

Michigan Every Day
By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly

Oct. 9, 1975
KISS descends on Cadillac

On most days in most years, the City of Cadillac attracts campers and fishermen to its parks and lakes. But one day in 1975, Cadillac looked like a much different place. It was the day the rock band KISS came to town for a parade and concert. The event saw Cadillac's most prominent citizens supporting the band's trademark black and white face paint. The publicity stunt was just goofy enough to work. It received attention from newspapers across the country. The story was covered in *Rolling Stone* and *Billboard* magazines. Cadillac High School English teacher and assistant football coach Jim Neff inadvertently caused the whole thing to happen. Neff wanted to motivate his Cadillac Vikings football squad when he nicknamed the defense "KISS," which he said stood for "keep it simple stupid." The team had just followed up an undefeated season with losses in their first two games. Neff decided to play KISS records before and after practice to motivate the team. It must have worked because the team won its next seven games. Word that their songs inspired the team made its way to the band. One thing led to another and arrangements were made for a Kiss homecoming concert the following season. For 24 hours, on Oct. 9, 1975, Cadillac became a city of rock'n'roll.

The band arrived in town at noon and retreated to Bill Oliver's Caberfae Motor Lodge, where the members put on their famous makeup. The group went downtown, where police and firefighters acted as official escorts to Cadillac High School, where students lined the school's entrance to welcome the band. Students showed KISS members a film they had made about the band. The group also met with the football team and the marching band. Some members of the community had been wary about the Satanic-Students and faculty, Cadillac residents young and old, were united in an unlikely way. The following day, band

members had breakfast with civic leaders, who wore face paint like the band. A parade through town was held before they returned to the high school to say goodbye.

KISS maintained it came to Cadillac not for publicity but because it loved football and appreciated that the music had inspired the team.

Bassist Gene Simmons told a reporter: "We were the ones who left Cadillac inspired. That concert, the parade and everything else from our time there will go down as one of the most important moments in our band's history. We have performed hundreds of concerts in lots of cities all over the world and the Cadillac performance will never be forgotten by any of us."

Throughout the rest of the football season, KISS called Neff each Friday night to see how the team has done.