

***What is it about “football”
that strikes **a special chord?*****



John Dolezal

July 3, 2019

This is a book about football and the important role it has played in my life. It is also about my journey toward finding and living out my “vocation”.

The primary reason I have written this book is to act on a “hunch”. I have felt the urge to write for several years and despite encouragement from my **wife, Mary Louise**, and others I have managed to put it off until now.

The “timing” comes from three sources of motivation: (1) Randy Pausch’s “The Last Lecture”; (2) my grandsons, Isaiah and Solomon; and, (3) my loving, supportive wife, Mary Louise

I recently read “The Last Lecture” (a book about the “message” Randy Pausch wants to leave behind for his three young children...Randy, a professor at Mellon University, has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer...the forecast is that he has less than 12 months to live). The book definitely inspired me and helped provide an “angle” for what I wanted to first write about.

The content in this book is based on personal reflection and memory. Therefore, please don’t take anything in particular as “factual”.

There isn’t any real organization for the material though it does move along chronologically.

There is no designed or intended “moral to the story” but, I do hope that the reader gleans hope that will fuel his/her vocational journey.

Thanks to great granddad!

Before I get into the “content” of this book I want to express special gratitude to my great grandfather, Joseph Edward Dolezal.

Great granddad passed away in 1956 and I was only 6 years old. However, he has had a great and lasting influence on my entire life.

I do have a clear snapshot memory of great granddad...In my mind I can still picture him sitting in his bed or a chair within the living room of his house on Birch Street (Perry, Oklahoma). I remember him watching us kids play out in his front yard and the special candy treats he had for us when we visited (lemon drops, peppermint, horehound drops).

I remember the “stories” my granddad and dad shared about great granddad. Stories about him coming to Oklahoma Territory and more specifically, participating in the Oklahoma Land Runs. I have done some extensive research over the past few years focusing in on family history (paternal), the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889, and the Cherokee Strip Land Run of 1893. Through this research I have been able to piece together my own understanding for who great granddad was and a lot about his life in the Perry area.

Great granddad kept journals during the time he lived out on the farm south of Perry. The journal entries provide a clear sense of his life for the period of 1933-48. I am blessed to have possession of these journals (my great aunt, Irene gave them to me before she died).

What I know about great granddad is inspiring and the fact that the journals were there for me when I was ready to learn more about him is truly a blessing.

Thanks, Great Granddad!

Football some early memories...

**What is the nature of my “experience” with football?
What are the “influences” that have shaped my appreciation for football?**

There are memories from the age of 5-6 that reflect some special, personal “interest” in this American sport...at the time I didn’t seem to think much on things like my ambition, talent, vocation or other such matters. But football was the dominant fuel for much of my excitement and “dreaming”.

I do remember getting my first football “gear” (helmet, football, shoulder pads) as a birthday or Christmas gift during the time we lived on Birch Street in Perry (next door to my great grandfather-grandmothers’ house) (the house they built and lived in after participating in the Cherokee Strip Land Run of 1893). Below is a picture that includes me “suited up”. The picture was taken in the living room at my great granddad’s home on Birch Street.

Great Grandfather was losing health (this would have been in the 1955 time-frame and he would have been 88) and he was spending most of his time in a bed placed in the living room. He would sit up and look out of the big window to watch us play football in the yard.

Also in the picture:

Deborah (my sister); Gib, Mark (cousins); Mary Kay Kingelin (second cousin); Gary, Don (second cousins).

Gib is also wearing football gear and given the fact Don and Gary were visiting from Texas, I am sure we had just come inside from playing some football in the front yard.



Here I am...decked out & ready to play...cowboy boots and all!!

Football some early memories...

Our family moved to 1409 Jackson (my dad built us a new house) and my next recallable memories on football are based there.

Some of these **early memories** are:

- Playing football with neighborhood friends (Ripleys, Sadlers, Charlie Waren, Fekens, etc.);

- Watching the 1958 NFL World Championship Game (N.Y. Giants vs Baltimore Colts) wit Dad.

Billy Pricer was on the Baltimore Colts team...He was a graduate of Perry High School and of OU.

There is a summary and picture of this game on the next page.

Summary of the '58 Championship Game:

Baltimore 23 N.Y. Giants 17 (OT)

Dec. 28, 1958 – “Two history-making drives turned Johnny Unitas into a legend at 25 and helped transform pro football into the most popular television sport of the latter half of the 20th century. And he accomplished this in the House That Ruth Built, no less. In the nationally televised NFL championship game at Yankee Stadium, the Colts trailed the New York Giants 17-14 when they regained possession on their own 14 with 1:56 left in the fourth quarter. After two incompletions, Unitas hit Lenny Moore for 11 yards and a first down at the 25. After misfiring on a bomb, he coolly connected three consecutive times to his favorite receiver, Raymond Berry. A 25-yard completion put the ball at midfield before strikes of 15 and 22 yards advanced the Giants 13. Steve Myhra's 20-yard game-tying field goal with seven seconds forced the first overtime in NFL history.

After the Giants punted on their first possession, Unitas continued to excel. Taking over on his own 20, he twice completed third-and-long passes to keep the drive going. When he saw Giants middle linebacker Sam Huff move over to help out on Berry, he audibled to fullback Alan Ameche, who ran 22 yards up the middle to the Giants' 20. Two more completions from Unitas (26-of-40 for 349 yards) brought the ball to the one. Finally, on the 13th play of the drive, Ameche bulled over from the one to give the Colts a 23-17 victory.”



More NFL influences...

There were several other professional football influences in my early childhood...



*Willie Galimore
RB...Chicago Bears*



*Y.A. Tittle
QB...NY Giants*



*Gale Sayers...the
Kansas Comet...
RB, Chicago Bears...
Second-best RB
I saw play live.*



*Barry Sanders...Heisman
Trophy winner...RB at
Oklahoma State University...
Detroit Lions...BEST I ever
watched!!*



*Jim Brown, RB, Syracuse &
Cleveland Browns*

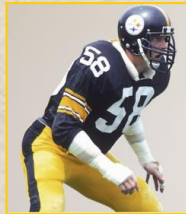


*Walter "Sweetness" Payton
RB Chicago Bears*

More influences...



*Pittsburgh Steelers “Steel Curtain”
Dwight White, Ernie Holmes, Mean Joe Greene
Greenwood...Jack Lambert and Jack Ham, the
2 main LB’s are not shown in this picture.*



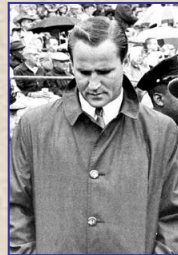
*Jack Lambert
LB, Pittsburgh
Steelers*



*Vince Lombardi
Head Coach
Green Bay Packers*



*Bud Wilkinson
Head Coach
Oklahoma Sooners*

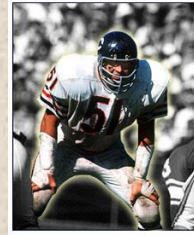


*Don Shula
Head Coach
Baltimore Colts*

More influences...



Boyd Dowler, Green Bay Packer WR...this is going to be my number.



Dick Butkus, MLB for The Chicago Bears



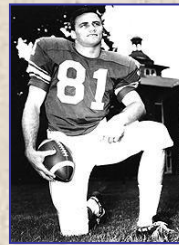
Homer Rice...he was an assistant coach at OU when I was in high school. He was also my Huddle Leader at the FCA camp I attended in 1966. This photo was taken at the time of his retirement as Athletic Director at Georgia Tech University



Walt Garrison...Dallas Cowboy FB, Oklahoma State grad who made it big!



Green Bay Packer Bobble-Head Doll

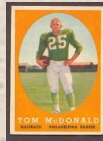


**Howard Twilley, WR Tulsa
My "idol" receiver**

“Between the Hedges” & “Knee football”...

*I started school (Perry Elementary) in 1956 and time on the playground ...our “Recess”... included lots of football. In reflection, this seems to be when I first sensed a **calling to Coach**. I would get the game “organized” ...including the “player selection” process, rule-making, position assignments, play calling, motivation of players, etc.*

When we weren’t in school, we would also spend a lot of time around “football”...either playing the game in our backyard or in the lot next to the Ripley’s house or trading playing cards.



*We played “regular” football as well as **“knee” football**. “Knee*

Football” involved the older boys (including me) versus the

younger boys (also, any girls who wanted to play)...The older

boys would have to play the entire game on knees...this included running with the ball, running pass routes, and

tacklin’ the younger kids (or girls) who were free to be on their feet.

*We also played some **“Between the Hedges”** ball. We played this variation in the area next to the Sadler’s home (710 Jackson) and the hedges on both sides of the lot served as “out of*

bounds...naturally, to ensure an opponent was out of bounds, we

physically shoved or tackled them into the hedges.

It is somewhat hard to believe now but, I “tackled” Mary Louise

into the hedges many a time.

The jump to “organized” football...

Another memory with influence was “**listening to the LSU Tigers** play football on Saturday nights”...I would sit down **with Dad** and we would listen to a radio...the station was broadcast from Baton Rouge and I was impressed we could tune it in. It also gave me the opportunity to enjoy something Dad and I had in common. I wasn’t necessarily a LSU fan, but this gave me the chance to listen to some college football. It also helped develop my mind’s capacity for conceptualizing and visioning.

Once I reached the 4th grade, I began to participate in “**organized**” football. Physical education was a “requirement” for all kids in school and football was one of the 6-week modules for boys (we also had wrestling, basketball, and track...baseball and golf were available in the summer for those who wanted to participate). The high school coaches (Rex Edgar, Gary Kirtley and others) would coach us through some basics but, the games were played during the half-time of high school football games. I believe there were four teams (Lions, Colts, Bears, Browns)...players from 4th, 5th, 6th grades were assigned to a particular team and we played 2 or 3 games. My strongest memories from this period are (1) some intimidation from playing with older kids (when I was in the 4th grade) and, (2) special sense of worth given we were playing on the “big stage”, under lights, and in front of a crowd. An adjustment for me was that, for the first time in my football experiences, I wasn’t the “coach”...I was fine with this but, remember thinking of several plays and position assignments I would have called if I was in charge.

After we played our organized game at half-time (in some cases, we played before the high school game), we moved to an area just south of the end-zone and played some “backyard” football.

The vision of “Maroon Pride” gains clarity...

In Junior High our practices were held on the lot just east of the Industrial Arts building.

The first position assignments for me were Fullback and Defensive End. I even played some Quarterback.

By the 8th grade I settled into playing Tight End and Defensive End. These would be the positions I would play for the remainder of my “organized” football playing days.

We seemed to have a good group of talented players in my class. There was Gib Dolezal, Garwin DeRoin, Vince Shoop, Danny Adams, Lester Seat, Larry Tabor, Jimmy Atkinson, Ross Chaffin, Dennis Boyd, Pat Bryant just to mention a few...

I don’t recall many particulars about the games we played during our Junior High career but, it seems as though we had more success than failure.

By our freshmen year we were all anxious to move up and play some high school ball. The Perry High School program was enjoying lots of success and the possibility of joining in on the growing tradition of “Maroon Pride” was very attractive.

High School ball...

My sophomore year was a key “milestone”...we would be “rookies” but, at least we would now be playing with the “big boys”! The seniors on the team were a very talented group...Mickey Ripley, Mark Passow, Lenny Sadler, Charlie Waren, Mike Bontrager, Randy Hillis,...I could earn one of those cool letter jackets!!

Our team went 8-2...impressive given we played teams like Guthrie, Blackwell, Edmond, Stillwater, and Choctaw...However, we did not qualify for the State Playoffs as we were not the District Winner (and during this time, only the District Winner qualified for State). Mickey Ripley made All-State and earned a scholarship to play at OU. A special, personal highlight for me was to catch a pass from Mickey (against Blackwell) and run for a TD...my first TD as a high school player.

Part of being a “rookie” was to be on the receiving side of some “hazing”...the upperclassmen would find ways to give us rookies a hard time...things like making sure all of the hot water was gone before we got to shower, going last to get a drink of water during one of our short practice breaks...

Practices were tough and demanding. Our coaches didn’t believe much in the use of “stuffed dummies” so, we sophomores got to line up as the “scout” team and go up against the junior-senior starters. Lots of bumps and bruises but, we learned to be tough!

We didn’t get much playing time but, it was great to be on the team and to enjoy the success!

Mickey Ripley...

*Speaking of **Mickey Ripley**...Mickey might have been the best all-around athlete to have played at Perry during my lifetime...He made All-State in football, was a State Champion wrestler, made All-State in baseball, and played in the State Golf Tournament (all in the same Senior year).*

Mickey wasn't fast, big, or exceptionally strong...his greatest assets were (1) love of sports; (2) knowledge of the sport; (3) skill development; (4) decision-making; ...

Mickey was my first sports idol (as far as a person who was more like a peer...someone my age...)...He was also a friend of mine and had included me in the backyard games, trading card activity, etc. even though I was two grades younger than him. He was a Yankee fan and I was a Cardinal fan but, this made the card trading more worthwhile for each of us (of course, with Mickey being intelligent and older than me, I am sure he was able to get much more value in Yankee cards from me than I was Cardinal cards from him.

*The most special aspect of influence I gained from Mickey was the appreciation for the importance of the “**mental aspect**” in sports. Attitude, thinking, and decision-making do make a difference!*

FCA Camp...significant “enlightenment”!

My junior year wasn't as positive as my sophomore year...the Senior Class on our team wasn't near as strong as the previous group of Seniors...We did have Abe Sears (a “stud” athlete with special talent for baseball...he would sign with the Los Angeles Dodgers after his senior year at Perry) and Bill Luttrell (Bill made All-State and would go on to wrestle for OU). It appeared I might get to start at one of the End positions so I was excited...however, during one of our scrimmage games I got injured...I had jumped up to catch a pass (from my cousin Gib who was playing QB) and when I came down I landed directly on my right hip...the injury would be diagnosed as a “hairline” fracture...

The injury would keep me out of action until mid-season or later...Our team finished 5-5 and, needless to say, we did not win our District.

The summer after my junior year I had the opportunity to attend an **FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes)** camp in Ft. Collins, Colorado...this was exciting to me for three reasons: (1) I loved Colorado...the cool, clean air...the mountains...the special “blue” sky; (2) this was a camp where sports was part of what we would be focused on ...several pro and college athletes and coaches would be there as speakers, huddle leaders, or participants...I loved sports; (3) Christianity was going to be a focus...even at a young age I had a theory that it was (is) possible to love sports and be a Christian at the same time...this camp would let me experience this possibility.

Upon arriving at the Camp we were divided up and placed into a “Huddle” (group of 15-20 high school athletes) and assigned to a “Huddle Leader” ...My Huddle Leader was Homer Rice...I was very excited about this assignment as **Homer Rice** was an assistant football coach from OU and at this time I was a big OU fan...My experience at Camp was wonderful.

The “talk” that really mattered...

God placed His hands directly on me...I was blessed to hear some outstanding Christian men and college athletes “witness” about God and the connection of Christian faith to life as an athlete...I heard grown men and young men (about 500 or so) from all over the U.S. sing Christian hymns...unbelievable experience. I got to participate in a variety of sports (volleyball, basketball, touch football, etc.) with kids from different high schools, towns and states...

*The most important experience I had at Camp was to “hear” **Coach Rice** speak to us in our huddle. I am sure he spoke about many things but the one “talk” he gave that I will always remember was about “making good decisions about big matters”...one part of this “talk” was about making a good decision about who you were going to date and/or marry. The meaning I took was “to change your current approach (which for most young men the traditional approach was centered on ‘external’ criteria like the ‘looks’ of the girl)” ...”you need to identify the values that are truly good, Christian, and lasting...then, go back home and see if you can identify a mother (who has a daughter) who represents these values through the way she lives...if this mother has a daughter this is where you might want to focus your efforts for dating and marriage”. Even before I left Camp I began to think hard on this message. Almost immediately **Betty Sadler’s** name and image came to mind. Betty represented strong Christian values (she was a “strong” Catholic)...she was an excellent mother for her and J.D.’s 6 kids (Lenny, one of the boys was one of my close friends)...she was supportive for her husband J.D. as he was the sole “bread-winner” for the family (he was the manager of accounting and finance for the Ditch Witch® company in Perry).*

*Best of all, she had a daughter who was my age, **Mary Louise!!***

A new “Game Plan”...Mary Louise Sadler

I couldn't wait to get back home and begin implementing my plan for dating Mary Louise and someday marrying her...the challenge I would face immediately was that Mary Louise had no idea of my plan and no idea or desire to date me (let alone marry me some day). I prayed (on the way back from Colorado to Perry) that God give me a “sign” (I didn't expect a “sign” we humans typically look for with our visual senses) of some type as to whether my plan was “right” and did it fit His plans for me. The “sign” came in the form of “intuition”...a feeling in my heart...I was cautious to take it immediately as His “sign” because I knew my emotions and thoughts were powerful and that they would potentially “bias” or “filter” my ability to pick up on His “sign”.

Implementation of my “plan” to date Mary Louise began soon after I returned from Camp...even though I was quite nervous, I approached her and asked her out for a date. I won't cover the “rest of the story” in this writing but, the bottom line is that Mary Louise and I have now been married for over 37 years! Thanks be to God!!

The above synopsis on the FCA Camp relates to “Football” in that it was “Football” that created my attitude about going to Camp and about being open and receptive to Coach Rice...through God's Grace I loved football, I was “ready” for Camp and for Coach Rice to serve as His conduit to me...

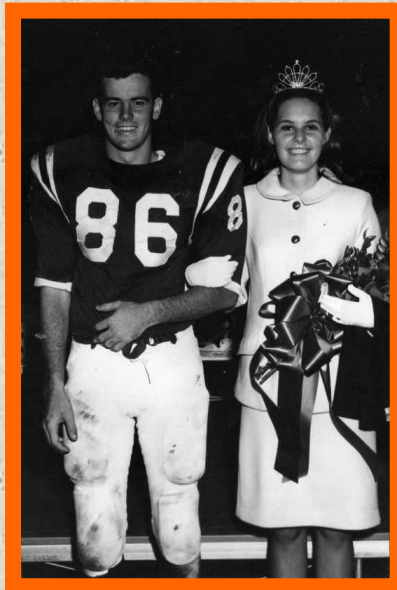
So, for me, there is no need for more proof for the theory of the connection that may exist between sports and Christianity.

My senior year...

The summer of 1967 was one where I really gained an appreciation for just how quickly time can pass...My senior year was near...my last year of playing football in High School was immediately in front of me. Gib, Ross, and I (along with a few others who weren't quite as committed to high school football as we were) dedicated to working out all summer...we ran, we threw and caught passes, etc. with lots of discipline...I was in the best shape ever going into a football season.

The season began and we started off strong...we won our first few games and grew in confidence that we could win them all and go to State.

It was a blessing to be named one of the three Captains for the team (and selected to Crown the Homecoming Queen)...Mary Louise was selected Homecoming Queen and this set up a great experience for me (and for her from a different perspective I am sure). Below is a photograph of Mary Louise and me at Homecoming.



Senior Year Team Results

FOOTBALL

1967

This is your team. It will be what you make it.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Position _____

Class _____

The only way to build a great team is:

1. Good Hard Work (the team that makes the fewest mistakes wins.)
2. Good Team Work (It takes 100% effort by every man, every play.)
3. Hard Work (It takes hard work and sacrifice to build a winning team and if we don't play to win, why do we keep score?)

Schedule

Date	Place	Opponent	Perry H.S. Score	Quarters Played	Opponents Score
Sept. 8	H	Fairview	7	4	0
Sept. 15	T	Kingfisher	13	4	6
Sept. 22	T	Cushing	0	4	10
Sept. 29	H	Western H.	21	4	0
Oct. 6	H	Pawnee (HC)	36	4	6
Oct. 13	T	Carl Albert	21	4	7
Oct. 20	H	Blackwell	14	4	0
Oct. 27	T	Guthrie	28	4	14
Nov. 3	H	Yukon	13	4	26
Nov. 10	H	Woodward	26	4	13

My playing days are numbered...

During one of our football practices prior to the Homecoming game (versus Pawnee...we won) I had my helmet knocked off playing defensive end and was hit directly in the face by two or three other defensive players doing their job of “gang tackling”...My right, front tooth was broken off about three fourths of the way up and the nerve exposed to air...very painful. The dentist (Dr. Busby) pulled the nerve and put a cap on the remainder of my tooth...The cap would come off from time to time and I was nervous it would come off while I was delivering a “homecoming” kiss to Mary Louise. It didn’t and things went great.

Our first real challenge would be Cushing. We played them in Cushing and they were an outstanding team...We lost 10-0 in a hard-fought game...I was knocked unconscious trying to tackle their giant running back, Butch Owens...I was not “out” too long but, enough that our coaches believed I had suffered a concussion...I ended up lying in the back seat of Dad and Mom’s car (instead of riding on the bus) for the return trip to Perry.

We also lost to Yukon and ended up the season at 8-2. Our final game was against Woodward and by winning we were left with a positive feeling about our High School football experiences even though we did not win District.

Each of the coaches I experienced while playing at Perry were influential. However, **Coach Rex Edgar** was the most powerful influence...he is the “model” I referenced in deciding to coach.

I had the opportunity to go play football at a few small colleges (like Panhandle State) but, didn’t have any true scholarship offers. I wasn’t sure if I wanted to go to one of these schools and play but, the real decision making factor for me on where to go to college was related to my plans for dating and marrying Mary Louise. Mary Louise was going to attend Oklahoma State.

From “playing” the game to studying the game...

I decided to go to OSU. My football playing days were over (except that I played Intramural football for the Acacia fraternity for 2 years at OSU).

So, my interest in football would now shift from playing to observing.

The OSU Cowboys were now my favorite team and I went to several of their games while at OSU. It was inexpensive to go (students could get in free sometimes and for other games you could buy an inexpensive all-sports pass). The Cowboys were not a premier college football team in those days. They were much better on defense than offense (Phil Cutchin and Jim Stanley were the head coaches while I was at OSU). They had to be creative on offense to have any success at all.

Following OSU football was an experience that really drove home my appreciation for the “underdog”.

This is when I also developed a strong, competitive attitude toward OU. OU was one of the premier college football programs and were always favored against OSU.

While at OSU I had the opportunity to watch players like Walt Garrison, Gayle Sayers, John Riggins, John Hadl, Howard Twilley, Jerry Rhome, Steve Owens, and others play.

It was during this time that I began to develop a bias toward defense.

Thank God, she said “yes”!!

Growing up I remember many people (including my dad and granddad) suggesting that I would someday make a good lawyer. Therefore, while at OSU I held onto the thought that I would get a Bachelor’s Degree and then, go somewhere to law school. I didn’t think being a criminal lawyer was a potential fit so I decided I would someday be a corporate lawyer. I majored in Business Administration. But I always had a feeling deep inside that there should be a way to keep a connection between what I would do to make a living and the sport (and my love) of football.

In November of my sophomore year at OSU I **proposed to Mary Louise (I hid a ring inside a drinking cup while at the Sandy’s restaurant and handed it to her as I proposed). Thank God she said “yes”. We were married on June 9th, 1970. May 25th, 1972 we were blessed with Amy, our first child. Man did I now feel more pressure for the expectations of responsibility of family.**

In the spring of ’72 I took the LSAT (Law School Admittance Test) and scored well enough to get accepted at OU and OCU.

At the end of August ’72 I finished my Bachelor’s and began deciding on where I wanted to go to Law School. I have always been one to want to hurry things up and finish them early...OCU offered an “accelerated” law program where I could finish in 2 years versus 3 or 4 at OU. Easy decision for me...I chose OCU.

“That’s great but, you gotta want to be something...”

Mary Louise and I traveled to Oklahoma City to look for an apartment to live in and to officially enroll and get books, etc. While standing in one of the OCU buildings I had a strong sensation (thought and gut feeling) that I didn’t really want to be a lawyer. I looked at Mary Louise and said, “Mary Louise, I know this may sound crazy but, I don’t want to be a lawyer”. I will never forget the look in her eyes and my amazement of how cool and calm she remained as she said, “John, that is ok but, you do need to be something...what do you want to be?” I told her I wanted to be a football coach. She said, “That’s great but, you just graduated with a business degree and don’t have any of the hours for being a teacher or coach.” I told her we would go back to OSU and I would visit with my advisor (Dr. Walter Starks). I understood some might be disappointed about my decision but the long-term prospects of following a personal dream were stronger than what others might think.

We drove back to Stillwater and I went in to talk to **Dr. Starks**. He was a great guy and someone who I greatly respected...after visiting for a while he told me he thought we could do something...specifically, he said he would design a special plan for me to get a Master’s Degree in Business Education...this would allow me to get a Master’s with 39 hours of credit and include the hours for student teaching. I could finish in 1 calendar year!

“Called to serve” and the calling to act on ambition...

The Vietnam War was in progress at this time and I had drawn #76 in what they called the “Lottery Draft”. What this meant for me was that I would be “called up for service” sooner than most. I did receive notice in the mail and anxiety set in...I considered myself a loyal U.S. Citizen and in no way would dodge my responsibility to serve. However, I have just gotten stared on my Master’s...We have Amy to care for...I am frightened about the odds of being killed or seriously injured if I have to serve on the “frontline”.

I put my active, creative mind to work and began to develop a plan on how I might (1) delay my service until after finishing school or, (2) go into the Service via Officer Candidate School. I didn’t really like the third option which was to sign up to serve with the National Guard.

The Noble County Draft Board granted me an opportunity to state my case for a “temporary extension” for my service start date. My case was primarily on the grounds that I was married, we had a child, and I only lacked a few months for finishing my degree. I was granted an extension to the end of May.

Good fortune (for me) would have it that the Draft was discontinued about 30 days prior to the end of my extension. Those who were “drafted” and due to serve would now be excused from reporting for duty.

The Vietnam War would begin coming to an end.

While this situation gave me a sense of relief I do believe I would have served loyally had the end of May arrived before the Draft was discontinued.

Go west young man...

Toward the end of my Master's I began the process of gaining employment as a Teacher-Coach. I had a great attitude about teaching and coaching...I had two degrees...I was a Christian and "good" guy...so, surely someone would hire me to teach and coach...

My "student teaching" assignment was at Perry High School. I served with Ray Nissen and Terry Leonard both of whom were very helpful and influential.

Guymon was looking for a teacher-coach...I applied and got the job.

Mary Louise and I packed up and moved to Guymon...Guymon is a 5 -hour drive from Perry but, for us young folks didn't seem to be any big deal...We found a simple duplex to rent that was about 2 blocks from the School. The Head Coach at Guymon was Earl Overton. He told me I would be "assisting" with High School football, a junior-high assistant, assistant basketball coach and the head coach of 8th grade track. I would be teaching geography and civics. My annual salary would be approximately \$8,000.

I admire and appreciate Earl...it is a good thing he didn't know that I knew so little of the discipline of football...the only thing I knew was I loved to play and watch the game plus my memory of what we had "run" while I played at Perry. Earl was an excellent "mentor" ...he taught me a lot about the game and he helped me remain confident about myself as I learned.

Your wife will have the toughest job...

To learn as much as I could, I volunteered to help with anything that needed done. The coaches quickly took advantage of this and assigned me to “scout” and “get film developed” along with my normal coaching responsibilities.

It was at Guymon that I began to relate to what I had heard experienced coaches talk about when they told me, “You better make sure you are ready for the amount of time and energy this job requires and that your wife is supportive because she will be on her own most of the time”. Our coaches (at least the High School football staff) worked “day and night” each and every day beginning the second Tuesday of August (that was the official date schools could begin football practices) and ending when the season ended (be that the last regular season game or at the end of playoffs if you were fortunate enough to be in them).

A typical week would be like this:

***Monday**...up by 6:00 or 6:30am...go up to school and get organized for the classes you were responsible for...teach class (in my case, 3-4 different subjects and 5 hours per day)...at 6th hour (2:30pm) you went to the stadium to change into coaching clothes and prepare for football practice/game...Coaching football from 2:45pm until practice ended (usually around 4:30 or 5:00pm)...if there was a Junior Varsity game that night you would be a coach at that game...if you were fortunate enough to have the game at home, you might get home by 10:30pm that night.*

Typical work week...

Tuesday...same schedule except you would typically attend the Junior High game that was going on. Also, Tuesdays after practice is when the High School coaches would meet to finalize the game plan for Friday night.

Wednesday...same class and practice schedule but, no Junior Varsity or Junior High game to attend...instead, you got to attend the Quarterback Club meeting (local fans organization and support for the football teams).

Thursday...same class/teaching schedule but, shorter football practice (in shorts and helmets versus full pads...mainly “walking through” the game plan and assignments...there would be a Junior High game to attend.

Friday...same class/teaching schedule....no practice...however, we (coaches and players) did not go home...we stayed at the school or stadium so our players could rest and make final mental and motivational preparation for the night’s game. If we had a “road” or away game we would load up on the bus and travel to the site we would play on...For Guymon this road trip might involve 3-5 hours on a bus and traveling across state lines (if we played someone in Texas, Kansas, or Colorado)....coaching the game and then, after the game I would get to take the film to Oklahoma City (Edmond actually) to have it developed for our coaches to review, etc. The drive to Edmond from Guymon was over 4 hours...and it typically took the company 2 hours or so to get your film developed...so, it might be 6:00am or later on Saturday before I could get the film back to our coaches.

Typical work week (continued)...

I would then go home to say hello to Mary Louise and Amy (if they were up) and lie down to sleep for a few hours.

Saturday...Once I got up from sleeping, I would go up to the stadium and watch some film with the coaches...some of the coaches would skip watching film that day so they could take a player/s to a college game (if they were being “recruited” to play by OU, OSU or some small college). After some film-watching I would go back home and try to watch some college football on TV. I would play some with Amy and then go to bed.

Sunday was supposed to be Church day and a day with the family. I tried to make it this way but wasn't as good at it as I needed to be. Mary Louise, being a good, strong Catholic was very disciplined at going to Mass (and taking Amy with her)...I was “hit and miss” at going with them. Time, experience and maturity would eventually change this...I “converted” to Catholicism in 1982 and this commitment was a great thing for me and my family.

It is easy to see how with this schedule my wife would “be on her own” most of the time. Mary Louise was (is) such a great person that she accepted the situation in support of me. One of the things that made it a little easier for her to accept and understand was that she had five brothers, three of which seemed to share my love for sports.

To move up you have to move...

We were in Guymon for 9 months...in the coaching profession it is well understand that “if you want to move up in the profession, you will need to move around”. Neil Craig had just taken over as head coach at Shawnee and was in the process of hiring his staff...I knew of Neil through Gib (Neil was from Guymon) and though knowing Neil’s dad, Virgil...Virgil was a farmer in the Guymon area and was very involved in the Guymon FCA...I was the high school FCA leader in Guymon and worked with Virgil from time to time...I was always impressed with Virgil as he had dedicated 10 acres harvest for “God’s 10 acres” and given proceeds from crop sales to FCA. Anyway, I contacted Neil and asked if I could apply for one of his staff positions...He had just committed one position (defensive coordinator) to Gib. I interviewed and got hired...A great opportunity...Neil was close to my age and a very smart football guy...he was a Christian and involved with FCA...working with my cousin Gib would be fun (he is my age, a Christian and involved with FCA). I would be the linebackers-defensive ends coach.

So, we moved to Shawnee...The work hours were roughly the same (or more) but, I had more coaching responsibility and the opportunity to prepare more aggressively to become a head coach someday (my ultimate goal).

While in Shawnee, Mary Louise and I were blessed with Josh and Sarah. Mary Louise had extra duty taking care of 3 kids while I was almost totally engaged in football and school.

The opportunity to become a Head Coach...

Mary Louise didn't really enjoy Shawnee but, I did. Gib left to take the head coaching job at Stroud our second year in Shawnee...this created the opportunity for me to serve as Defensive Coordinator and Coach of the Secondary.

*After our third year in Shawnee I thought I was ready to pursue being a head coach. I found out that **Larry Coker** (I knew Larry some from Coaches Clinics, etc.) was leaving Fairfax for Claremore. **Fairfax** had won two straight State Championships and even though they were classified as a small school (town of 1200 and classified as Class B) there success and program were well respected by most Oklahoma coaches. I called Larry to discuss the situation and find out what type of players might be returning, what the fan support was like, what the superintendent of schools was like, etc. Larry said a nucleus of players were returning but that there were 4 or 5 key players graduating. He said there would definitely be pressure as fans and kids had gotten used to success recently...the one thing Larry said that stuck with me was, "John, in starting out as a head coach you have to decide if: (1) you want to "build" a program that has been down or, (2) go into a program that has already been successful and sustain the success with your own 'stamp'".*

I decided to apply for the Fairfax job (Neil Craig was very supportive and helpful but, many of the other coaches and people I knew were hesitant or a little discouraging (they thought I was setting myself up for failure).

Head Coach, living on a farm, ...this is it!!

Felix Sikes was the superintendent of schools for Fairfax and he was the main person conducting the interview.

I lacked head coaching experience and that was the primary consideration from a “weakness” or “negative” side...However, I was “bright” (according to Felix), of good character, and I had experience with the “Houston Veer” offense (this split-back, option offense is what Larry Coker had installed and had success with the past two years).

Felix Sikes did give me the job and our family moved to Fairfax. We rented a farm house from Donald Brown...it was located approximately 1 mile from Fairfax and a couple of miles north of the Arkansas River. Donald had cattle, hay, etc. that he took care of while we rented the house but, it was nice to feel like we were “farmers”.

I met with the Fairfax players and tried to set the proper stage up front that this would be our program and not the Larry Coker program...we would keep important things in place from Larry’s reign but, we would be making changes in line with my vision and what I thought would help us even be better...sounds great but, difficult to implement into reality!!

Our first game was against Ponca City JV...Ponca City (coached by Kenny Ray) was a town of about 50,000 and they had over 100 players out for high school football. Kenny was a good coach and I knew this game would be tough no matter who they brought to play. Man, was I right!

Dreams meet reality...

We ended up losing to Ponca City...22-23. In the process our tight-end and middle linebacker, Charles Crosby went down to injury in the first half...a dislocated shoulder. Charles was 6'5" weighed 210 lbs and was fast (State Champion in the 220)...also, our starting quarterback, Craig Lance twisted an ankle and we had to use a sophomore to sub in...to top it off, our main running back, Lonnie Bellows got a bruised thigh and didn't play much of the second half. These unfortunate excuses didn't cause us to lose this game, but they did factor into the "panic" in my mind about what we were going to do for the remaining games.

This was the first time the Fairfax senior players had ever lost a high school game! It was the first loss Fairfax had suffered in 31 games. It was my first game as a head coach...I immediately began to cry when I saw Mary Louise, Dad and Mom after the game.

After staying up all night thinking about things I arrived at the notion that this might be an opportunity after all. I would use this as reference for why we needed to let go of the past and what things had been done under Larry Coker...this is our team and we need to be champions our own way! The players seemed to accept this idea and were open to any changes we wanted to make. The biggest change early on was to change from a 5-2 defensive alignment to a 5-3. There would be other changes but, not as drastic as this.

Our practices went well in preparation to "bounce back" for the second game and I was confident we could earn our first victory. We were scheduled to play Sperry in Fairfax.

Head Coach...What a beginning!

The good Lord had another “surprise” for me...just before game time (while our team was on the field stretching, etc.) a highway patrol car pulled into the gate entrance to the field. A patrolman stepped out and immediately located me...I wasn't sure what was going on but, it was odd that we were within 20 minutes of game time and hadn't seen Sperry yet. The patrolman informed me that there had been a bus wreck (the Sperry team was on board) and that the game would need to be cancelled. Man! We lost our first game and now I have to inform the players and fans (Fairfax fans were rabid fans and filled the stands early) that we would cancel this game. The good news was that no one from Sperry was hurt seriously!

What a start as head coach!

Well, we did re-group and we did win...we won 12 straight games which put us into the **State Championship finals.**

We played Okeene. Okeene was ranked number 1 and we were ranked 4th. The game was played in Enid on December 9 (1977).

The temperature at game time was in the 20's...there was a strong north wind (about 20-25 miles per hour). The field was dry.

The first half was a “back and forth” struggle for the most part. We did score on a long run by Bellows but, it was called back for a penalty. Eventually, both teams would score and the half ended up tied 7-7.

An opportunity presents itself...

The second half was very unusual. If my memory is correct, Okeene kicked off to us to start the half. The ball never crossed mid-field again until the last play of the game. We would try and advance the ball but would not have much success (we would either fail to get a first and ten or would fumble/throw an interception). The good news...our defense did a fantastic job...we would keep Okeene from scoring even though every snap they took started on our side of mid-field. I believe there were a total of 53 snaps between the two teams in the half.

As the game was winding down late in the 4th Quarter, Okeene had the ball and were driving. With about 17 seconds to go they were on our 23- yard line. I was confident they were not going to be able to settle for a field goal as they were going into the wind and it would have been a 40 yard attempt...I thought they might try a pass but, their strength was running the ball...The most logical thought seemed to be that they were going to run another play and if they didn't score would settle for going into overtime. In high school football at this time, overtime meant that each team would have the ball on the opponents 10- yard line and get four snaps to score. We were at a timeout and I was conversing with our coaches about what to do...we decided to call a LB stunt with hopes of stopping the run or putting pressure on their QB if they had a pass called.

Okeene snapped the ball and it was going to be a running play to their tailback...our defense caused a fumble (Jim Hight was the main cause and Mick Hutchison recovered the ball) and we recovered.

The Grace of God...818 Lookback pass

Now, there are 3 seconds left...we have the ball and the wind but, we are 77 yards from the end zone. I called a timeout...my first thought was to just have our QB take a snap and a knee and go into overtime...Praise God! I had a new thought...

We had a certain play that we had practiced every day during the year for situations where we needed to score in desperation...We had not been in desperation so we had never used the play in a game. There is no way the opponent would be aware of this play...

I asked Dennis Fine (my main assistant coach) what he thought of the idea. He said, "Coach, it is whatever you want to do." I could distinctly hear someone/s in the crowd yelling, "Coach, just take a knee and let's go into overtime!"

*I don't know exactly why (other than the Grace of God) but, I decided to run the play. I called our QB over and told him, "We are going to run the play we have practiced on for these type of situations." I will never forget the look in his eyes and his reaction..."Coach are you sure this is what we want to do?" I said "yes, but here are some special instructions...I want you to call the play on the sideline and have everyone ready to execute it immediately when we take the field and the referee signals the play ready...I want you to 'eat' the ball if anything goes wrong so we can go into overtime...If you throw the ball make sure you throw it outside and deep so the only person who could possibly catch it would be our receiver...you got that?" So, we called **Rome Split Shotgun 818 Lookback snapping on the quarterback's first signal.***

Foot race to victory!

I gave specific instructions to our QB to “get the team onto the field and lined up as quickly as we break from the sideline...have the center snap the ball on your first signal!”

We called the play and took the field...as I looked at our opponent coming on the field and lining up I sensed they were thinking (like many would) that we were just going to down the ball and go into overtime. Their secondary were lined up at normal depth and a little confused when they saw our formation. Before the defense could respond we snapped the ball.

Our quarterback pump faked to the receivers on the right and then looked back to his left. The formation had Charles Crosby (yes, he is the big, fast tight-end who had dislocated his shoulder the first game of the year...we had strapped his arm and shoulder down and he had played the last five games of the year basically “one-handed”). By now the game clock had expired (but, the play was underway).

Charles had a step or two on the Okeene cornerback...Craig (our QB) threw a perfect pass and Charles caught it in full running stride. Now it would be a “foot race” between Charles (State Champion in the 220) and the Okeene free-safety (State Champion sprinter). The free-safety would have the angle working for him and he hit Charles at about the Okeene 10- yard line (against the out-of-bounds line)...Charles stumbled but put a hand down and fell into the end zone...**FAIRFAX WINS!!!**

The State Championship Game...



Scene from 1977 State Championship Game



*State Championship Game
Half-Time "Talk"*

Fuel for a lifetime...

Things got crazy...the crowd (mainly Fairfax) was coming onto the field to celebrate...the referee was telling me that to make it official we would have to execute the extra-point attempt...I told him there is no way we are going to get people off the field nor did I think it was right to make Okeene have to do it.

I immediately ran to shake hands with the Okeene coach (Bruce Hendrickson) and then searched out the Okeene tailback who had fumbled the ball with 3 seconds left in the game. I told the player to keep his head up, that it wasn't his fault, and that there were plenty of other plays that could have made a difference...I don't think this helped him but, I hope it lifted just a little of his disappointment.

Mary Louise, Dad and Mom, Lenny and others grabbed and congratulated me...the players lifted me up on their shoulders and carried me around on the field...An unbelievable experience and blessing from God!

Having the opportunity to experience this game and victory would definitely provide me "fuel" for the passion to coach for a lifetime!

Late Fairfax Heroics Like Replay to Okeene

By GARY SHUTT
World Sports Writer

Had Okeene coach Bruce Hendrickson had time enough to think about the situation he might have expected Fairfax' unbelievable winning touchdown Friday night.

Fairfax quarterback Craig Lance connected with tight end Charles Crosby for a 77-yard desperation touchdown pass on the last play of the game.

The scoring pass gave Fairfax the Class B state championship for the third straight year on the strength of a thrilling 13-7 victory over Okeene.

THE SIMILARITIES between Friday's Fairfax victory and Okeene's last trip to the state finals in 1974 are striking.

Davenport, the last team to win three consecutive state crowns, won its third in December of 1974 with a 41-yard scoring pass with 19 seconds to play.

Davenport quarterback Kent Walker tossed a 41-yard strike to Jackie Wilson to shock Okeene, 26-22. Davenport trailed, 12-22, with less than five minutes left in the game when Walker passed to Mark Holland for 35 yards and a touchdown with 4:07 to play. That left Okeene ahead 22-19.

The storybook finish for the Red Devils capped a storybook career for 17 seniors.

FAIRFAX' SENIOR class lost only one game and tied three in six years of football. The seniors were un-

Playoff Road

CLASS A

FIRST ROUND

Chisholm 7, Laverne 6; OC Millwood 36, Mansum 6; Watonga 41, Beaver 0; OC St. Mary's 21, Hobart 14; Newcastle 26, Fox 20; Wynnewood 12, Healdton 7; Comanche 14, Blanchard 7; Tishomingo 24, Plainview 0; Mannford 19, Tonkawa 6; Oologah 14, Salina 0; Beggs 33, Hominy 16; Berryhill 10, Commerce 8; Haskell 21, Prague 20; Roland 20, Stigler 6; Stroud 45, Warner 13; Wilburton 22, Westville 9.

SECOND ROUND

OC Millwood 14, Chisholm 7; Watonga 38, OC St. Mary's 7; Newcastle 27, Wynnewood 10; Comanche 32, Tishomingo 0; Mannford 32, Oologah 27; Beggs 47, Berryhill 13; Haskell 24, Roland 9; Stroud 16, Wilburton 14.

THIRD ROUND

Watonga 29, OC Millwood 7; Comanche 25, Newcastle 20; Beggs 57, Mannford 22; Stroud 19, Haskell 8.

SEMIFINALS

Watonga 21, Comanche 7; Beggs 31, Stroud 13.

FINALS

Watonga 20, Beggs 0.

CLASS B

FIRST ROUND

Lamont 14, Boise City 9; Okeene 47, Geary 14; Pond Creek 8, Texoma 0; Mooreland 9, Thomas 7; Tipton 19, Waurika 6; Minco 17, Mavsville 0; Hollis 27, Ringling 21; Davis 37, Rush Springs 0; Fairfax 33, Perkins 0; Sequoyah (Claremore) 28, Fairland 27; Crescent 55, Shidler 6; Adair 35, Quapaw 22; Liberty 48, Maud 16; Kingston 6, Gore 0; Dewar 35, Oilton 0; Allen 14, Panama 12.

SECOND ROUND

Okeene 50, Lamont 20; Mooreland 27, Pond Creek 16; Minco 17, Tipton 14; Davis 20, Hollis 6; Fairfax 32, Sequoyah (Claremore) 15; Crescent 34, Adair 0; Liberty 36, Kingston 8; Dewar 46, Allen 6.

THIRD ROUND

Okeene 32, Mooreland 9; Minco 19, Davis 13; Fairfax 24, Crescent 6; Dewar 7, Liberty 0.

SEMIFINALS

Okeene 29, Minco 21; Fairfax 28, Dewar 0.

FINALS

Fairfax 13, Okeene 7.

beaten in three years of junior high ball (they tied three games as freshmen).

Fairfax was 15-0 in both 1975 and '76 as it won state crowns. The lone loss came in this year's season opener, 22-23 to Ponca City's JV team.

First-year Fairfax coach John Dolezal had said all season the Ponca loss helped his team. The Devils finally found out what it meant to lose.

Obviously, they didn't care for the experience. They won their remaining games to become the eighth school in state history to win three straight titles.

ADA (55-56-57), Thomas (55-56-57), Enid (64-65-66), Balko (65-66-67), Tulsa Washington (67-68-69), Clinton (67-68-69), and Davenport (72-73-74) are the other three-timers.

One of the spectators at cold Plainsmen Field in Enid Friday was Larry Coker, who coached this year's seniors as sophomores and juniors before departing for Claremore.

"It didn't surprise me that they won, although I thought they'd win in overtime," said Coker. "I felt like they had the talent to win again this year."

Crosby and Lance, along with tackle Jody Tillman and halfback Loney Bellows, started as sophomores on Fairfax' first state title club.

THEY ARE AN extraordinary quartet from an extraordinary class from a small school. With the loss of 17 seniors, Fairfax will be hard pressed to become the state's first four-time state champ next year.

Beggs' talented class of seniors saw their careers end in defeat. With Ivan Doakes hobbled, Beggs couldn't overcome a super Watonga team and four fumbles.

"They really came at us," said Bill Wylie of Watonga's big, unbeaten Class A state champions. "They have a fine team. Our kids were ready to play and they played their hearts out. I'm really proud of them."

Every “dog” has its day!!



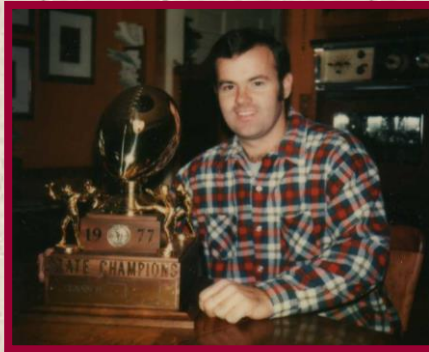
*Carried Off the Field
...State Champions!*

Thanks be to God!

In coaching you will experience “ups” and “downs”, “wins” and “losses”...As my dad used to say, “Every dog has its day.”

This day this ‘dog’ had a day that would create a positive memory for life!

Fairfax Red Devils...1977 Champs!



Sitting in J.D. and Betty's kitchen with the State Championship Trophy (this was taken on Saturday, Dec. 10th, 1977)

1977

FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL
"Red Devils"
STATE CHAMPIONS
KAW VALLEY CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

1977

ROW 1: Head Coach John Dolezal, (12) Craig Lance, (15) Tom Lynn, (20) Todd Crabtree, (21) Mark Lynn, (22) Greg Renfro, (25) Raven Sterling, (30) Jimmy Hight, (31) John Holloway
 ROW 2: Manager Mark Fine, (32) Loney Bellows, (40) Mick Hutchison, (41) Mark Paalay, (42) Tim Davis, (60) Mark Holing, (61) Brad Irons, (63) Mike Clover, (65) John Grigg, Manager Ronnie White
 ROW 3: Asst. Coach Dennis Fine, (66) Brad Culver, (69) Pat Boone, (69) Nick Irons, (64) Ray Hunt, (65) James Lockett, (66) Charles Crosby, (66) Jimmy Farren, (67) Mithuel Riley, (71) Scott Ingram, (74) Kevin Standridge, (73) Mike Davis, (73) Sam Cronshaw
 ROW 4: Asst. Coach John Blumaker, (81) David Prater, (86) James Mashburn, (87) Pat Murray, (86) Russell Hurt, (86) Billy Cannon, (70) Jody Tillman, (82) Clinton Staples, (77) Rick Mathis, (76) Mike Burgess, Asst. Coach Gary Klapp, Asst. Coach James Early.

Fairfax Red Devil team plaque

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Time to let go of a dream and get a “real” job...

Shortly after the State Championship game I decided that if I was going to stay on at Fairfax I would need to see some changes made in the football program...one of the changes I wanted to make was to have the ability to have the staff I wanted (versus the one I inherited when I took the job). I went in to talk to Felix Sikes about it and he informed me that due to the tenure of the staff members I may not be able to make any changes. This led me to some serious reflection on my life and the situation.

When I decided to be a coach (and not a lawyer or something else where there is potential for the income to raise a family on one income) I told Mary Louise I would coach for 5 years and then, evaluate to see if I could “afford” to stay in coaching (and allow her to follow her dream which included being home with our children). It had now been 5 years of coaching so it was time to evaluate and decide. After several sleepless nights and some deep, deep thinking, I decided it was time to get out of coaching...Mary Louise and I talked about it and decided that for the time being this is what I would do...we left the option open that once our children were “raised” I might get back into coaching. Of course, Mary Louise, being the “wise” person she is said, “John, if you get out of coaching you will need to do something...what are you going to do?” I told her I was going to contact Rex Edgar, my high school football coach, and ask for his input and advice. Rex had taken a similar path out of coaching and into the business world (he was now the President of First National Bank in Ponca City).

Second guessing...

I called Rex and he offered that I come to work for him...I would be in a “Management Development” program working in different areas of the bank while I gained better insight on what type of business and job I might want to pursue.

*So, we packed up and left for **Ponca City**. I worked in the bank for about a year and a half...overall it was a good experience but, I didn’t see myself in banking (especially in a 3-piece suit everyday and working inside). I really believe that I wouldn’t have liked anything given I was feeling like I had to “give up something very important to me”, football. I decided that I might want to own my own business and that the best business I knew of was the Ditch Witch business (owning a dealership). However, I didn’t have enough experience or money to pursue this idea. I decided to call Gary Bridwell (a Perry boy, 4 or 5 years younger than me...his dad, John owned **Ditch Witch of Oklahoma** and Gary ran the Tulsa Branch). When I told Gary I was considering leaving the bank and that someday I wanted to own a dealership (but didn’t have the experience or money) Gary said to come to work for him...he would put me to work as a salesman and while earning money would teach me more about a dealership, etc.*

*We moved to **Tulsa** in February of 1980. By now I am definitely second guessing my decision to leave the coaching profession. However, I did enjoy working for Gary and did learn a lot about running a dealership. After 3 years of selling I still didn’t have enough capital to purchase a dealership but, I was ready to try.*

I approached Dad about the possibility of helping me obtain the money necessary to buy Ditch Witch of Denver. Dad and I flew up to look at the dealership and visit with Terry Wilcox (Finance-Acct. Manager at the Charles Machine Works, Inc.).

Trying to figure out what I am to do...

It didn't take long for me to get "cold feet". As much as I wanted to own and run a business of my own it didn't appear this was the opportunity. Plus, Terry wasn't sold on the idea that I had access to enough capital.

I shifted my mind to the possibility of going to work at the Charles Machine Works, Inc. (CMW)...this would give me a different (and important) perspective on the Ditch Witch business and it might allow me to save enough money to get a dealership at some point in time.

So, I made contact with Paul Rogers, sales manager at The Charles Machine Works, Inc. Paul said CMW was looking to hire someone for a District Sales Manager position. He also mentioned that with time and experience I may be able to move into the Sales Training department.

It was at this time that I began to question the notion of being a Ditch Witch dealer someday. The prospects of teaching and coaching as a Sales Trainer at CMW begin to be more attractive.

CMW hired me and I started as a District Sales Manager in 1983. We moved to Perry. The timing was good in that J.D. (father-in-law) had announced his plans to retire as the Finance and Accounting Manager at CMW and I had been away from Perry long enough to lose many of the "expectations", etc. that were tied to me growing up there.

Wow...what an opportunity!

It took about a year and a half but, I did wind up as a Sales Trainer...Life was much better for me now. After a couple of years I was given the opportunity to serve as an “internal change agent”...my title was Manager of Corporate Training but, I didn’t have a direct reporting relationship to anyone...this would give me complete freedom to innovate ways to help our company improve with “Teamwork” and “Communications”...I did report to George Albright for budgeting purposes.

Wow! What an opportunity! What a challenge!

But, “what am I supposed to do?”

I decided to take a few weeks to think on it and to educate myself as much as possible. To me, this opportunity was about as good as possible given I was not going to coach football and teach in the classroom (my first true love). However, it would be difficult. I had no “power”, “direction” “job description” or “boss”. How am I going to coach us toward positive change without the normal “tools”?

Jim Roth, our Chief Operating Officer, was a “link” and “informal sponsor”...**Ed Malzahn**, our founder and President, was aware and supportive of the idea for me helping people improve in teamwork and communication. However, both were wise enough to know that my innovation and efforts would be ruined if they “told me what to do”. Plus, they both knew and admitted that this was a task outside of their talent....

Ed told me once (after I had been doing my thing for a year or so), “John, I don’t know exactly what you do or how you do it but, I like what you do.” This gave me the confidence to innovate and go forward.

Influence, Communication and Example...

One of the first things I was involved with in this new role was a “High Performance Teams” program. I did some research on content we might use to help managers and supervisors as they learned to improve the “teamwork” in their work areas. The Wilson Learning company seemed to represent the best fit for our needs and my beliefs about teams and teamwork. I quickly got a hold of the “Creating High Performance Teams” material and began to “tailor” it for our company.

The managers and supervisors of the company were all to go through the “class”. The delivery method most appropriate seemed to be “facilitation”.

I “facilitated” the first sessions. The expectation was that once a manager or supervisor completed the class, he/she would serve as facilitator for another group of employees (or for their own staff if they wanted them to go through the class)...I offered some “Art of Facilitation” courses so managers and supervisors could learn how to “facilitate”.

I also implemented an idea that would create an avenue for all employees to learn...a “voluntary Noon-Time” series of classes...the classes were on topics like: Teamwork, Our Company, Our Products, Our Customers and Markets, Interpersonal Communications, etc. Over time we had over 400 different employees participate.

Learning “on the job” & from some “experts”...

To use “example” in creating change, I decided I should pursue a doctorate degree. This would be evidence for integrity and credibility purposes. I enrolled in the Adult Education program at OSU. I stayed with it until it got to the point where the only classes I lacked (4) were not accessible...they were only offered on a “day-time”, semester basis (like for traditional college students) and there was no way I could justify taking off work that much to go to class.

My next step would be to serve as an “Adjunct Professor” with Southern Nazarene and their “Non-Traditional Adult Bachelor’s and Master’s of Business” program. I taught in this program for 4 semesters. At least those who cared would know I was trying to lead by example.

I used personal influence and relationships with some of the CMW managers to gain their participation in a “Book Study”...we would take a business book and read/discuss on a weekly basis...We started with “The Fifth Discipline” by Peter Senge. There were 10 managers who participated in one or more of these study groups.

My own “education” in the field of organizational development, human resource development, leadership, and change would continue while these other activities were implemented. Some of the most influential “experts” for my learning were: Peter Senge, Peter Koestenbaum, Peter Vaill, Peter Block, and Max DePree...Naturally, my love of football also led me to study football coaches like Lou Holtz, Don Shula, Vince Lombardi, etc.

Learning to coach without “authority”...

After the first year or so I could begin to see some “fruits of my labor”. While the magnitude of “change” was not great, the quality was beginning to become more apparent. I was encouraged but, also anxious. The vision I had for the type and amount of change as contrasted to the “current reality” definitely magnified my “creative tension”.

Jim Roth asked that I sit in on most of his staff meetings and corporate planning sessions...my role was “listener” not “participant”. Can you imagine? I was sitting in listening for hour upon hour as senior managers discussed business and corporate strategy...both very important to me...but, I couldn’t participate. My role was to observe and give feedback as to the “teamwork” and “communication” I witnessed.

I had the ability to do this but, man did it make the managers nervous...they didn’t know why I was in the room and they were fearful that I was doing something and working with Jim or Ed to make the managers change or do something.

Personal influence, example, service and encouragement were about all I had in my “tool box”. It took me quite awhile to adapt to a “coaching” approach without authority, power or sense of control.

I think I need a “sabbatical”..

*Given most of the CMW employees didn't really know or understand my role in the company, I didn't have any tangible “identity” for them to relate to. This was a necessary part of serving as an “objective, innovative” change agent but, it eventually took a toll on my sense of self and connectedness...I began experiencing what is referred to as **anaclitic depression**. Anaclitism relates to the natural psychological dependency humans have for others (that our own existence is recognized and that we are “accepted”). Think of the feelings you develop when you are among a crowd of people you don't really know (and they don't know you) and you find yourself in this setting for an extended period of time.*

Many of the employees at CMW knew who I was as a person. However, they didn't know what I was doing (what my “title” was or what my “job” was). After five years of being in this type of setting my emotional bank account was running low.

*I needed to get refreshed...A **sabbatical** would be helpful. The only problem...our company didn't have a sabbatical program.*

There were some other factors at play in my life at this time (early 1992). Joshua, our son, was in his junior year at Perry High School. When Josh was born, we lived in Shawnee (I was coaching there) and I had thought a lot about the prospects of getting to coach my own son someday. Also, the Perry High School football job had just opened up. So, you couple these factors to my need for refreshment and it leads me to apply for the Perry coaching job.

I love challenges...

I went in to inform Ed Malzahn of my plans. I told Ed that I really enjoyed working at CMW but, I needed to refresh myself. I also shared with him my desire to coach my own son and that the Perry football program needed me. I told Ed my work at CMW was not complete and that someday I would be back. Ed was very understanding and supportive.

Larry Frye, superintendent of Schools in Perry, hired me as Head Football coach and Social Studies teacher.

Leaving employment at CMW for Perry High School would mean a lot of sacrifice for Mary Louise and me...we would take a 50% pay cut, get to pay our health insurance premium, and forego the possibility of annual profit-sharing bonuses. Mary Louise would go to work (outside the home) for the first time since early in our marriage.

Thank God for Mary Louise. She was fully supportive and went to work at Exchange Bank in Perry.

Going into the Perry coaching and teaching job I had decided to use the situation and test some of the theories I had formed over the years about coaching, teaching, and learning. Many people suggested that the students of today were much different than of the past and that I wouldn't be able to approach them in the same manner as in "the good ole days". I love challenges and was even more determined to prove these folks wrong. Students want to learn, value the right type of discipline, and will be accountable for learning!

Strategy to encourage and measure learning...

From a teaching perspective, I would incorporate the use of “measurable learning objectives, expect personal accountability, and utilize “expositions” as the framework to support what the students learned.

From a coaching perspective I would use vision, personal & team goals, and teamwork for fostering development. The emphasis was centered in Discipline, Defense, Determination, and Teamwork.

There is an adage that goes something like this: “Nothing is ever as good as it seems or as bad as it seem...reality is found ‘in-between”’. This served me well as I tried to implement new approaches into current reality.

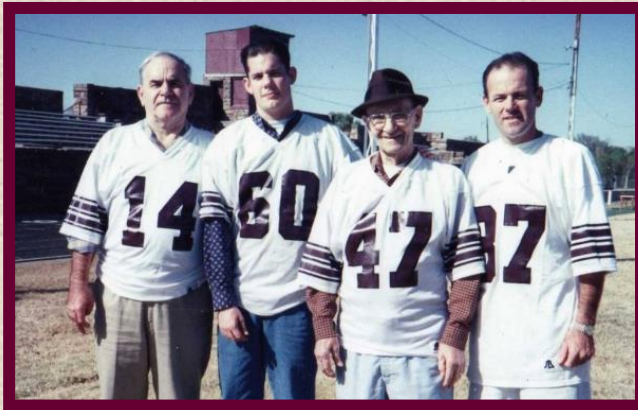
I taught five different subjects during my time in the Perry School system...Government, World Geography, World History, Sociology, and Psychology. All in all in my public- school system teaching experience (Guymon, Shawnee, Fairfax, and Perry) I taught 10 different subjects none of which were in my area of business major in college). The students (the vast majority) took to my approach over time. The use of measurable learning objectives, self-discipline, and expositions did work! Care for the individual, mutual respect and feedback (constructive and developmental) are indeed good things!

Opportunity to coach my own son...a blessing!

The football team won 4 games my first year...as 4th place finishers in our district we did qualify for the state playoffs...we lost to Frederick in the first round. Our second year we went 4-6 and failed to qualify for the playoffs. The third year we improved to 6-4, qualified for the playoffs but, lost in the first round to Spiro.

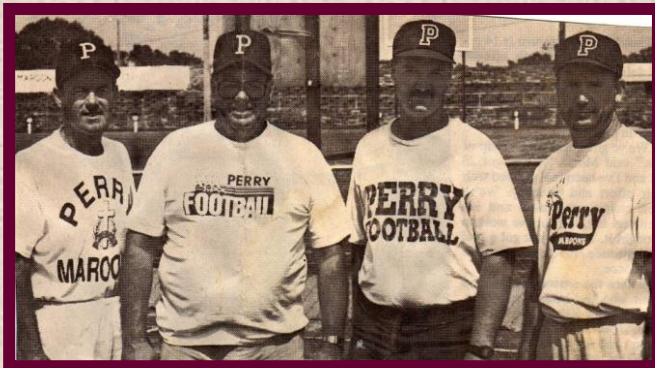
I did get the pleasure of coaching my son, Joshua for his Senior year. Josh handled the situation very well. He was a pleasure to coach and made me feel proud with his enthusiastic effort and positive attitude. Thanks be to God for this blessing!

4 Generations of Dolezals played at Perry...



Dad Joshua Gramps John

Coaching Staff...Perry...1992-94



John Lonnie York Mike Anderson Ralph Baker

It's time to go back...

At the end of my third year I approached Mr. Frye to request the opportunity to serve as Athletic Director. I felt that we could improve the quality of all athletic programs and the experience for the student-athlete through this role.

The conversation didn't go well. Mr. Frye informed me with "I don't believe in teamwork when it comes to the coaches themselves...my philosophy on coaches and the various sports programs is that the strongest shall survive." This was all I needed to hear to figure out where I needed to spend my time...it wasn't under this type of "leadership". I decided to go back to work at CMW.

The Charles Machine Works was hiring for a District Sales Manager and I applied. Kurt Andrews, Sales Manager, and Gene Goley, Regional Sales Manager, were the two people leading the process for CMW. I won't ever forget one of the things Kurt said to me in the interview..."John, I am not sure we need to hire you...you would probably just be here a short time and want to go back into coaching." I will admit, I did leave employment for coaching once and it would be possible again. However, I decided to push back a little...I told Kurt, "none of us know if we will even be alive tomorrow...we don't know if we will be drawn to one setting or another to serve where needed...I want to work here and you need good help so, let's don't worry about what happens down the road when we can approach the opportunity and need in front of us today."

I am a teacher-coach...

I did get the job and went to work as a District Sales Manager in the Eastern Sales Region.

My interest in football would now turn back to being a fan of the OSU Cowboys. Mary Louise and I bought season football tickets and enjoyed “tailgating” and rooting for the Cowboys.

After a year and a half as District Sales Manager Kurt approached me with the opportunity to be Manager of Sales Training. This was great as it brought me closer to serving within my true vocation as teacher-coach.

In 2001 our company combined Sales with Marketing and I reported to Shan Kirtley. I worked for Shan for the next 6 years.

In November of '07 our company implemented a “re-organization” and I joined the Corporate Services department as Manager of Corporate Training. In this role I am again serving as change agent. I am trying to help people learn to act consistently on the value of learning & development. I report to Dave Lamerton and he is very supportive for what I am doing. I work with Kristen McCaul on things like our Leadership Development curriculum, Job Profiling, etc. My “tool box” still consists of influence, service, example and communication. Our vision is Skills for Success and I am enjoying the work a lot.

My love for football remains strong. I am a teacher-coach!

Closing

Football strikes a special chord with me.

Playing football in the backyard, “between the hedges”, and throughout Junior High and Senior High School programs was fun and the lessons learned continue to serve me well.

The positive influence that “shaped” me into more of who I was created to be has come from faith, my wife & family, individuals I played football with, and from many athletes and coaches.

My sense of vocation (the calling to serve)...Being a teacher & coach...has been derived over time through first-hand experience, self-awareness, and feedback from those I have “served”.

My journey continues...my love for football remains strong!

New needs appear each new day and by God’s Grace His will shall be done!