

Interview with Scott Husak
Marquette, MI
8/1/03

On student life and being Wildcat Willy

START OF INTERVIEW

(I): Interview with Scott Husak. August 1st, 2003. Marquette, MI. Okay Scott, this morning we're going to talk about your involvement with the athletic program and in particular your role as Wildcat Willy. Could you tell us when you first came to Northern and how you got involved in Wildcat Willy?

(SH): Well I arrived at Northern the Fall of '98 and saw Wildcat Willy a few times around campus and was really intrigued with it. Then I met a few friends from Van Antwerp hall, is where I was dorming at the time, and one of my good friends was Wildcat Willy and I didn't know, but homecoming weekend we went and built a float, there was about 20 of us, we were building floats and I got to know him really well. He pulled me and one of my buddies aside that worked – me and my buddy worked really hard on this float, way more than anybody else but – this guy pulled us apart and he's like, "Hey I want to show you something." You know and he had this big black box in the back of his pickup truck and we were just like, "Okay, no big deal," and he opened the box and he shows us the head and we're just like, "Oh my gosh we can't believe it you're Wildcat Willy!"

(I): You had no idea?

(SH): Had absolutely no idea.

(I): What would happen when he would have to go on a mission?

(SH): When he'd have to go as Wildcat Willy?

(I): Yeah did he just...?

(SH): You'd just ask him, "Hey, you going to be at the game?" and he's like, "No I have other things to do." So it's like he sort of just slouched it off.

(I): And you probably didn't even think about it.

(SH): No it was just like, "Oh well what do you have to do?" and people that knew already would say he had some homework to do or something like that. So you'd never figure it out. But then I was like, "Oh that's cool! I wish I could do that!" You know, after saying that. He's like, "Well, I don't know what's going on." So a few weeks go by after homecoming and I'm like, "Nathan," because his name was Nathan Leech, he was the ASNMU president up here a while back.

(I): Oh, oh that's right, yeah, yeah, yeah. So he was a Wild Cat Willie?

(SH): He was Wild Cat Willie before me and he did, I think, 2 years before me. The first 2 years and then he did it the year I did it also.

(I): Okay, so what year was that?

(SH): Nathan Leech did it from I believe '96, '97, and half of '98. So until January of '99 he handed Wild Cat Willie over to me, totally, January '99. So two weeks after homecoming he comes up to me and he goes, "Hey, I remember you telling me that you played hockey your whole life. How would you like to do the Wild Cat Willie for hockey games?" And I was like, "Oh I'd absolutely love to do it. If you need somebody to skate I'd love to do it!" So he said, "Yeah, you could do it. I talked to Rick Comly," he was the athletic director at the time he like, "He just wants to make sure you can skate well enough that you're not going to hurt one of his players while you're on the ice." So I was like, "Alright," you know and a few weeks go by and I talk to Rick and Rick's like, "I just want to make sure you know how to skate." And I was like, "Yeah, fine." So then I got to do Wildcat Willy. I did all the hockey games, did some football games, some volleyball, some basketball and stuff.

(I): Now was Nathan doing it as well?

(SH): Nathan was doing football until football ended, and that's when he handed it over in January and just totally didn't do it anymore.

(I): Oh because he had problems skating.

(SH): Nathan couldn't skate at all. Yeah he actually at one time was doing the skating but was terrible at skating on the ice so Rick just says, "Well until we get somebody that can skate well enough, I don't want Wildcat Willy on the ice."

(I): Oh so Rick was truly concerned about his players getting hurt and so on...?

(SH): Yeah, he was truly concerned.

(I): Now did you have any special training? What did you do? What did Nathan tell you or...?

(SH): Nathan actually pulled me aside and we also recruited one other person in the fall season to help starting in January. He pulled us aside and showed us how to do the Wildcat Willy walk, how to act, how to totally be excited in the suit, because a normal person talks with their hands and you can sit there and a regular hand movement is only a few inches back and forth, but when you are in a mascot suit, you have to make your actions a lot bigger. You have to move your hands two or three feet in movement just to get your point across. The little hand movements won't do it, you have to actually overemphasize. So he showed us how to do Wildcat Willy walk and stuff, so nothing major training, but you know he showed us how to act and stuff like that and there were a few times when he pulled us aside and let me put the suit on before I actually went on the ice. We went to the PEIF when the PEIF had ice and I'd put my skates on and I'd put the Willy suit on and skate around and do a bunch of stuff on the ice and practice before hockey season actually started. To get the feel of it of skating in the head and stuff like that.

(I): Okay that was a question that I wanted to ask – how much of a difference is it between just skating and skating with this...?

(SH): Huge, totally huge. To skate with the head on, you only have a probably three inch diameter for each eye to see out of, and your vision is only – you can only see probably 30 or 40 degrees from straight to the side, your peripheral vision is only like 40 degrees. You can only see through these two eyes and then through the mouth and that's it.

(I): Through the mouth?

(SH): Yeah, you could, through the old head, you could see right through the mouth. The head was attached by sort of a head harness with a ratcheting system on the back that you tighten. It had a chin strap that nobody ever used because it really didn't work anyways. But it was very hard. Very hard to see and your eyes have to adjust big time because it goes from regular light to, you put this head on, and not a lot of light enters into the head.

(I): You're kind of looking out into bright light. I mean very focused.

(SH): Right, yeah, and you have to focus very, very hard because the eyes are black on the inside and the outside so you're looking through these small little holes in the black mesh but you can't see that well.

(I): Oh, so the eyes are actually shielded with black mesh?

(SH): Oh yeah, your eyes are shielded with a black mesh, because the black mesh is what they painted – there's white lines on it as the eyes and stuff like that. So you're not looking straight through and the reason it's covered with black mesh is so that people can't see into the head.

(I): So you're not only dealing with this head and this whole contraption, and then the small space. But then that small space is covered with mesh.

(SH): Right, has been covered with black mesh that's very hard to see through also. So that's why it's very irritating for me now when I see Wildcat Willy because they don't do the walk, they don't act like Wildcat Willy, they're not animated enough, they don't act like a true mascot should.

(I): What do you mean by that? How isn't it a true mascot?

(SH): Well back in I think '84 when Wildcat Willy actually was made, his head was made out of paper mache and it was all built from there. And the kid that started it started it because he wanted a mascot.

(I): Now do you know his name?

(SH): I can't remember what his name is, and if I got a hold of Nathan he would know exactly. But he started it back in '84, he actually made it on his own, the university didn't supply him with any money until I think it turned around to '90 or something like that, 1990, where the university actually started putting money, actually gave Wildcat Willy to the cheerleading team to have full control over it and that's when Wildcat Willy was into the cheerleading budget.

(I): Okay now the fellow was Jay McQuinlan was the first guy. Developed and played the role of Wildcat Willy from '84 to '89.

(SH): Okay, yeah, and then it was '89 was handed over to the cheerleading team because he was leaving. So he did for five years and then handed it over to the cheerleading team because nobody else took it over, I guess. From what I understand that it was handed over to the cheerleading team was into the cheerleading budget at that time and then people did it from there on.

(I): Now what is the usual process of becoming or being selected as Wildcat Willy?

(SH) Well just like I was Wildcat Willy, usually Wildcat Willy was handed down from person to person as Nathan handed it down to me. I didn't have a chance to hand it down because I stepped aside because back in the winter of '99 semester. I was working with the cheerleading coach Wendy, I can't remember her last name, and I actually jumped the whole chain of command because the Wildcat Willy suit had worn in knees, the hands was worn, the head was getting worn, I jumped the whole chain of command and made an appointment with Dr. Bailey and went straight to her and said, "This is what's going on with Wildcat Willy, we need a new suit, we need help because the cheerleading budget does not have enough money to pay for a new suit. I went to Wendy two or three weeks before the meeting, because I made the meeting a month in advance, and went and talked to her and she says, "You can't jump the chain of command. I have to talk to everybody up the chain of command to make sure it's okay, but I want to go with you." So me and Wendy and Dr. Bailey sat in a meeting and we talked about it. Dr. Bailey decided to take \$2000 and hand it over to the cheerleading budget so that we could get a suit for Wildcat Willy. I don't know where she pulled it from but she got us \$2000 and me and Wendy sat down, and I actually did the majority of the work looking for a new suit. I'd help her find companies and stuff like this, so I was pretty involved because I was that die-hard about being Wildcat Willy. Then her and Rick Comly sat down and picked out of, I think, four different companies over the summer and picked a suit, and I didn't find out what the suit looked like, and totally got cut out of the whole choosing part and got back here in '99 fall semester, came back a little early and picked up the suit and was totally disappointed with the suit they picked out because now the new Wildcat Willy suit looks like a cartoon character. You know, it's not, it just doesn't have the pizzazz, it doesn't have the status of the other one. The other one just was Wildcat Willy. Didn't look mean, but it had like a snar to it. The old Wildcat Willy had a tail, this one doesn't have a tail. The old suit was a one-piece suit, the new one is a two-piece suit. The old one was attached as a bike harness, the new one is attached by clasps. There's four clasps on the shoulder that you snap together to put the head on. The new suit just is not mascot friendly. Just was unsatisfied. But the whole process is usually just handed down from person to person and you pretty much, like Nathan wanted to make sure I was good enough to be Wildcat Willy, so he had me put the suit on and had me do a few things and made sure that I could pick up how to do the walk and a few things and made sure that I held the status of Wildcat Willy. When I stepped aside, the new cheerleading coach, which was another thing, the cheerleading coach changed. So the old coach that sort of, I think that she kind of did me in, screwed me over with the whole Wildcat Willy. Then a new coach stepped in, had absolutely no clue about Wildcat Willy and just said, "Well okay, can you help us pick new Wild Cat Willies?" And I was like, "Sure, no problem, I'll help train them too." We had like a tryout and absolutely not one of them was good enough to be Wildcat Willy by my thought, by my status. I asked Stacy, Stacy Welling, I asked her I said, "Stacy is it okay if you coach the cheerleading squad and I'll coach Wild Cat Willies? I will make sure that they're taken care of, make sure the suit is dry cleaned, the head is clean, the suit is taken care of and stuff. And I'll train them and make sure that they walk correctly and stuff like that." And she's like, "No I have it. I have the whole team, don't worry about it I don't need your help." And so I stepped aside and said, "You know what if that's how you want it to be that's fine, go ahead." And Wildcat Willy has not been the same ever since. It frustrates me to see Wildcat Willy when they walk around but then I absolutely don't want anything to do with it right now because it's handled in such a negative way. I don't understand how the mascot of the university,

which people look at now, when I was Wildcat Willy and I talked to people I was like, "What do you think of that Wildcat Willy?" And they're like, "Oh, it's pretty cool. I wonder who does it, it's really cool." But then, now, it's just like people are like, "Wildcat Willy, who cares?" You know, like "Whoopee." And I'm just like – it's depressing. It's very depressing that people don't look at it as the mascot and like, "Oh that's cool!" and people don't know because Wildcat Willy is not handled in a positive manner. You know, like I know the coach now, Leanne Hayburg, she's the cheerleading coach and she takes care of the cheerleaders, she's been a cheerleader since probably I think in middle school, and she went to Ishpeming and I know her pretty well and stuff, and she is die-hard about cheerleading and that's great. She's a great female and stuff, a great person, but she doesn't know anything about the mascots. Now I think they send the mascot to camp, you know the mascot camp and stuff, but still the mascots don't come back knowing how to be a true mascot. You can send somebody to camp all they want but that's not how the university, how the Wildcat Willy should act... All different mascots are going to act different, like Sparty from Michigan State acts totally different than Syracuse Orange Man, or the Nebraska guy or you know whatever, the Clemson Tiger. Wildcat Willy acts totally different, has his own walk, you know acts totally different. To this university has its own personality and it's not there. The personality has just died. So it's very frustrating, very frustrating.

(I): How would you, in terms of some scale, how would you classify your enthusiasm for Northern, Northern sports, whatever that got you into...

(SH): With Wildcat Willy or just my personal...?

(I): Just in general.

(SH): I'm a big hockey fan because I run the club hockey team here, so I actually deal with the division I Wildcat team very often. I deal with their equipment manager Bill Kaivo and Walt Kyle's a great guy, I deal with Walt Kyle probably two times a month. I sit down with Walt Kyle and I talk to him and we get a chance to buy Northern's old equipment and some other stuff. Walt helps us out with ice time and with some other stuff. So hockey I'm very big with. Football, you know, football's alright. I get into the games, I'll go to the games every once in a while, basketball every once in a while, volleyball I'll go watch. I don't go as often as I used to my freshman and sophomore year and I think part of it has to do with just being part of the whole program because when you're Wildcat Willy you're into the whole game and stuff like that. It's funny because you walk around as Wildcat Willy and like hockey games I would know we score and I would know that the other team would score, but I wouldn't actually know the score of the game or know what's going on until I get out of the suit ten minutes before the game ends and go look at the scoreboard. You have absolutely no clue what's going on because if you're a good Wildcat Willy or if you're a good mascot, you deal with what's in front of you and what's around you within ten feet or whatever, you deal with the people that are right there with you and that's it. You pay attention to who's around you at that second and that's it. You don't pay attention to what's going on in the game other than if you know that you're scoring or stuff like that. You have to be enthusiastic with the people around you and the whole stadium at once. So you're trying to concentrate on the people around you because if you have little kids you don't want to just walk right past them – you get down on one knee and you stoop down to their level so you don't look so big and scary to them. That's part of the status of Wildcat Willy that's totally dropped. Wildcat Willies now, they don't get down on one knee, they don't come down to the little kids level and greet the little kids. They just stand up and tower over them and to a little kid that's frightening.

(I): I think he used to go _____ was doing it, they'd kind of put their arms out and the kids were all coming around, I mean, he was down on one knee...

(SH): Yeah, you get down on one knee and you come down to their level and be all friendly and stuff. There were times where I'd be walking around and I actually one time went to the Great Lakes invitational for hockey over Christmas break. I was invited up to one of the suites up in Joe Lewis arena where a bunch of Northern fans and alumni were there and I went up into the suite and stuff like that and was walking around the stands in Joe Lewis arena and one guy handed me two of his newborns and I'm sitting there holding two newborns in my arms and he's like, "Smile!" and I'm like, "How am I going to smile in this head?" But I'm sitting there holding these two newborns going, "I hope I don't drop them." You know, but it's probably a perfect great picture, but it's just stuff like that. You don't see that now. Wildcat Willy is not looked at like that and, now it's a job for people to be Wildcat Willy. Now Wildcat Willy's going and doing birthday parties and stuff like that and people are paying the university for Wildcat Willy to show up. You know, when I was Wildcat Willy, we used to take the suit, I had my friend dress up as Wildcat Willy and I walked around with him – we went to the Special Olympics as Wildcat Willy – and they have the Allstate bear that's usually at the Special Olympics, but some of the cheerleaders went there for community service and stuff. I woke up one morning and said, "Hey Paul, let's go to Special Olympics." He's like, "For what?" I'm like, "Let's throw the suit on just go there and just walk around. You know, do you know how much those Special Olympics kids will just love it?" And they just absolutely loved Wildcat Willy, just loved it. They had free pictures in there and everybody wanted to take a picture with Wildcat Willy and it was great, just great. Just did it because we wanted to. And if I had people say, "Hey can you do this?", "Yeah, not a problem!" So I'd put the suit on and I'd go to events and stuff as Wildcat Willy, just because I wanted to, just because I loved doing Wildcat Willy that much and just loved being in the suit. We went to some ski events, some cross-country skiing event out in Negaunee, and just threw boots on and put the suit on as Wildcat Willy and just walked outside to the ski event, you know was clapping for everybody, just having a good time. We went and did Cat-talk down at Red Lobster, showed up as Wildcat Willy, just did it voluntarily, you know because Wildcat Willy's not paid to do it. Michigan State pays theirs, you know and other universities pay, you get a scholarship to be the mascot. Here it's voluntary as I think as know right now, I don't know any different, but I think it's still voluntary. I just absolutely loved it that much and was so die-hard about it that I would go do anything as Wildcat Willy. We put the suit on one time and just drove around the city and took pictures in the PEIF, took pictures as I was lifting weights, into the locker rooms, and we just took pictures everywhere. Drove around Marquette in the suit and just took...

(I): Do you still have any of those?

(SH): I still have them.

(I): You should really think about giving a set or something to the archives.

(SH): Okay.

(I): Because unless you do that, you know, it's not going to – now we don't have an official photographer.

(SH): Right. I took a few of those pictures and got them blown up in the posters. One of me and Sparty when we were at the Great Lakes invitational we have our arms around each other, one of me as

Wildcat Willy at one of the hockey games and it just blows my mind you know. This is the one of me and Sparty. It just blows my mind because there's nothing archived and nothing kept of Wildcat Willy.

(I): Right. Well that's why I wanted to sit down and do this interview because this is the only tangible, because from my, you know when I was trying to get information about him, there's nothing written, and I don't know how I got information, and it's pretty accurate but it's you can see is kind of flawed. I mean it's not complete, but one of the things I wanted to get was a list of all the people that have been Wildcat Willy. It'd be sort of neat to have them all come back or something.

(SH): Right.

(I): Because, the other thing is that you're going to get students like yourself with a great deal of spirit, or else you wouldn't be doing this.

(SH): Exactly. That's why I asked you – because somebody asked me – but when I was talking to you about getting rid of it because I was thinking if Russ leaves and somebody else takes over they might just say, "Oh who cares about the suit." And just get rid of it. And I was like, if I had – that's why I wanted to have control of it and say, "You know what, I know it's going to be preserved, I know it's going to be taken care of." You know and I'm very enthusiastic about it and it's like somebody that has that enthusiasm about it should have control of something like that.

(I): Well the thing is that we've, I'm trying to think of, I think I got a phone call one day from the cheerleading folks and they kind of said, "Hey we've got this thing over here do you want it?" The next step would have been to throw it out and I said, "Yes, absolutely." And I immediately went over and got it. It was, yeah, it was very precarious. I mean they had almost thrown it out because it was, it's not in the best of shape, so it looks like a piece of junk if you pull it out of a corner you'd say, "What is this?" And then it was on display for about a year at the Marquette County historical society...

(SH): And they gave it back?

(I): Oh yeah.

(SH): They didn't want it anymore?

(I): Well no, it was just a special exhibit of... Well it was an exhibit they had, they usually had an exhibit for a year, like now they're doing an exhibit of clothes and then they had food, and the one before that when Wildcat Willy was on display was advertising for us and they asked if they could borrow it, and then we got it back. Yeah, so it, I mean...

(SH): And I think it, and you know, I was even thinking, because John from receiving was telling me, "Yeah maybe if they get rid of it I'll mention your name maybe you can take care of it." And I was thinking, I was like, you know what I could do with that, I would make a stand, I don't know if you've ever seen like Sharper Image where they had like the Terminator thing or the Alien thing, I was going to make a stand and then stuff the suit and have it stand there, you know, on a stand and stuff and have it preserved. I was like that would be awesome. I'd have that thing standing in my family room and people would be like, "Oh what's that?", "Well that's Wildcat Willy." Just have it preserved as like a statue. I was like, "Oh I hope I have a chance to do that."

(I): Well the thing is that one of the plans for the future, I don't know how far in the future, would be to have a university museum where you could dig out a lot of this stuff – we had a lot of stuff – and could put this stuff on display so we'd have a Wildcat Willy there.

[FRONT SIDE OF TAPE CUTS OFF HERE]

[OTHER SIDE CONTINUES]

(SH): There's actually two Wildcat Willy suits now.

(I): When was the, just to get the dates down, when was the new suit...

(SH): The new suit was purchased summer of '99 and then I think the second suit was bought last year winter time? I think so. Yeah, or last year summer.

(I): So the coach would be, well the cheerleading coach would know, but who is...

(SH): [INTERRUPTS] Actually you know what I don't even know if the cheerleading coach would know because Stacy handed the team over at the start of last year so 2002 fall, actually 2002 winter semester Stacy resigned and Leanne took over the team. I don't know...

(I): What was Leanne's last name?

(SH): Leanne Hubert, H-U-B-E-R-T, from Ishpeming. She's the new coach now and I don't know if she knows when the second suit was purchased but I was informed by a previous Wildcat Willy that, from I think last year, she was telling me that she did the same thing I did and went straight to Dr. Bailey and said, "Hey the suit's worn, this is what it looks like," and...

(I): This is the second, the new one?

(SH): Because they bought the second suit, so Dr. Bailey, I guess, gave her an allotment to buy a second suit, so now they have two suits – one that during hockey games just skates and one that walks around the stands. So yeah now there are two suits.

(I): Oohh.

(SH): So probably by the time that there's a museum, the old suit is just going to be obsolete, you guys will probably use one of the newer suits because by that time they'll have another one. They'll all just, yeah, so probably by then people will just be like, "Who cares about the old, old one – it's not going to be used anymore."

(I): See now if they had the original paper machete...

(SH): Right, it'd be a different story, right. But this is the second, the old suit now is I think the second generation, so it'd be obsolete, it would be useless anyways.

(I): So you had, the first one was, paper machete 1984.

(SH): The first one was back in... '84 and I think until '92 or '93 or something like that...

(I): The one you used was about '92.

(SH): Was about, yeah, '92, '93 and then...

(I): It went to '99.

(SH): It went to '99, yep, summer of '99, then they got a new suit and now the new suit looks like a cartoon character. Depressing. [laughs]

(I): Now, do you know any of the other, and I believe I already asked you, any of the other people that played Wildcat Willy?

(SH): I just know Nathan Leech and then I can't remember the other student that did it with me in the winter semester of '99. I can't remember his name.

(I): Okay, so just, even though we don't have the name, there was this fellow Jay McQuinlan was the first one, and that was '84 to '89.

(SH): '89 and I think there was two more after that and then there was Nathan then there was probably another student from '89 to '93 or something then '93 to '97 or '96 then there was Nathan from '96 to '98 and then I took it over in '98 to '99. Then there was, I don't even know who the heck they are now, and now Wildcat Willy is like a – they have three or four Wildcat Willies – so it's not even the status of having a Wildcat Willy and nobody knowing who it is and having – and that's another problem. When you have four people doing one job, the enthusiasm, the act of being Wildcat Willy is knocked down to being zip because when you're that one person you're getting looked at every single time Wildcat Willy is in the public eye, but now it's like, "Who is that person, who is that person?" Wildcat Willy goes from being 5'2" to 6'3" from one day to the next so it's like, it's just not very practical. They just don't take care of it well.

(I): Now what is the role of, you said you had talked to Rick Comly when he was here so, what is the role of the coaches? Now you haven't mentioned football coach or anything, was it mostly the hockey coach Rick Comly that was most interested in Wildcat Willy?

(SH): Well the cheerleading team is underneath the athletic department and Rick Comly was the athletic director at the time during this, so he was the hockey coach and the athletic director. So he was the only one that was really around when we were talking about this but if Wildcat Willy needed a basketball uniform the cheerleading coach or Wildcat Willy would go talk to the head basketball coach and say, "Hey, I'm Wildcat Willy blah blah blah, do you have any uniforms that you're not using that we could borrow for the season to have Wildcat Willy wear during the games?" And we did that for basketball, we did it for football – we got a football jersey – we had a volleyball tee shirt and stuff like that and I was so much into it that I went up to Rick and I was like, "Hey Rick, do you have any hockey jerseys that you're not using that I could take to Marquette Embroidery and have them put Wildcat Willy on it?" So I went personally to get a jersey for Wildcat Willy. I went and got the jersey and it's all nice and it's the exact same jerseys they wear, double zero, it says Willy on the back, and then when I left I wanted to take the jersey with me because it was Wildcat Willy's but it was a personal jersey because I got it for him. I went through all the hard work of going to take care of all this stuff and I left the jersey with him. When

Nathan left Nathan took the football jersey, when I left I didn't get to take anything as Wildcat Willy, so it was sort of depressing.

(I): So where's this jersey?

(SH): See that's another thing, Wildcat Willy is supposed to wear one during hockey games. They wear it sometimes, they don't wear it, I mean Wildcat Willy is just not handled well because they wear, it they don't wear it. You have no clue if Wildcat Willy is going to come out wearing sometimes a tee shirt, sometimes nothing, sometimes a hockey jersey, it's just – it's like nobody cares. That's why I just wanted that jersey to say well this is what I wore while I was Wildcat Willy because I was the only one that would do hockey, I was the only one that, not that it wasn't allowed – anyone else could have walked around – but I would not let anybody touch the suit during hockey games, not one person was allowed to, because hockey was my sport, I was the one that skated, I was the one that walked around the stands, and people knew when there was me and Nathan and there was only about three maybe four inches difference in height so I mean, Wildcat Willy looked the same whether it was me or Nathan. But people knew if I was in the suit or if Nathan was in the suit because you could tell on how I carried myself in the suit and how Nathan carried himself in the suit. Exact same walk, but I'd walk around in the stands all cocky and just strutting and people knew who was in the suit. But we did it so well sometimes people were like, "Who is that? Who's doing that?" You know I had pictures taken of me. I had people coming up going, "Hey can I take a picture of you? Hey do this at half-time or do this during one of the intermissions at hockey." You know because we used to do bowling and Wildcat Willy at one time we'd do bowling with the cheerleading cones, the megaphones, but we'd set it down at one end and Wildcat Willy would skate hard and dive into them and knock them all down. There were times where I'd used to put goalie pads on and have people shoot on me as Wildcat Willy that I have videos of and stuff. I just took it seriously, I took it very seriously. It was a job. It was a second personality – when I was out of the suit I was Scott Husak, when I was in the suit I was Wildcat Willy, and you are Wildcat Willy to the best of your ability and you act as Wildcat Willy. It's a dead serious job it's not something to take lightly – to me it's not and to Nathan it wasn't either – it was very serious. So that's why it's frustrating. I don't think the students who do it now take it seriously. "Oh it's Wildcat Willy who cares, do you want to do it this week?"

(I): You're saying there were four of them?

(SH): Yeah and there's tryouts for new ones every year. Who knows who does it and who doesn't do it. But during opening ceremonies during football games Wildcat Willy used to run down onto the field with the football team – Wildcat Willy doesn't do that anymore. During hockey games Wildcat Willy would stand by all the Wildcat players and just sat there and would joke around with the players and stuff like that. When there were announcements for the other team Wildcat Willy would act like he's not paying attention and stuff and skate down by the goalie and just stand there by the post and when they said, "And now your Northern Michigan University Wildcats!" I would go crazy doing circles on the ice and then skate up to the center and go crazy and the players would come up and slap hands, you know, get them all riled up and they got excited with it. Now it's just like, "Willy get out of my way." I had always skated around out there and the players when I went down to the Great Lakes invitational over Christmas, all the players found who Wildcat Willy was because I went down to their locker room like, "Hey guys what's going on?" I got to know the team really well. So the rest of the year they were just like, "Hey what's up Willy, don't fall, don't trip, don't hurt us out there!" You know and I'd joke around with the team all the time when I was on the ice and I'd talk to them. You know, Wildcat Willy is not supposed to talk but when it's one-on-one or it's just with people you know and they know who it is

you're just like, "Hey what's up?" and you just joke around with them. I'd always sit there and bark and Dan Ragiset, just talking to him like, "Hey what's up Danny. How you doing Rags?" Just talking to him and then get all crazy. So it was fun. It was a blast because you got to know the players and people respected you doing it. Now if you're Wildcat Willy it'd be like, "Why would anybody want to do Wildcat Willy?" But before it was like, "Ooh you're Wildcat Willy that's so cool!" You know.

(I): Well that's why I was asking about, I wanted you to do the interview and talk about all this because just from what I had heard in the past there was a certain mystique about Wildcat Willy – nobody knew his name and different things that were connected with it but made it very special. Now what you hear is just kind of, "Who cares?"

(SH): Who cares, yeah.

(I): Okay what did you say about Wildcat Willy, that you're...?

(SH): Well, Wildcat Willy before was, when I was there, there was the coach, the cheerleading coach, then I was Wildcat Willy and if there was another one it would channel through me and I had to schedule them and say we need to go do this, this is what we have to do, and there was always one person making sure that Wildcat Willy was taken care of. Now, there's a head cheerleading coach and an assistant coach but nobody coaches Wildcat Willy. But now Wildcat Willy doesn't go to practices with the cheerleading squad, doesn't really do anything with the cheerleading team other than he may travel every once in a while going to a football game with the cheerleading squad and stuff like that, but Wildcat Willy is not really on the cheerleading team.

(I): And what do the cheerleaders think about that?

(SH): They're friends with the Willies and stuff and they're like, "Oh that's Wildcat Willy no big deal." But when I was Wildcat Willy it was like, "Oh that's Wildcat Willy." You know and it was like they were protecting Wildcat Willy. Now there's a Cat Squad or whatever, there was always somebody walking around with Wildcat Willy to make sure nobody hurts Wildcat Willy or something – which is sort of dumb because nobody's really going to hurt Wildcat Willy, I mean who would actually hurt him? Before you know I would have middle school kids pulling my tail, they'd tap you on the head and stuff like that, mean kids and stuff but nothing that – nobody's going to hurt you. Now they're doing it because of NMU students also because people don't take Wildcat Willy seriously, they think it's all some joke and it all has to go back to the status of Wildcat Willy.

(I): The whole image.

(SH): The whole image. Nobody really cares anymore because the image has not been kept up, it's not there. It's not - they see Wildcat Willy walking around it's like, "Oh that's Wildcat Willy!" No. It's like, "Who cares?" Before, you'd take a double-take and go, "Oh I wonder who's in there?" Now it's just like, "Oh who cares?"

(I): And then in the process trip him.

(SH): Yeah, exactly. Exactly. You know like, "Oh dude I tripped Wildcat Willy there." Or something, I don't know. I don't know. But I know the status has gone down and I know this because I've asked

around you know like, “What do you think of Wildcat Willy?” “Oh who cares?” Before it was like, “Oh I wonder who does that?”

(I): Was there anything that I missed? That I didn’t ask you?

(SH): Not that I know of.

(I): Okay. Well alright good, thank you.

(SH): Not a problem.

[RECORDING ENDS, BUT IS RESUMED]

(I): Scott could you tell us about the Wildcat Willy bean baby? Give us a little background tonight?

(SH): Yeah, Linda that works in the NMU bookstore that does gifts and stuff like that, she was trying to come up with a beanie baby look alike for Wildcat Willy and they did a promo of it for her to see and to see if she likes it and the eyes were green with orange in the middle and she said it didn’t look right so she took a sharpie and put a black dot in the center, and there was only one promo made and she could never get them to make any of them forever, and I walked in one day and told her who I was – she gave me the beanie baby and there’s only one made and it looks like the older Wildcat Willy.

(I): And it was made then when they were using the older Wildcat Willy?

(SH): Yeah it was made in like winter of ’99. Yeah, she got this one in maybe fall of ’99 and she ordered some but they just couldn’t get it right. They couldn’t get the beanie baby right so there’s only one made now and on the back tag it says “T.Y.” and then it says “Promo”, and I’m the only one that has that Wildcat Willy beanie baby. And also, when I was doing Wildcat Willy, I made a cat growl that now on commercials for Northern’s hockey team and on the radio also when they do announcing for Wildcat hockey and sports, you’ll hear a cat growl. That cat growl came from me – I made that cat growl – the “Rawrawr!” I made that cat growl for my entrances when I would go on the ice to skate and Mike Nelson who does advertising and stuff like that, promotions for Northern, asked me if he could borrow it and I said, “Yeah that’s fine.” He said, “We want to do it on first downs when Northern’s football team gets a first down they’ll do the cat growl or when Northern scores for hockey they’ll do the cat growl and then do the horn.” I was like, “Yeah not a problem.” So he borrowed it, well I didn’t copyright it or anything like that but now TV commercials, radio, games – there’s the cat growl, it came straight from me when I first made it up back in ’98.

(I): And how does the cat growl go?

(SH): It’s like “Rawrawr!” You know, it’s a sweet growl and I have, in my CD case, I have the Wildcat Wakeup which is the Wildcat Wakeup 1 and 2, has my name on it and has exactly the first thing you know, the drumroll and it’s Rawrawr! It’s the little stuff that I did for Wildcat Willy that still to this day sticks around because they use it for TV and, you know, everything, commercials. Very interesting.

(I): Okay, you should get us a copy of that as well.

(SH): That’s not a problem I have a copy of the growl.

(I): Okay, and we can have a copy made. But also, what I'd like with the bean baby is a picture of it.

(SH): Okay, not a problem. I have it packed away in my little archives collection. [laughs]

(I): Okay, okay. Alright. Thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW