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Mixed crowd inhabits Memorial Stadium

Traditional tickets establish seasonal bonds

By Mark Lage
Staff Reporter

The sight of Memorial Stadium filled with an amorphous mass of red on game day is infamous, but in reality the crowd is far from uniform.



The east stadium is jammed full of students, many of whom do not sit where their tickets say they do, many of whom have left seats in the north and south stadiums vacant.

The west stadium generally is considered to be the old folks' home of Nebraska football, although this is only hearsay -- I've never sat there. But considering the slow, intermittent pace that the wave makes through that area, this rumor seems well-founded.

The north and south stadiums, outside of the areas reserved for yearly student tickets, are interesting cases for the study of football

society. Since they both have been built since 1960, many of the tickets in each have had only one owner, and there are areas which are filled by little groups of people whose line-ups have changed little over the years.

I myself was a part of one of these little knots for about ten years. In 1960 or so, when the South Stadium was being built, my grandparents ordered three tickets. They are the only people ever to have owned the tickets for seats 9, 10 and 11, row 30, section 16. When I was in fourth grade, my grandparents offered me the third ticket, and I didn't give it up until I graduated from high school.

The surrounding seats always were occupied by the same people for as long as I sat there, and, according to my grandparents, for a long time before that, too. This creates some strange sorts of personal relationships -- these are people that you've known for ten or fifteen years, but you only see them six or seven times a year; your only connection is Nebraska football; and, because of the nature of the seating, you've never had a face-to-face conversation with them. If you sit in front of them,

they talk into your ear and you know them primarily by voice. If they sit in front of you, you talk into their ear and you know them primarily by the back of their head.

I have a difficult time figuring out what the people around me really thought of my addition to the group. They've always been very nice to me, but I'm sure I had the capability to annoy often. Because of my intensive love for Nebraska football as a youngster, and my good memory, I always came to the games with the roster memorized from 1 to 99. And when one of the adults around me made a mistake, I wasn't bashful about correcting them.

This developed into a long-running joke between me and "Romey," the man who, with his wife and family, sat directly behind us. Many of you no doubt remember when Roger Craig, current NFL star, played for Nebraska. But he was preceded a few years by his older brother Curtis, who played wingback. When Roger played, Romey repeatedly made the mistake of referring to him as Curtis, and I repeatedly corrected him.

After a while he just refused to call Roger anything but Curtis, and

then began referring to any unidentified player as Curtis. Before games he would lean over and ask me how I thought Curtis would play that day. Years later, when Roger and the 49ers were tearing through the NFL, Romey would ask me if I had seen Curtis on television the other day.

Eventually, he just started calling me Curtis.

Romey has a son who often would come to the big games in place, I think, of Romey's wife. Before every play he would yell "hut! hut! hut!" until the ball was snapped, hoping, apparently, to draw the hated Sooners offsidelines from row 30. After bad plays he would just scream "Shiiiiiiiiii-hit!"

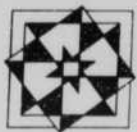
The first game I ever went to I was terribly thirsty at halftime, and I saw Romey pouring out cups of orange juice from a thermos. Innocently, I asked if I could have some, and everybody laughed. Someone ran to get me a pop, and from then on Romey brought a special container of straight orange juice for me, something that I wouldn't understand until many years later.

In front of us sat Harry and his wife, and their main characteristics were that they smoked, and the portable seats they brought were too large by about two inches, and encroached into our footspace. Other than that they were very nice people, and, after trying to com-

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