

Tribute to Duane Beamer

(1933-2005)

Duane Beamer was the smartest kid at The Academy at Arcadia. He was almost fatherly to the rest of us, although he was only one year older. At one time or the other, he was the captain of each of the sport's teams, the academic leader of the Academy and the person we all looked up to for leadership. He was funny, clever, intelligent and wise beyond his years. We were kids and he was an adult! Kay (Kieffer) Beamer was his lifelong love, and they were our mother and father while we were at the Academy. Duane always knew the right thing to do...well almost always! I will never forget his leadership while he was the captain of the Arcadia Indians football team during the 1951 season. We weren't very good, but we always gave it our best! Duane was the Right End, Punter, Kicker and one of the best Defensive Players on the team. He also called all of the plays, a rare occurrence for an End, but this just demonstrated the respect our coach, Bob Robinson, had for him.

No one ever thought anything strange about an End calling the signals (the normal task of the quarterback)... because we all knew Duane was the leader. His task was made no less easy for him because he had asthma so bad that he could barely talk in the huddle. He would return to the huddle, panting and say, "Just a minute," we would quiet down and he would whisper the next play. No one EVER questioned his calls, even when his desire to demonstrate his leadership overcame his normally sound judgment.

To wit...

Against one of our biggest rivals and strongest foes, The Vanlue Wildcats, Duane's competitive spirit overcame his better judgment! We kicked off and they marched down the field and scored against us! In the huddle, after the score, Duane said, "I am going to elect to kickoff again and will continue to do so until we stop them from scoring!" This rather dumb idea, in retrospect, seemed right to us at the time and we kicked off again. They scored again! We kicked off again... they scored again! Coach Robinson was going crazy on the sidelines and finally got Duane to elect to receive. We held our own for the rest of the game, probably because the Wildcats were laughing too hard to get off good plays...but Duane's decisions were never questioned...in fact, most of us felt we had left him down! That was the kind of leader he was... we trusted him and believed in him.

After graduation from The Academy, Duane's path and mine were never quite as close again...but my respect for him, and for Kay, never diminished. Duane and Kay were the leaders, the dad and mom, the spirit of The Academy at Arcadia. Duane was the best and brightest and he will be missed. Duane Beamer was the quintessential Captain and he always made the right calls. The Academy at Arcadia beacon is not as bright today as it was when Duane was alive.

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