

"Charles, I think it would be wrong..."

The girl from Boles Home, 1974

## The Pit



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### Part Eight

#### The Pit

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## Goodbye to an Old Friend

It was finished and it was time to turn in the goodies. I didn't want to. Jersey 12 and I had been through far too much together. Jersey 12 had survived the devastating gym fire. Jersey 12 had been with me through the season of glory in 1972. Jersey 12 had been on my back when I was lovestruck over Miss Boles Girl. This red and white shirt meant as much to me as anything I had in my possession.

I sorta felt like I was giving away my first born. Kinda. In a way. Well, maybe not, but I sure wanted the old red rag.

I reluctantly carried my gym-bag into the gym to turn in my old stuff. I gave up my shorts and my white jersey. Mr. Fannin knew what I was up to and he opened my gym bag and took back the school property while I whimpered a weak protest.

I last saw # 12 disappear into Mr. Fannin's locker and I would never see it again.

Heartbroken, I shuffled out of the gym and hung my head all the way to class. If I had the cash I would have bought it. If I had the unmitigated gall I'd left it at home and just told them I had lost it. If I had no sense of honor I'd sneak back in there and steal it.

But I wouldn't do that. I had no special claim on that or any other jersey. People have worn #12 before it decorated my back, and people would wear #12 long after I left. So it was with me, so it was with everybody else.

No numbers have ever been retired at Lone Oak High. The only claim any individual has on a specific number is that they happened to wear that number all too briefly in school.

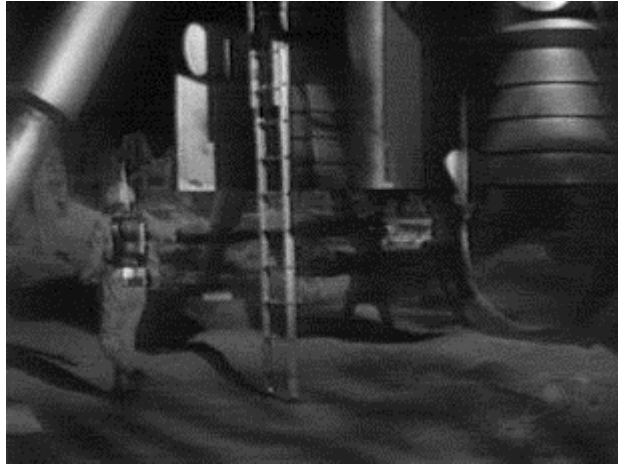
In the person's individual mind, though, the number burns deeply and bright. That #12 would forever mean the 1972 season of victory and joy for me. I let it go and I did not look for it again. It was goodbye, one last time.

In 1993 I found Gunner's number 24 for sale in a store in Lone Oak. I quickly snapped it up, and I gave it to the school to keep in their museum. It may be the only surviving jersey of that time.

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## Lone Oak's First Astronauts

(Touching the Edge of Space)



On 6/Feb/74 a funny looking white van came to the north entrance to the school. This vehical got Randy Price's and my immediate attention. Printed on the side were the four magic letters that spoke of unprecidented adventure and exploration: N.A.S.A!

Wow, man, oh wow! Oh wow! Get back and LOOK AT THIS!

This was a public relations ploy by N.A.S.A. to renew interest in the space program. The interest in space exploration had fallen off sharply after the Apollo moon landing so now N.A.S.A. sent out vans loaded with goodies and P.R. people to schools all over the nation to try to get the youth of America re-interested in mankind's greatest adventure.

Somehow connections were made and the the next thing I knew Randy Price and I were being asked to participate in an on-stage tech show the Nasa guy was to put on in the stage in the auditorium. You can bet Randy and I jumped at the first opprotunity.

Randy and I had to get wired up before the show. I was to have sensors taped to my chest and Randy was to have a sensor strapped to his arm. Called out of class on this special day he and I went directly to the auditorium. As we entered the old confines of the familiar stage and playhouse we saw a platform of tables in front of the stage covered with everything a space model collector could dream of. There was a cut-away model of the Skylab, America's first space station that had been put in orbit a while back. This model alone took up almost all of one table! There was a prototype of the Shuttle there. As I had a comic strip goint about my Shuttle this model drew my attention the most. There were Apollo models, Gemini and Mercury models, and a lot of stuff I could not identify.

Randy and I just stood there and stared at this treasure trove. The Nasa guy came over to us.

"Hi! Are you the two fellows volunteering for the show?"

"Yeah," Randy said.

The guy shook our hands. He introduced himself as a Mr. Erlich. He showed Randy and me the gizmos he was to rig up on us. We were instructed on how to put the goodies on and we left to wire ourselves up.

I had a box with a rat-tail anntena that attached to my belt and a fist full of sensors that went on my chest. Randy had a blood flow sensor that attached to his arm. Once Randy and I were properly wired up with the gadgets we went to join our classmates for the show.



Mr. Erlich introduced himself and showed us a film about Nasa and the space program. I sat there fascinated. When he started talking about how Nasa invented many high tech goodies that beifitted us all, he called Randy and I to the stage.

He amplified the sounds the sensors picked up through a large speaker for the audience to hear. It had a built in reciever on the same channel as our little belt boxes. After people listened to the rapid thud-thudding of my heart they got to listen to the swishing sound of Randy's blood flow. I thought it was too neat.

He asked for the sensor boxes back and Randy and I disconnected the sensors from the boxes and took them off our belts to give them back to Mr. Erlich. I was standing on the antenna and there was some amused chuckling when Mr. Erlich casually asked me to get off of it.

As Randy and I got some applause Mr. Erlich made a closing spiel about the space program and what it really meant to the people of America. Everyone then gave him a round of applause and exited the auditorium. Randy, Herman, and I hung around, very curious and with a lot of free time. Randy had me show Mr. Erlich one of my space comic strips. He thought I had some good ideas and all but nothing came of it. He took us out to his van to show us some replica moon rocks he had in hemisphere covers. The real moon rocks were far too valuble to carry around in a cheap van.

In the van was a real Apollo space suit. Randy looked at the artifact with hungry eyes. He said he'd give a hundred dollars just to try the thing on. The suit was made of snow white beta-cloth and had a fishbowl helmet. This was mind-boggling. We didn't ask to try the suit on, because that would be pushing Mr. Erlich's hospitality.

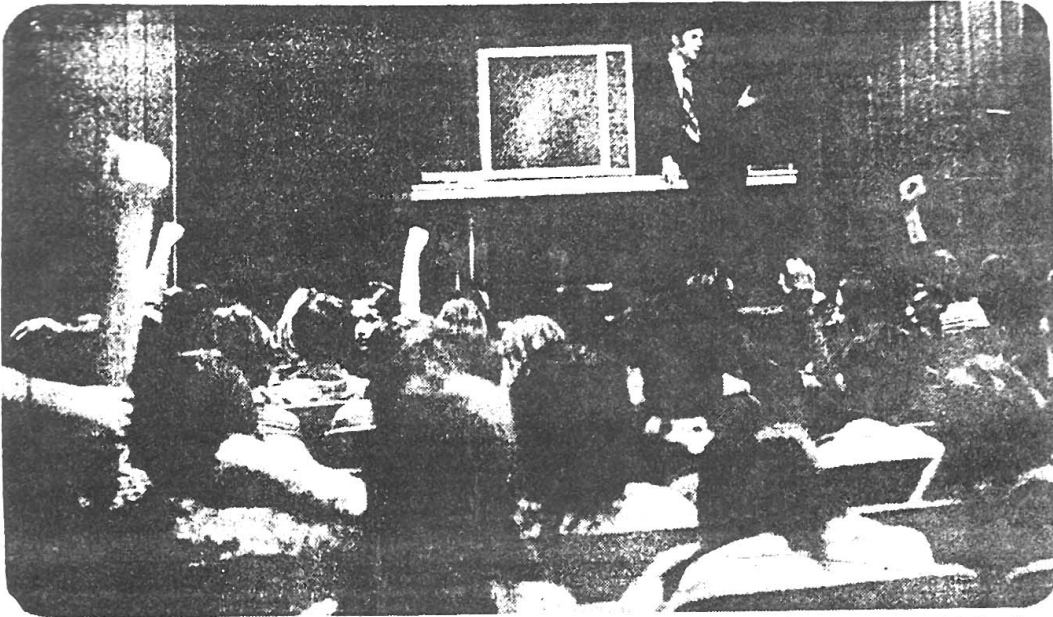
Mr. Erlich had one more show to give, for the Campbell school kids who were invited to come here and soon would arrive. We told him that if he needed help to pack his stuff just to ask for us. He smiled and said that he was never short of volunteers.

Randy and I had to take off the sensors we still wore and return them. We went back to the rest room to do so. As we approached the door to our right from the breezeway I saw a student standing in the intersection near the front doors. I pulled off my shirt only a second or two before entering the restroom giving his guy a look at my sensors. He freaked out and Randy and I got a good laugh out of that one.

We took the hardware back to Mr. Erlich and we never saw him or his van full of million dollar goodies ever again.

For a while there Randy and I were almost Astronauts, with Nasa. It was just too good.

Thursday Morning, February 7, 1974



SPACE TALK—NASA representative John Erlich answered questions from Lone Oak and Campbell students Wednesday following a speech on the space program. NASA officials have visited the Lone Oak school annually for the

past three years to show space exhibits to school children. Films, models and demonstrations were included in his presentation to the students.

(Staff Photo)

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## On the Way

On the 7th of February Randy and I filled out the initial enlistment papers for the U.S. Army. Sgt. Sheppard even came to my house with Randy to be certain everything was in order. Randy had trouble with color blindness tests and that bugged ole Rabbit a lot.

I sent a bunch of idiot mail to Boles Girl then I looked forward to the trip to Dallas coming up on the weekend. My Mother was out of the hospital, all tests had proven negative, and she was home. I felt like things were starting to look up at last.

I am not sure what was wrong between Randy and his father, but I picked up a lot of friction between them. Randy's mother was in Mexia and he lived with Wayne, his father at Tawakoni, so I guess Randy was beginning to feel his independence. Wayne probably didn't like that, and tried to tighten the laws a little. That only made Randy test them even more. I guess we were all changing in ways that would come to surprise us in retrospect.

On the 10th of February Randy and I climbed on a Greyhound bus with instructions on how to find the Hotel Adolphus from the Dallas terminal. It was a long ride on a bus we were not familiar with. After several years of school bus riding I thought the air conditioning and plush seats with the tinted windows to be very nice.

We got out at the bus station with our gym bags of extra clothing and soon found our way to the hotel. We checked in at the front desk and were assigned a very cheap room with no T.V. or

anything but 2 beds, a telephone that connected only to the front desk, and a bathroom. We took one look at this and figured we'd been had.

We went through every drawer and box in the room, collecting souvenirs like soap and blank telegram forms. Bored and with energy to spare we ran up the stair well from the first floor to the very top, then back down. We went back out on the streets of Dallas, an exceptionally dangerous thing to do at near midnight, and wandered over to the bus station. We played some pinball there and then went exploring on the streets.

Randy and I carried no weapons of any type, not even pocket knives. Moving around in this no-man's land like the naive hayseeds we were, we soon were approached by a short fellow with medium length dark hair. Being friendly fellows we said hello.

The guy stopped and I noticed he had a far off look in his eye we would come to call the 1000 Yard Stare. He smelled strongly of decongestant ointment. Maybe he had been sniffing the stuff, I don't know. He was not on this planet, and was high as a kite. He told us in wild tones how he had found Jesus in jail and rambled on about Christianity and all. He then walked away.

Randy Price and I took one look at each other and ran at top speed back to the safety of the Hotel Adolphus. We had seen our first Lost Soul, and it scared us appropriately. We had enough of the streets of downtown Dallas at midnight.

It was now about 1 a.m. and we had to get up early in the morning. We had eaten in the dining room earlier so we decided to doze off. That was next to impossible. Would be recruits ran up and down the hall, pounding on doors and partying far into the night. I heard a hotel security guard scream at them to get into their rooms.

Shortly after that Randy and I finally got to sleep. We had briefly looked out of our window at Dallas at night and marvelled at all the lights on the freeways. Where were all these people going? Where were we going?

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"Tell me not in mournful numbers,

Life is but an empty dream."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life"

## Crash

The phone rang way too early to suit us the next morning. Bleary eyed and dragging our tails we dressed and went out. It was still quite dark at 6 a.m. and we had been told not to eat before going for our physical. We didn't. We joined in a mass of teenaged boys who were headed for the Examining Station. It was a large group of almost 100 people. We soon arrived at a place that was the equivalent to a human stock-yard. To the bored people in there we were little more than cattle. They had seen literally hundreds of human beings a day so they got somewhat cold and unfeeling, detached, from the young men and women who came and went 6 days a week for over 8 hours a day. It was boring duty, it was tedious duty, and it was mind numbingly repetitive.

Randy Price and I stepped into this machine and the impersonal coldness it contained. I didn't know what to do with my gym bag. I couldn't leave it in my room back at the hotel. They had said

something vague about a locker where we were supposed to insert a quarter into it and get a key. When we returned the key we got our quarter back.

Nobody understood the deep Tennessee drawl of the bored Marine Sergeant who told us once about this without a demonstration then went someplace else. Most of us ended up carrying our gear all over the place and getting bawled out for it by all sorts of unfeeling, evil, and mentally deficient people.

We spent a lousy morning filling out thousands of forms for reasons we could only guess at. Our tests instructor was a loud voiced Army corporal who leched over every girl in the room. When one of them got up to go to the restroom he eyed her like she was a prize piece of meat. I hated him immediately for his smugness and constant leering. This guy would come to represent a part of the Army I would dispise.

We took test after written test and all of us were bored in the exstream. When we broke for lunch 6 full hours after getting here it was a welcome relief. Rabbit and I were not having any fun in this tedious adventure.

All too soon we had to go back. Randy and I thought this day would never end.

We went back into this house of horrors to a place for them to take a blood and urine sample. As we were issued little plastic cups we were sent into a large latrine packed with guys wall to wall. I was asked by a pathetic looking long haired fellow who was having a hard time with this place "what can you do if you can't go?".

Ten years later I would have been able to help this individual and get him through this problem with no fuss. He would have had the confidence and ability to face what ever came for the rest of day when I got through talking to him.

But in 1974 I had lost the Thunder for myself and all I could do was coldly wish him luck and go on my way. I was getting uptight and fearful. This was the first year of the post-Vietnam Armed Forces, and I guess it was rubbing off on me at the time. These guys were used to examining draftees and hadn't got used to the all volunteer units coming in. It wasn't their old draftee Army anymore. The guys signing up with me would make the changes to come in the next ten years that made the military a world class service again. But at this time soldiers were supposed to be uncaring creatures for their fellow man from what I had seen, more animal than human. It would be a while before that would change for the military. When it would the Army and the military at large would be a better unit over-all than this base creature it was at this time.

We put our filled specimen cups in a window and a very bored technition took them away. They then poked a hole in one of our fingers for a blood sample, drawing it up a pipette. They gave us a cotton-ball to put over the wound to keep from getting blood all over the place.

The military in it's infinite wisdom gives a bunch of scared and confused teenaged boys cotton-balls and expect us to keep them forever. Once the bleeding stopped there were no trashcans to put the used cotton-ball into. Some guys simply dropped theirs on the floor.

A huge Marine soon showed up and scowled at us like we were scum.

"Don't drop your cotton-balls on the deck!" he bellowed at us.

I still had mine, but I was getting more terrified of the situation by the second. Something didn't feel right, and I didn't know how to deal with it.

After that bit of nonsense we did a battery of physical tests we were just rushed through. I have no idea how I passed my hearing tests. My eye test was a joke. I was more confused and scared than anything else. These guys were supposed to be professionals, but they were mostly just going through the motions.

We stripped to our shorts. They measured and weighed us. It was amazing how many of us were 69 inches tall. They took a chest X-ray. This was when I reached the conclusion that we were being treated like cattle in a sale-barn.

Next we had the "drop your drawers, turn your head and cough, and grab your cheeks and bend over" drill. This was done with solemn respect and no clowning around. We were all having a bad day.

I was shaking like a leaf, and I couldn't even get my right foot down I was trembling so bad. This old guy who was bald with a mustache came by and listened to our hearts. I guess he was some military surgeon or some such. He stopped in front of me and said three words that forever burned into my mind.

"Check this one."

I was double checked. The second doctor said he had his doubts. But this old guy insisted, so I was culled out of the main group. After letting me know that something may be wrong with my heart these tactless idiots decided to test my blood pressure. What did they have for brains? They were surprised that my blood pressure was so high in a fellow with my thin build. Yeah, can you guess how come?

I was rejected. I refused to accept that. I reached down inside myself and found enough of my old self to fight back. I took my file with me and on my own I found the older surgeon again. I told him I was real scared at the time he examined me and I requested that he check me again.

He refused, and for the first time all day I was treated like a human being. He politely asked me to get out of the area as the women recruits would soon be coming through.

I was sent to the page-turners, they non-chalantly checked the right boxes on their papers, and sent me on my way without a second word. They were not used to the all volunteer forces yet, so failing a physical was not looked up as a bad thing in their eyes.

In a daze I went back to the Hotel Adolphus with a very confused Randy Price. He could not believe I had failed my physical. He looked at me with great curiosity. I could not explain to him what had happened. I was having enough trouble dealing with it myself.

We got back to Greenville and the Greenville Recruiter, Sgt. Sheppard, did everything he could. He even tried to call in a few favors. My life long ambition of a career in the Army was gone. My self esteem plummeted with it. One more thing had gone wrong. All that remained was to pick up the pieces and stagger on to what ever else awaited.

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"I would rather have a fool to make me merry than

experience to make me sad."

Shakespeare, "As You Like It"

# Dancing the Night Away

## A Happy Time

So it was that my turn had come. I got kicked in the gut like so many prominent people before me. Like Bulldozer I could not control my hormonal urges that manifested itself in self centeredness, anger, aggression, and to continually write letters to a girl who wanted me to just go away. Now the greatest career ambition I ever had was ripped from me in the most cruel and unfeeling fashion. It was my turn.

When I came back to school on Tuesday word spread like wildfire that I had failed my Army physical. People would whisper and look at me. Reality and the shadow of their own mortality had intruded in the persona of one of their own. It was scary for all of us. I had really no other plans than to be a soldier. What do I do now?

Randy was in a state of shock. He had planned for us to go to basic training together. It was even in our contract we had signed with Sgt Sheppard. We'd enlist in February and with the 6 months delay enlistment program we'd go in that August, after one last summer together. We'd also have had 6 months on our time in service. It had looked like too good a package. It was.

I was to go back for a second check-up next week. I was optimistic. I felt as if the old doctor had messed up. I silently prayed he had. If he was right then I was in deep, deep trouble.

Of passing interest to me was the fact that a "Flu-like Sickness" was decimating schools throughout the area. It had caused the postponement of the District Tournament, and even Leonard Schools shut down briefly because of it. This was more than likely the same thing that struck me down in December. I believe this so called "Flu-like Sickness" was Rheumatic Fever! I thought it had almost killed me, and caused my heart murmur. How many others had it messed up out there? Calling it a "Flu-like Sickness" probably avoided a panic that would have been caused if it was called Rheumatic Fever.

Fortunately my mind was distracted by other things. On the 15th of February we had our final Football Banquet for the class of 1974. I prepared for it with enthusiasm, needing this distraction right now in the worst way. The banquet was fun. Randy and I went there in his yellow van. The party was just outside of Commerce in the party room of a hotel located on Highway 50. The food was fantastic. They had clips of our football films. It showed Bobby Underwood missing a kick during the Fannindel game. He had grabbed his helmet and did a little hop.

"What did you say, Woody?" I called out.

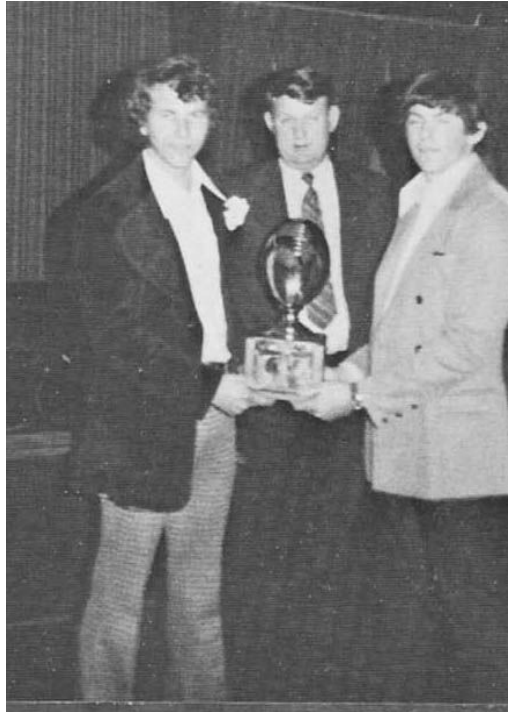
There was laughter.

It showed my night at Wolfe City where I was picking at my leg. It showed our Pep-squad and the passing drill Robert "Dynamite" Evans and Kenneth Jones had. It was a bitter-sweet goodbye to the first undefeated season of district play Lone Oak ever had in 11 man football. I was laughing with everyone else and having a much needed good time. For a while we were on the football team again.



Had the Boles Girl and I ever got together I would have brought her here. It wasn't meant to be. We would never sit together at my last Football Banquet, laughing at film clips of a most unforgettable season of excellent football. She'd never meet my friends, my coaches, and see Julia in her evening gown and Homecoming Queen tiara. I feel the loss was more Boles Girl's than mine. It would have been great to have had her here. Who knows what she would have thought, and what memories we would have shared.

A lot of other guys brought dates with them. The girls in the room even outnumbered the guys. It was easy to find someone to dance with, though by choice there was no slow dancing.



Our District Trophy was presented. It had a gold football and a red nameplate in front of it. All of our names were on it and this time they spelled my name right. Gunner would give his bullet to the Coaches, and it would be taped to the front of that trophy and remain there for as long as it lasted. It was still there last time I had seen it.

The high point of the night came when I got to dance with Julia. I danced with this wonderful lady at least twice. She was beautiful, lovely, wonderful, and one of the greatest Homecoming Queens I ever knew. She was a terrific and classy lady.

The Football Banquet was soon over. My ears rang from the loud music played by the live band and I was tired out from all the partying and stress of the past weeks. We were given these foot long plastic red megaphones during the banquet and we took this party-favor home with us as a memento. This little toy sits on my shelf today.

Randy and I rode to our homes with 2 Freshman who hitched a ride with us in the van. Randy and I talked about the Boles Girl while we drove along. The two Freshmen were way in the back, so they couldn't hear us.

"Will you write to her and ask her what is wrong?" I asked Randy.

"I'll try," he said, "But I don't know what she'll say."

Troubled by so many things, I thought about the Boles Girl, and the fact that next week I went back for another shot at the enlisting station.

But that was next week. Tonight had been great fun. I had danced with Julia, had a good time, and even Randy said he'd see what was up with the Boles Girl. I felt greatly optimistic about next week. Things just might work out. Or not.

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## Wipe Out

Sgt Sheppard, his chin jutting out and smiling optimistically at my chances, briefed me on when I was to go, where I was to go, and what I was to do once I got to Afees (Armed Forces Examining and Enlisting Station) a second time. Randy wished me well, and held on to the razor thin hope that his dream of us going into the Army together would be realized. It was Tuesday, the 19th of February when I left again for Dallas.

I was put on the bus with a black guy who had his hair up in dreadlocks. I lost all track of him once we got to the Adolphus and never saw him again. They then put me in a room with a guy who was re-enlisting in the Air Force and I told him that I didn't have to be at the Afees until 11:00 tomorrow.

As usual the entire night was bedlam. Guys went running up and down the halls and making noise. I finally fell asleep about 2 or 3. I didn't hear the wake up call at 6:00.

When I woke up it was 10:00 a. m. and I had the entire floor all to myself, except for the cleaning ladies who gave me curious looks when I came out of my room. The air conditioning was turned off and the heat had awoken me. I cleaned up at a leisurely pace and made my way alone to Afees. I checked in at the desk in front and informed them who I was. I was sent for my Blood Pressure check very soon after that. I passed it with flying colors.

This gave me great hope for what was up next. I had cleared one hurdle, now just one more. That would have to wait until tomorrow.

I was given a food chit and sent back to the Hotel Adolphus. I had dinner with the Air Force guy, as he found my company likeable. I got my allotted food and drink and went to present my chit to the waitress. I then got my first example of Dallas Big City Hospitality. The waitress at the register gave me a hard time. I had signed the chit as directed by some Sergeant at Afees and this woman wanted me to sign it again. This was so incredibly stupid! I signed over my own signature and tossed the pen back on the counter top.

This subgenius example of unfriendly salespersons everywhere glared at me.

"If that had fallen on the floor you'd be in trouble!"

I didn't say anything. What was she going to do? Call the cops? Just because she was having a bad day wasn't a reason for her to act like a jerk. I shrugged it off. Things were bad enough for me as it was. The Air Force guy told me to pay it no mind, and I let the incident slide.

I spent another night in the hotel and when they called me at 6 a.m. I got up this time and went to Afees with everybody else.

I was examined by a number of top surgeons, one of which was British and very proper in his mannerisms. They decided to send me to some specialist in Dallas.

I was given my chest X-ray and a bus ticket to where I had to go. I wrote all the directions down because I didn't want to get lost in that surge of humanity that made up downtown Dallas.

I stuffed the valuable X-rays under my coat and caught the bus to the location I was supposed to go to. It was drizzling and I was as lost and forelorn as I looked.

I got off at my location and after a little bit of searching I found where I was supposed to be. I presented my X-rays and paperwork to the receptionist. After a wait of about an hour I was sent in. I was then given an E.K.G. and other assorted tests.

The specialist then arranged for me to get what was called an Echo Cardiogram so they could see exactly what was wrong with the damaged valve on my heart. That was where they took a sonar-like reading of the area, giving a detailed picture.

I had wiped out. I went back to Afees and they shipped me home that evening. I looked and felt as lost as that fellow Randy and I had seen our first night in Dallas. This dream had turned into a nightmare. This was one that I couldn't wake up from either. It had been going on like this since December. I wondered if it would ever end!

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"Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my

reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself,

and what remains is bestial."

Shakespeare, "Othello"

## Pictures in the Paper

Randy accepted the news as badly as I did. I told him that I had to go back next week for the Echo Cardiogram. It scared the bejabbers out of me. It left Randy confused. What was he to do now?

We had a field trip to the Dallas General Motors plant on the 22nd of February. As we rode over there on the bus Randy told me he had gotten a letter from the Boles Girl. He told me that Boles Girl had been so turned off when she saw my picture that she threw it away. He said the letter she sent him said that I had insulted her in some way. Randy never showed me this letter and would claim he threw it away. I never knew if he was just probing around to get some answers on his own or he really wrote to her. The Boles Girl doesn't recall getting a letter from Randy, when I asked her years later. I believed him at the time, so I told him all I did.

I told him that when I had been treated so discourteously at Campbell I wrote to her and I had jokingly told her to "stay out of car back seats."

Randy gave me a dirty look.

"That was stupid!" he said, and began to give me a lecture, really chewing me out. I just covered my head and put it down on the seat-back in front of me.

I was a monster. I had not only made a fool out of myself and insulted a girl I loved, I had also sullied my honor in front of one of my best friends. I was lower than the gutter.

I had wrote to Boles Girl much earlier about how dissappointed in her conduct I was at Campbell, and I insulted her. Yet, much later I wrote a letter gripped with the fear of my heart problem and about my mother being in the hospital. I still got no answer from her. It was maddening, and it was ripping me to pieces.

We all toured the G.M. plant and watched with fascination at how easily the cars went together. Everything was clean and neat and the parts seem to just fall into place. Nobody was swearing or covered with grime, very much unlike it was when I had seen people work on these vehicals in repair shops or when my friends modified or repaired their cars.

I liked especially where they tested a car up on a platform. They hooked on an exhaust funnel to the tail pipe, and the car was made to run in place to test it's performance. That looked too cool. The vehical did some weaving in place as it was pushed to the equivalent of about 50 miles and hour, with one wheel turning on a special flywheel

I think we guys liked the tour more than the girls. We knew cars and it was fascinating to see all the familiar pieces put into place with relative ease.

I figured this would be one truely great place to work at. It paid more money per hour than I had ever made in my life, and it had tremendous benifits and insurance. It would be a good job to have and to raise a family with.

But the way things were going I didn't know what to do. I felt as though I could no longer talk to Randy about the Boles Girl. I began to turn to Herman more and more on this matter. Herman bluntly suggested that I drop her like a hot potato. I told him I would give it a try.

When I got home from the field trip I put my typewriter away and decided I'd make an honest effort to forget about her. It was the paradox I felt like I found myself caught in. To my mind I saw only the black and white of the issues. If Boles Girl, who I felt like I loved deeply, didn't love me, then she must hate me. I simply couldn't stand having the woman I love hating me in return.

The key I did not know was this; the opposite of love, in this case, was indifference. If Boles Girl didn't love me she didn't necessarily hate me. She just didn't care! I sent her mail that she recieved with same feelings a person gets when they recieve junk mail. The musings of a love struck 18 year old must have seemed to her as weird in the ut-most. She put up with this only because in her mind it was the polite and lady-like thing to do. What confused her the most is why this nut from Lone Oak kept writing back! She hoped I'd eventually just give up and fade away.

I was about fed up with the situation myself. Writing to her was getting to be a kind of oddball hobby. I spent hours pecking at a typewriter and thinking of something to send her. I wasn't doing myself any good, not mentally and not physically.

The Sunday after the G.M. tour I got out of bed and decided to read the paper, look at the Sunday funnies, and all that. I enjoyed the comics and I wanted to see what my favorite characters were up to.

I got the paper and started digging through it. I then found something that stopped me in my tracks for a second. Splashed all over one page in the Features section was nothing but pictures of the Boles Girl and an artical on life at Boles Home. It was like lightning had struck me.

Here's Boles Girl playing Volleyball. Here's Boles Girl fixing dinner. Here's Boles Girl helping to move furniture. Here's Boles Girl singing in the Bel Canto Chior. Here's Boles Girl on the see saw. My head swam.



INVOLVED - In foreground, like other Boles Homers, is actively involved in extracurricular happenings at Boles Home High School.

## At Home

### ...Almost

Photos and Text  
By DAVID STEVENS

For 50 years now, since they received into care the first six children on Thanksgiving Day, Boles Home has been serving homeless children by providing supplemental home life in development of the spiritual, social and academic needs of each child.

Boles Home, operated by the Churches of Christ, is located by the Texas State Department of Public Welfare to receive children between the ages of four and 14 into care. Most applicants now received are 13 years old and older.

All students live with house parents in cottage-type living quarters which are centrally heated and air conditioned.

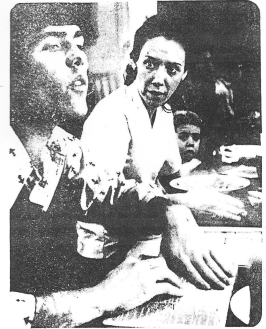
Boles Home started as an institution for care of orphans. During the 40 years of existence, it has evolved into a federal and state welfare program. The main concern has changed to dealing with children with teenage adjustment problems.

During 1973, Boles Home was caring for 166 children. During the same year, the home released 43 children through various routes. Thirty-one were enrolled with their families, six graduated from Boles Home High School, one went into military service, one underwent training in vocational rehabilitation, the Department of Public Welfare took two and two private life without.

"We have found in these last and they are getting along on their own," Alan Sawyer, superintendent of the home, said.

Further care work and contact with families of children has enabled the home to return some children much sooner than in previous years, he added.

During 1973, the home received 38 students, 24 boys and 14 girls. The child care family resembled that the home take 71 of those: the church, seven churches, five, and the Department of Public Welfare, two. These 38 students were received from 24 veterans worked during the year.

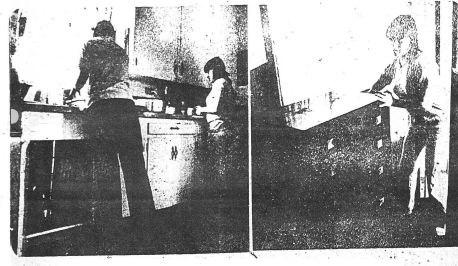


## Features

Sunday Morning, February 24, 1974



LEISURE - In foreground, Boles Homers, is actively involved in extracurricular happenings at Boles Home High School.



How in blue blazes can a girl I essentially just picked out of the crowd in an obscure place like Boles Home end up having a full page feature starring her? Why her out of over 100 girls who were at the institution? This had to be bad karma! I sat on the back porch and read the artical. This was just too much. A whole entire page with not much else but her in it. Fate seemed to be mocking me at all avenues this time.

I wrote her a letter that night.

## Proof Positive

I went to the hospital in Dallas the following week and got checked out. My Mother drove me over there. The techs found out that my aeortic heart valve had locked open, causing the murmur. It was bad enough to keep me out of the Army but it wasn't going to keep me out of my sports. This thing wasn't going to beat me! I would continue into track and field. I had to run one last mile, even if it literally killed me. I went to school after this and back to what I had come from and no idea what I was going to do in the future.

We were in class about Thursday February 28th when the entire student body was summoned to the auditorium. I wondered what was up as I went there with the rest of the school. The auditorium was packed with grades 1 to 12. I sat next to Herman and Randy and I looked up on the stage. Coach Fannin, Coach Taylor, and Coach Brookins were up there in front of the crowd. I couldn't tell what was in the box they had by their feet. It was a big box, about 3 by 3 by 3.

Mr. Fannin gave a speech that I only got bits and pieces of. He was talking about the football team and such. Then he reached into the box and pulled out a brand new red and white letter jacket. The shell and sleeves were red, it had a silver-grey liner, with red and white banded cuffs and waist band. On the left side of the chest was an interlocked L-O in letters almost a foot tall. This type of jacket was traditional at least to the 1920s when the first ones were probably issued.

Mr. Fannin looked in the pocket on the left side and pulled out a tab that had someone's name sewn into it. He called out Danny Bowman's name.

Danny went up first, then Robert. Next came Gunner, Rickey Graham, Johnny Hooten, Randy Oaks, Eddie Bell, Frankie Payne, Rabbit, Ronald Posey, then Gonga. I sat there trembling, clutching the seat in front of me. Would I be passed over? Did I even qualify? My name was called and I almost sprinted to the stage. I leaped up onto the platform, not even using the steps. Mr. Fannin handed me my jacket, and helped me put it on.

MY jacket! It was mine, mine, mine! I had the cherished red garment on. It fit like a glove! It was mine! There was no letterman hash-mark on the L-O, but there was a football, proving to the world that I had played the game and won the honors. I had done what few before me had done. I had stuck it out and attained undreamed of glory.

Now here I was in front of the entire assembled Lone Oak student body and faculty wearing proof of my dream.

Julia was called up also. She was the only girl to awarded such an honor that year. Her basketball letters clearly showed on her L-O.

We were applauded by the entire student body and we accepted the accolades with humble joy. I stood together one last time with my fellow players and our Homecoming Queen wearing our school colors. It was proof positive of the dream we all shared.

Almost 300 students, most of them children, sat in front of me in that audience looking at us in the school colors and perhaps thinking that someday that they too would gather such honors for themselves. They looked at Robert Vice and Danny Bowman, a scholarship in their pockets, first class players all the way. They looked at me, small and thin, and knew that if I could gather such a cherished honor that it was within their reach as well.

The girls saw in Julia a chance to get a jacket for themselves. Some of them would achieve that goal, but it would not be easy.

Of all those present many might try, and many would fail. Only a few would go on to stand where we now stood. I remembered those who had fallen by the wayside. Philip Andrews, Spider, and a host of others who were better athletes than I were but they had failed. I had managed to stay with it somehow and now I was awarded this jacket of glory. Life felt good again.

These were not the only awards being passed out. Julia had proven that she had athletic ability, brains, good looks, and that she could cook now, too. She won the Betty Crocker award for herself on the 25th of February.

Truely I was standing among the greatest I had ever seen.

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"There is so much good in the worst of us,

And so much bad in the best of us,

That it ill behooves any of us

To find fault with the rest of us."

Unknown.

We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise.

We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.

We castrate and then bid the geldings to be fruitful.

C. S. Lewis

## Leaving Me Alone

The doctor in Dallas had prescribed a depressant called "Inderol" to keep my blood pressure and heart rate low. I took about 40 milligrams of this in tablet form a day. What it managed to do was deepen my personal funk and made it very hard to get up in the morning or to get motivated about anything in general. I felt like I needed to just crawl in a hole someplace. All I really felt like doing was writing junk mail to the Boles Girl, and I did that often. I subconsciously felt that if I could salvage what was wrong between her and I, I could salvage everything else. That wasn't going to happen.

These off-beat and bizarre pieces of mail were beginning to irritate her. If she had any real interest at all in me this was eroding it badly.

In Lone Oak word had leaked out that Buzzard had a 'sweetheart' at Boles Home. One bleak day in typing class Danny was in an offensive mood. He verbally attacked me, as he had many times in the past, with sarcasms. Laughing loudly, he asked snide questions about "that girl at Boles Home."

I couldn't think of anything to say. I just sat there in a state of disarray. Danny has a higher level of perception than most people I know and when he saw the hurt look on my face he suddenly backed off and left me alone. What ever was going on with Charlie was not funny, not this time. He had suddenly realized that something here was very wrong, and he figured it was now none of his business as to what it might be.

Nobody kidded me about the Boles Girl after that. I don't know if Danny had spread the word or what, but for the rest of the school year I was left pretty much alone by the other people from outside of my clique.

I was having a very bad year, and I suppose it showed. Mr. Brookins had seen it and told the teachers to keep an eye on me. He was confused and disturbed by what he saw. He even kept an eye on me himself. I had a lot of people worried about my welfare, but there wasn't much they could do for me. I was all but lost.

I kept running and exercising. In the back of my mind was always the dark spectre of a quick death if my heart suddenly gave out. Believing I could keel over dead at 18 was a terrible thing. I had my own mortality forced on me at a time when I should have been thinking about a bright and promising future. Beyond Graduation I had absolutely no goals. I was lost, broken, and depressed. I even wondered why I should care. I had lost my career and I felt like I had lost the only girl I had ever cared for. I was in a deep dark pit with no visible way out and no light above. I had lost who I was and almost everything I believed in. But I wasn't going to give up.

Other things went on as normal. Unlike what happened to me, Randy had a good experience at Campbell. He went back with Gary several other times, and met several interesting ladies. Randy had such a way with the ladies! Gary was a little wacko, though. He once scared the bejabbers out of Randy one night in Campbell. Gary just stopped his car right on the railroad tracks, got out, and at 2 a.m. bellowed to the sky "Campbell stinks!" Then he got back in the car and drove away. Randy looked around for anybody that might be chasing them, but there were none. Randy had doubts about Gary's sanity after that. I think he stopped going to Campbell too.

Track and field was upon us with the usual fun things of running everywhere and throwing heavy objects about. Bad ticker and all I participated with almost as much enthusiasm as I had the passed 2 seasons. But the drugs I was taking essentially gave me a lackadasial attitude. There was a lot I simply didn't care about and a lot I didn't see because I was stoned.

The first thing I did notice was that my endurance seemed to be down. I could run and jump just as good as ever but I couldn't seem to go as far. This worried me a little but after a while I just didn't care. It was just one more thing on a long string of things that were going wrong. I had stopped caring about a lot of things.

Randy had returned to the Marine recruiter and he went back to Afees. When he came back he was on his way to the Marine Corps with a guaranteed slot as a Military Policeman. His future was shining bright with a white hot light. Randy Price was on his way to his future.

He didn't strut it, though. He was still my buddy and we still thought up harmless mischief in school. We came into the hallway during track practice. Randy and I looked around. Everybody was in some sort of a class except those who were in track. We made it to an empty class room and looked around again. Right across the hall from us was the Pricipal's Office. The door was closed. That was good.

Randy and I then took our shirts off, wearing only our shoes and skimpy track shorts. We took off up the hall at a dead run.

"Streaker!" we yelled, blasting out the back doors. We then fled rapidly behind the Ag-shop to put our shirts back on. We were certain that somebody believed that they had seen Randy and I buck naked as we zipped passed the doors. Giggling, we sneaked back to the track area.

Later on, Herman and I were wandering in the halls with nothing to do. We found a couple of girls in the Home-Ec room tinkering over a massive cake. The thing was huge. It looked like some giant green castle. It was covered from base to roof with green frosting.

Herman and I chatted with the girls then Herman raked his finger over the frosting. He put this in his mouth and the girls collectively gasped.

"That's soap, Herman!" one of them exclaimed in horror, "The frosting is made out of soap!"

Herman turned as green as the 'cake' and fled the room. He went to the boy's restroom and spit suds into the sink. I sorry I laughed at my old buddy, but it was just too funny to keep inside. The expression on his face when he tasted the soap-based frosting was priceless. I totally lost my control. When Randy found out he got a big laugh out of it, too.

It felt good to laugh and fool around again, echoing better days that we all had.

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## The Ides of March

The Boles Girl was getting really fed up with this. My letters were getting downright stupid. Only she knew why she even kept reading them. Sometimes she got as many as two or three a day! This idiotcy simply had to stop! Basketball season had taken her mind off of this from time to time but now there was nothing but Volleyball, and it wasn't much of a distraction. This constant pestering of her with a continual avalanche of mail was starting to wear on her nerves.

Then one day she had enough of it. She lost her cool over it all and decided to slam the door on this madness once and for all. She had been insulted, cajoled, praised, and cursed enough by this. She usually fled and hid from her problems, but this was something that went directly to her. She couldn't avoid it. So she dealt with it.

After a talk with her housemother and presenting the evidence to her, the powerful wheels of the Boles Home beurocracy begin to turn. In short order a letter bearing the official letterhead of the institution and a cease and desist order was on it's way.

Boles Girl returned to her room quite pleased with herself. Something had to be done. This stuff was starting to get to her. It had to stop. The guy over at Lone Oak had to get a life. And get out of hers.

Back at Lone Oak the feeling was mutual. Herman was referring to me as a "persistant fool!" He saw no reason I should write constantly to this uncaring girl at Boles Home. She hadn't even bothered to answer since that first letter back in January!

"Give it up, man," he'd tell me, "It's over!"

When I got off the bus one evening I opened the mail-box and found a yellow official envelope was in the box. I picked the thing up and got a charge of fear. It was adressed to my parents from Boles Home!

I held the envelope like it was a bomb. I went in our garage and opened the thing up. It was adressed to my parents but it was for me. I read the document.



"Mr. Charles Tarrant

Miss (Boles Girl) doesn't want to write to you anymore. Please stop."

It was signed by some official and dated.

I felt a surge of fear again. I had really messed up this time! This was suddenly replaced by anger. She had turned me in! Rather than write to me and tell me herself to knock it off she got the authorities to do the dirty work for her! I thought that was low, real low! They even addressed it to my parents!

I burned the letter and envelope. I had really blown it once and for all this time. How was I gonna tell this to Randy and Herman?

When I did my running the next day I cursed her with every footfall, and myself for ever noticing her that night in the gym. I felt betrayed and insulted, treated as if I was some low life predator like Bulldozer or something.

When I told my buddies that Monday they expressed the same sense of anger I did.

Randy even said "She didn't have the guts to tell you herself!"

I stopped writing. I wanted to forget her. It should have been easy. I never dreamed about her, or pictured her in my mind. All I was is just lonely guy who desperately needed a lady friend. She certainly wasn't going to be it.

Why should I care? What did she want? What would it have taken to get her answer at least one letter? I hadn't heard from her since our first letter that January. Other than what she told me in that note and the few brief glimpses I had of her at basketball games I knew absolutely nothing about her.

I resigned myself to my fate. Bitterly, I let it slide. I believed all she had to do was tell me to 'go away'. I had failed yet again.

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## Senior Paraphenellia

We started taking field trips all over North East Texas. We went to just about any place that offered tours. I guess this had something to do with looking for a career. We'd load up in a yellow monster wih Ms. Baldwin and a driver and off we'd go.

It was March, and springtime warm, but we all wore our letter jackets. There wasn't any way we were going to leave these beloved coats at home. We wore them at every opportunity.

Everyone had ordered their patches and we waited impatiently for them. We ordered them one day in the History room, filling out order forms and trying to remember what we had won and what honors had fallen to us.

I was asked by someone what patches I was going to get. I guessed I'd get what ever patches Danny was getting because he and I had similar careers spanning pretty much the same times.

The guy inexpicably got mad at me.

"Are you going to get 'All District' and 'Most Valuble Player' too?"

I just gawked at this jerk and went away to my own place in the room, leaving him to scratch his head in his own confusion. Randy was absent on this day, probably dealing with the Marine Recruiters. I puzzled my way through it, getting what I considered the most important because there was no way I could afford the entire load of titles and honors we had gained.



We had our most cherished award of our 1972 Regional Quarter Finals in basketball. This was put on a patch in the shape of the State of Texas. Our 'District Champions, 1973-74' went on a football shaped patch, worn on one sleeve. I went on to buy two sets of "62"s to go on each shoulder.

A lot of guys bought Buffalo Head emblems to wear on one shoulder. I could have got one, but I didn't like the way they looked. I looked at what I had filled out in the order form.

"I sure don't have much to put on my jacket," I thought. In six years of some type of atheletic activity or another I believed at the time that I had very little to decorate my jacket with.

In my state of mind, and stoned as I was on my medication, I had simply forgotten about the first District Championship in 11 man football, the undefeated season in Junior High, and even the undefeated season we had in this very district. There were enough honors available to fill both sleeves, the front, and even the back. There were tons of honors for us all. A lot of us had forgotten them. More of us couldn't afford them.

I figured up my tally and it was quite expensive! I wanted a second set of numbers to go below my 62, to represent my basketball season, but I could not afford it. I'd settle for my two patches and my football numbers.

There was a lot of chattering among us about what patch to put where. We all agreed that the Regional Quarterfinals patch goes on the right chest of the jacket. Those of us who had been there knew just what a fantastic season that had been because of the way everything had fallen apart in basketball immediately after that. Danny, Gunner, Rickey Graham, and I were the ONLY ones in the entire class who could get these patches. Manager James Kelly could have gotten one too, but because he gave up that job on his Junior and Senior year that costs him a chance at a jacket.

Philip Andrews and Dan Webb could buy the jacket if they wanted the patches. I don't think any of them did.

Julia Mahand knew exactly what she wanted. She got the Football Sweetheart patch, numerous basketball awards, and the other honors she rated. The simple red jacket meant as much to her as ours did to us.

Like us, Julia wore her jacket on field trips too.

We were coming back from this field trip from somewhere and we stopped at a place for munchies and fuel for the bus. We barrelled out of the bus and fell upon the hapless attendants with money for our purchases. We were a blur of red jackets and blue-jeans.

I went immediately to a toy rack in the store and saw a model of a T-33 Jet Trainer by Hawk for \$1.50. Rapidly counting my coins I found to my delight that I could afford this model. I got it and a cola and sat on the bus next to Randy.



"I had a model of one of these back when I was in Grade School! Its a cool model!"

"Oh yeah?" Randy said, "I don't build many models."

I liked the artwork on the box and the simple assembly instructions. I built this model according to the instructions, but it was crushed when we moved in late 1974. Since that time Hawk model company has passed into oblivion and with it most of my chances to replace that model. I still find bits and pieces of it and I remember that day on the highway someplace many years ago. It was a good memento of my Senior Year, and I found another one much later in a hobby store in Dallas. I still have that one, box and all.

Because it was a little warm to wear our letter jacket all the time, we took to hanging our jackets on the left shoulder, Hussar style. It looked cool and it didn't wad the jacket up. All through March we could be seen with these jackets on in that fashion, until it got way too warm to even think of bringing the jacket to school.

When the patches arrived it was met with great enthusiasm. I looked at my small stack of goodies and I wondered why so little costs so blasted much. I didn't realize I had bought so few!

Senior rings were soon here and everyone who could afford the gold and red piece of jewlery got them. Girls and guys could be seen strutting their rings with great pride. I could not afford one so I did without. It didn't bother me. It was just one more thing to get later on in life when I had the money. Herman didn't have a Senior ring, so I figured I was in good company.

Herman also didn't have a Letter Jacket, though he had enough basketball time to be awarded one. I can't say why he was overlooked.

Everybody who bought a ring followed a traditional pattern. The ring was gold, with a red stone in the center. The red stood for our school colors. To get a birthstone of some other color was not in style.

By the time I got my mother to sew my patches on my letter jacket it was too hot to wear so I hung it in my closet. Washings and wear would take a toll on the jacket, causing the sleeves to crack and go stiff. I eventually had to junk the jacket, but I transferred all its patches to a new jacket I bought in the Crossroads Mall in Greenville, 15 years later.

When I went to college I liked to wear my jacket around the campus. With my small size and all the awards I had, I got some curious stares by the 5-A and 4-A school jocks there. Once I was in English class, stoned on my medication and with my jacket draped over the chair-back I was sitting in. I was listening to the professor drone on about something or other when he addressed me directly.

"Mr. Tarrant, is that your jacket on the seat back?"

I looked up, wondering what was up.

"Yes sir."

"Did you play football in Highschool?"

"Yes sir."

"You have my unqualified admiration!"

I just grinned back, a little embarrassed by this special attention. Heck, I had paid my dues. These were my battle honors. This was my reward. It was part of the grand adventure of being a Lone Oak Buffalo. The professor had seen only a tiny part of the story my friends and I had lived, and what we had done. I looked the egghead over and knew he didn't have what it took to be a Buffalo. That's why it surprised him that I was what I was. He couldn't do it. He was envious.

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## Yearbooks

It was finished! My silver-green Corvette model was complete! This little model was my project for over 3 months, off and on, and I had worked on it with great care. The interior was red, and had lots of gauges. The wheels were red also. I had painted all the chrome stripping on the windshields and windows. The Corvette name on the front fenders had a dab of silver on it to bring it out.

Under the hood was a 4 cylinder engine, paying homage to the so called Gasoline Shortage that terrified us all so much back in 1974. The engine was my own custom touch. It was the extra engine in an Opel G.T. customizing option that I had built before. I had a choice of engines in that kit, so I put it in my Corvette model.

The little Vette had a steerable front end that flexed on tiny coil springs. I just had to show this thing to my buddies at school!

I cleaned out a safe spot in my gym bag, carefully cushioned the car, and took it to the most dangerous place on earth for personal possessions; to school.



Both girls and boys have learned what happens when a person brings something to school that they value. It can be lost, broken, stolen, taken by a teacher, or the person who brought the item to school can be held up to vicious ridicule by fellow classmates. Is it a model built with care and craftsmanship or is it a baby's playtoy? That would depend on who saw it. I kept the model out of the area of operation of the class jerks and idiots. It was safe in my locker, wrapped in a towel, and hidden in my gym bag.

I carefully showed the car to Randy and he admired the way I had put it together. He thought it was really neat. I wanted to show it to Coach Taylor, and get his more adult opinion.

Our yearbooks came out about this time and I was filled with anticipation over this. For the first and last time in school I was going to buy a yearbook. In all my years of school I could not get the money to buy any yearbook. This being my Senior year my parents put out the cash to buy this noble tome.

To set up this year book a lot of data had to be collected and pictures compiled. We were asked to write down for future reference what we had gained in the way of honors while we were in school. This left a lot of us confused, at best. None of us knew it also included Junior High and Grade School so we naevly put down only our highschool stats, and even that was incomplete at best.

I had forgotten my first year of football, brief though it was. Randy Price forgot his entire first 2 years of football all together! Everybody who was on the football team put down they were Captains this year. Herman forgot to put down his Boy's State award and I forgot mine. Rickey Graham did not put down that he had played basketball for 2 years, even the great year of 1972. I don't know why.

Vicki Pipkin and Julia Mahand had the most honors, offices, and club membership of anyone. Both girls had 10 lines of honors each!

School wide honors and elections were held, and a lot of special titles were passed out. Vicki Pipkin got Miss L.O.H.S. Randy got Most Handsome and Herman and I never let him forget it, calling him 'Most Beautiful'. Danny Bowman got Mr. Personality and Most Sudious. Frank Payne got Most Dependable. Ronald Posey got Best Dressed. Julia and Robert got Most Courteous. Robert? That was a hoot! Robert getting 'Most Courteous' made me, Randy, Herman, James Kelly, Rickey Graham and even Gunner howl with laughter.

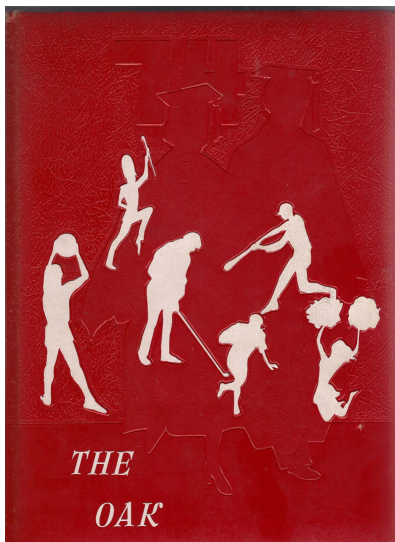
Of special notice here was that I had been nominated for Buffalo Booster. I was surprised and humbled that enough people still thought well enough of me to try to honor me with that title. Randy Oakes got the title in the elections. In that popularity contest I didn't stand a chance against Oakes. Sheron Stewart and Randy Oakes also got Best All Around. Class Favorites were Martha Sale and David Dillon. David Dillon? I think Gary Dooley would have been a better choice, but what the heck. There are times I think my fellow classmates were quite insane. Of course, I was nuts too, so I had good company. Martha, of course, was a perfect choice, because she was our favorite girl to pick on in class. Therefore she was a class favorite.

Randy Price and Robert Vice got F.H.A. Beaus. I have no idea what that meant, and Randy couldn't cook for all I knew of.

Vicki Pipkin was elected F.F.A. Sweetheart. I cast my ballot for her in that election. She was my friend, and I thought well of her.

Still, Julia outdid them all by winning the Football Sweetheart crown. That put her head and shoulders above the title of even Miss L.O.H.S., because that is how prestigious the title of Homecoming Queen was.

Our yearbooks of 1974 arrived several weeks after this hullabaloo, and were issued out to those who bought them. There was a sense of great anticipation. Randy and I got ours and immediately opened them and looked over the goodies within. All other classmates did likewise.



Soon it began to rankle some of us. There seemed to be an overabundance of pictures of the girls in our class. Barely a page went by that didn't have Vicki Pipkin or Sheron Stewart's timeless smile on it. Elaine's inscrutable face was everywhere. There were no game scores, no records, and darn little in the way of even action photos of the football team. There were no sideline pictures of the coaches. A lot of the male portion of the class began to grumble.

The yearbook of 1974 was dedicated to Karla Little, who was married to Larry Little. She was killed in a car crash that miraculously spared her child. She was well known and liked throughout the school. It was the least we could do for them.

There was a flurry of signings going on soon after the books arrived. Yearbooks were passed around and signed in the back with short private messages to the owner.

I signed Gary's yearbook with what I considered a discription of how he acted in class. I wrote he was at his desk, his hand raised in an obscene jesture, waving it about to the class at large, and saying "Up yours!"

Gary held a lot of us in contempt, but then he held most of the entire human race in contempt too. It was just his style.

Garys' folks would read the above discription of his antics, and got a little angry at him. Gary said he had to do some fast talking.

I signed all of my friend's yearbooks, some non-friends, and more girl's yearbooks than I thought possible. It was a tremendous and much needed ego-boost to discover a lot of the local ladies cared enough to want me to sign their books. Perhaps I should have looked a little closer to home than across the lake at the children's home over there. I believed that I had, but I can't say. Maybe there were more might-have-beens than I thought.

In typing class, which was now little more than a study-hall, we attacked the Year-Book Staff. We told them of our displeasure with this edition of the annual. Vicki Pipkin was stunned. She studded and paled, then tried to explain to a group of hard-headed small-town boys why she took the course she did with our yearbooks. I know she was surprised at this attack, and shocked by it. Some of us chewed on her for a while about the content of the yearbook until she didn't know what to say.

In our opinion the book was too 'Girlified'. There were no males on the Yearbook Staff, just 7 girls. That alone was enough to upset us. To present us with a book like this, in our opinion, was not right.

Sheron Stewart, not nearly as shy as she appeared, tried to defend Vicki Pipkin and the yearbook, but she only took a verbal lashing too. She got mad at all of us and stomped away, not going to put up with this nonsense from us. (And we wondered why Lone Oak girls usually don't marry Lone Oak boys!)

In spite of all this, nobody demanded their money back or threw their yearbooks away. Many would be lost in the years to come. Some would be destroyed by fire or water, others would be eaten by bugs. Some would be lost, forgotten, left behind, or even stolen.

My yearbook, my first and only, with all it's wonderful messages and autographs to me by some people who I loved like brothers and sisters, was lost sometime in the mid-1980s when I left it with a girlfriend. When she and I broke up she moved away and I never saw my yearbook again.

Thus, after I got my yearbook with it's red leather cover I put it in my locker. It would go home with me that evening. Now I had to show my model car to Coach Taylor.

Randy and I went into the gym with my priceless cargo hidden safely in the gym bag. We found Coach Taylor in the locker room.

Coach Taylor was big brother and mentor to a lot of us. Unlike Coach Brookins and Coach Fannin, who were the law, Coach Taylor was approachable. He pretty well liked what we liked in spite of his being 5 or so years older than us. He had the college degree, but he hadn't forgotten what it was to be a high-school kid and all the trauma that go with that.

Coach Taylor was sorting out the uniforms and pads for the next year, deciding what needed to go to the cleaners. He greeted Randy and I as we entered the locker room.



"Hey boys," he said, greeting us with his friendly smile, "what cha got there, Charlie?"

I carefully unwrapped the car and showed it to him. He examined it with an expert-like eye to detail, and treated it very carefully.

"Very good," he commented, "Sporty and with fuel economy, too. Thats real nice, Charlie."

I showed him a special feature of the interior.

"I like lots of guages," I told him.

"Yeah, that makes sense."

I showed him the working suspension and all the features of the little model, and then I carefully put it away, back in the gym bag and wrapped in the towel. After that we chatted about whatever came to mind and spent about 10 minutes with Coach Taylor. Then Randy Price and I left the gym.

Coach Taylor watched us leave then returned to the task at hand. It must have felt strange to him. This was his last year as a coach. Because his family was getting larger he could no longer make it on the starvation wages he was getting as a teacher, coach, bus driver, and all around good-guy. He was going to leave Lone Oak and try to find a better paying job in his old home town of Arp.

Randy and I did not know this. I don't know if anyone in our class did, except him, his family, and maybe the faculty.

He was Lone Oak's last 8 man football Junior High Coach, with a stunning record of 13 and 1 in the two years we were there for him. His teaching career began and would end with us. That made him even closer to all of us in the class of 1974. He was, and is, one of Big Red's best coaches.



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Films and Shows



Aside from football films I didn't see that many films in high school. Coach Taylor showed some films in a hygiene class he was teaching, but he refused to show a film about childbirth. He knew us well enough to know that this collection of hound-dogs and prudes that made up my class were not sufficiently sophisticated to view a film like this.

Back in the 60s films were shown directly on a free-standing screen that the teacher lugged in and placed in front of the projector. In the 70s a combination projector and screen was invented. It was mounted on a desk sized roll around cart, and had the screen placed 90 degrees to the mounted projector. A mirror reflected the image to the back of the screen, making it sort of like a t.v. set. The projectors all had built in speakers.

Sound would sometimes go out on these projectors, or the machine would go haywire and sounded like it was underwater. On other times the film would break, refuse to take up, or come untreaded, causing a panic stop of the projector by the teacher.

None of the films we watched were real cinematic masterpieces. Sometimes we watched films I could not understand the point of. We once saw a film documenting about a B-25 ("Lady be Good") that crashed in the desert in Libya in 1942 and how the crew all perished in the desert. Just what was the point of all this?

Sometimes just before Christmas we'd go into the auditorium and see a stop-motion animated film on The Night Before Christmas. Other times we'd see a film about various obscure topics that just didn't interest us much, like the B-25 film.

Sometimes the school hired a travelling dog act or a magician to entertain us about once a year. These types of shows were great entertainment. When I was in the first or second grade in Greenville they had this guy come to Lamar School who had this trained black bear. I was called up on stage to give this gigantic animal a piece of candy. I took one look at the biggest animal I had ever seen in my entire 7 years of life and I bailed off the stage like a paratrooper. Everybody thought it was funny, and I was terrified.

The magic act was really great, and this guy had a long running, non-stop show of one vaudeville magic trick after the other. He got kids from the audience on stage and his tricks were especially funny.

The dog-act had dogs of all sizes and breeds jumping through hoops, walking on their fore-legs on a narrow board suspended on two chairbacks, and hundreds of tricks we wished we could get our dogs to do. This was one good show, and again vaudevillian.

A few times a travelling evangelist came around, pounding his bible and seeking souls to save. He spit fire and brimstone and we prayed a lot, but I don't think he accomplished much. I didn't look upon him with the same sense of trust I did Brother Fox, my local preacher. For somebody to come out of nowhere and to want to do something as intimate as to pry into my most innermost thoughts was a bit much.

Once we saw a special movie about Venereal Disease and how to avoid getting it. For most of us it was comical and low-brow entertaining. I don't think it got its message across except what the symptoms might be. AIDS didn't exist in the 1970s.

Watching the films running usually had our attention. The film could go bad at any time, so it was entertainment to keep one eye on the projector. Some people would doze right off as soon as the lights were turned off. If the film was a real turkey I would get drowsy myself. Nobody took notes and note taking was something we simply didn't do in high school. There was enough light in the room to see by, so if I got bored I started drawing.

Sometimes a teacher would treat us to the novelty of running the projector backwards. This was 10 years before the first V.C.R.s, so the novelty of seeing people walk backwards and picking up thier tracks in the snow was still entertaining.

That is how it was with stage shows and films back in school.

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## A Magic Box

Class Toys and Distractions



Some of us got novelites from time to time that were perfectly legal to carry around. Most of these were in the form of pencil sharpeners. While the Space Program was in high regard and very popular some of us got pencil sharpeners that were in the form of a Mercurey space capsule. These were quite a neat toy, especially for someone like myself who was totally gone on the space program. The little capsule sharpened pencils, too. I still have it because it is a good representation of a Mercury capsule.

Once I got a representation of a bust of Ulyssess S. Grant that was a pencil sharpener. As a good Southerner I held President Grant in some contempt. Herman and I referred to him as Useless S. Grant, and made quite a bit of fun of the old general.



Fritoe Lay company came out with a collection of novelty erasers and I wound up with at least 2 of W.C. Fritoes. One was green and the other one was blue. The blue one became the 'President' of my collection of inch high figures that I had in my box. There was a green Rat Fink novelty I had gotten on one of my trips to the skating rink. I also had an angry looking Humpty Dumpty, a strange looking mouse-like figure, and a yellow chicken.

Sometimes I'd break these figures out of my cigar box and set them up and my buddies would break out in a fit of role playing. This reflected our view of how people behaved. Often our

characters would pick on the little mouse-like guy unmercifully, and they often resorted to role-play violence.

This might reflect on us badly, exposing innermost thoughts on how we would react to certain situations. Throwing our weight around and ridiculing a little guy was just exactly how the jocks behaved.

The box these little figures lived in was a typical Lovera cigar box that had a lot of wear and tear on it's cardboard body. It had miles of atheletic tape around it, barely holding the worn out box together. There was a smaller box inside used as an organizer to hold the pencils, pens, rulers, and other goodies in some symbolence of order. The organizer also prevented the lid from being forced down and inward. A false bottom was in the box, in the form of a sheet of notebook paper. Under this was stored secret items of great importance, like Boles Girl's letter or a diary. To get to this the entire box had to be unpacked. So it was relatively secure to put stuff in the secret bottom. Still, some people got into my notes and secret stuff. Oddly, nobody ever gave me a hard time about what was found, and some even expressed sympathy over my frustations.

In contrast to this was the time that the Jocks found Gonga's secret list of girls he liked and had rated. For about 2 days he was lambasted and verbally attacked. He put up with this stoicly and patiently waited for this to blow over. The list was partially read aloud by Robert in study hall! Some of the girls on his list were more embarrassed than he was. Tact and couth were non-existent.



The lid of my cigar box was barely on. It was held loosly in place by several types of duct tape and atheletic tape. The lid was heavily decorated with cutouts from comic books and the Sunday Funnies, and some stuff I had done with multicolor tape. It looked gaudy.



On the inside of the box lid was a cherished artifact; the identification tape off my helmet. This was a simple piece of athletic tape I had once put on the back of my football helmet and used a red marker to write my name on. I had taken it off when I had turned my helmet in.

I did get away with some momentos, I suppose.

My box was held in contempt by some people who considered it juvenile and childish. When these people needed a pen or pencil they always came to me. Childish indeed.

I had this particular box since at least the 8th grade. I had one all the time I was in school.

The gear I usually carried around from class to class was my clipboard, my box, and what ever book was needed for a particular class. I'd go to the locker, put one book in and take out another, then go to class. I always had the comic strip I drew called the Zigoatian Chronicals with me so if things got boring in class I would draw a page or two in this book.

If I didn't have the Chronicals with me for what ever reason I'd usually end up doodling on a piece of notebook paper. Most of this stuff was totally off the wall, and the things I put in the Chronicals were only slightly better. Nobody but my clique read the Chronicals, and very few outside that tight little group saw my drawings. Usually that was because they simply did not care, and wouldn't understand them if they tried.

Herman actually managed to copy my drawing style, but had nowhere near my speed. He got quite good at it, and drew more detailed backgrounds. I would usually ignore backgrounds or just put in a few lines or some such. Together Herman and I designed some truly spectacular space ships and tried to work out all the angles from life support to propulsion. It had to be feasible, look cool, and most of all it had to be easy to draw.

It was an escape from stress, bullying classmates, and boredom.

Most of the desks in High School had formica tops. These could be drawn on with a pencil and not the damage the desk itself. Often there would be messages from unknown school-mates from another class or even a grade level. Entire conversations were going on, done on the a desk-top. This was not mean or insulting, but quite cordial. The conversations and tic-tac-toe games would come an abrupt halt when the desk would be cleaned by the janitor. A couple of squirts of window cleaner and a week of correspondence disappeared forever.

This was oddly a lot like the computer posting pages that became popular in the early 2000s. Post a message and wait to see who answers.

Complicated messages were left in pages of books for later owners to find. They would say something like "go to page 19". On page 19, for instance, we might find "go to page 3". The message would take the reader all over the book to finally end on a page with an inane message like "Hi!"

One other thing was animated cartoons in a book. Flipping the pages made a simple stick figure kick a ball, dance, or move in any of a number of ways. It appeared to me as though I wasn't the only one bored in study hall!

In the History Room Mr. Chambliss hung a copy of the Declaration of Independence. Some of us stole up to this document and actually signed it. Mr. Chambliss did not do anything about this because he could not prove that we actually signed it or somebody else had signed our names to it.

I never saw any real debate over historical subjects, the likes of which I would see in college. Julia did come up with some interesting points that Mr. Chambliss was hard pressed to answer, though he was impressed with her range. For the most part we all just sat there and vegetated while any teacher of a particular class droned on. We took what was offered, and did not question, but somehow we absorbed enough of the lesson to pass it. School would soon be over, we were Seniors, and we were looking forward to the Last Summer.

As Book-keeping class wound up we were told to turn in our books. Without ceremony Randy Price reached over, got my book, handed me his, and turned in the heavily damaged book as his. I was stunned. Randy had not let me down and he accepted his guilt for the damage. In the end we both got away with it because Ms. Baldwin just tossed the books in a box after counting them to be sure she one book for each class member.

Sometimes I could not believe the stuff we got away with!

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"My honour is dearer to me than my life."

Cervantes, "Don Quixote"

"When a good man is hurt, all who would be called good must suffer with him."

Euripides

## Sabbatical

March had been a lousy month, basically standard for how the entire year of 1974 was going. Boles Girl had turned me in to her house-parents. I had gotten Randy mad at me. Sports had lost a lot of their luster and seemed to be little more than a distraction from the boredom. Our yearbooks were sub-par. I was usually stoned most of the time from taking my medication. I felt chronically lousy.

Randy was warming back to me. He knew I was mentally in very bad shape, so he got an idea. He planned for us to go on a trip to a lake near the Gulf Coast, as a celebration of our graduation. All I had to do was save up about \$1000 (!) for a new motorcycle, get a license, and off we'd go. This distraction worked, but it was to cause a lot of friction in my family.

In late March Herman, Ray Higgins, Randy Price, myself, and a couple of other guys went to a campout on the beautiful muddy, fishy, shores of Lake Tawakoni. Randy had built a lean-to out of poles and a tarp. I brought a couple of old quilts and other stuff.

We made ourselves comfortable and as the sun went down we got on with the camp-out. Randy had got some bottled beer and he was in the process of getting very drunk. This ticked me off because Randy was acting like a fool and wouldn't listen to reason.

I guess Randy had his reasons. He was going into the Marines all by himself. He was now facing his future alone, without me. Things had gone wrong for me in many ways and he hated to see me in this state. So much would have gone a different way if only a few minor things had changed. He needed to jettison all this tension he had built up inside him but never let out. Now he was doing it. That didn't make me any happier at the time, though.

Randy was beer-bonging and he got splattered to the 4 winds rather quickly. After about 4 quick bottles he sat wobbly near the fire and decided he'd cook dinner. He took a potato and began to hack at it with a razor sharp steak knife. He had cut himself several times and actually bled into the frying pan. He was so wiped out he just didn't care.

After a few weird hours of this I talked Ray Higgins into letting me ride his motorcycle. I did this partially to get away from Randy the Rabbit, who was getting quite obnoxious, and to have a distraction.

Randy saw me ride the 175 cautiously through the darkness, feeling my way around the shoreline so I wouldn't get any nasty surprises. There was a 10 foot drop-off to the beach and I wanted to know my terrain. Randy liked my technique. He didn't know I could ride a motorcycle and it awed him in his drunken state. I guess he figured I was just full of surprises.

Once away from Rabbit and the gang I tooted around in the darkness and my thoughts came to me, as they do in situations like this. This was bad, because my thoughts carried me to a place across the lake called Boles Home, and 'her'.

I stopped the bike, got off, and sat on a lonely outcropping near the sheer cliff to the beach. I could see our campfire to my back and right. I looked back across the lake at where I imagined Boles Home to be. I felt a great sadness and an aching sense of loss. Everything I felt I had tried to achieve had come to nothing. Now here I was in the last 3 months of my 13 years of public schooling. Why had it all come to this?

I had to make something right. I had to salvage something out of this dark horror that my life had been reduced to. I made up my mind right then in the quiet darkness, listening to the waves, that I could not let the Boles Girl think I was some sort of animal out here. I had to apologize for whatever stupid thing I had said or done to her. I quietly made a decision.

"Hey, Charlie, are you okay?"

I looked over to my right. There was Herman and Randy.

"Yeah, why?"

Rabbit laughed.

"We thought you had wrecked out or something," Herman said.

I looked back out over the jet-black waters.

"Naw. I just had to come over here and think for a while."

"Think? Think about what?" Herman asked, sitting next to me.

I pointed out over the lake, into the darkness, North and East.

"Boles Home."

Those two words said it all. Randy rolled his eyes.

"Come on, man! We didn't come out here to get all funky about some dumb ole girl! Come on back to the camp! Let's drink some booze and loosen up!"

I nodded and they went back to the fire. I cranked up the bike and drove it in.

We ate some food, drank some beer, and chatted about nonsense for several hours. I rode the bike some more, then one of us wiped out by the camp and that ended the bike riding for the night. I picked on Herman, and he picked right back. As the night wore on we all eventually ran out of things to talk about and soon all of us were snoring remarkably loudly under the shealter of the lean-to. It was early spring and the nights were cool. There were no bugs this time of year, so I slept quite soundly between Herman and Ray.

I awoke early and I noticed it was daylight. I had no watch so I had no idea what time it was. All of the other guys were still sacked out. I got up quietly.

I was pretty much all to myself and I knew if I diddled around camp I'd just wake everybody up. I looked at Ray's blue Honda 175. The key was in the ignition. I put on the helmet, then I pushed the bike away from camp and hopped on it. Once I was out of earshot I cranked it and rode quietly off.

I just drove for miles around the lake area, thinking and killing time. I had made up my mind last night so all I had to do was go about it the right way. If the Boles Girl was still mad at me I would more than likely be on my way to jail or some other sort of entanglement with the law. If that was what it was going to take then so be it. I'll take my medicene.

I rode back to camp and parked the motorbike. I took off the helmet and put it on the handlebars. I saw Randy sitting next to the campfire, looking very ill and hung-over.

"Where you been?" he called to me.

"Just riding."

I sat down in the grass not far from Randy. Most of the guys were still asleep.

"You ride pretty good," Randy said.

"I've been riding bicycles for years. I guess I get it from there."

"Beginners luck, then," Rabbit said, grinning.

The guys begin to stir and we found ways to kill time. We played Zulus at the expense of Herman and the others. Randy and a couple of other guys went bike riding, moving down the drop to the beach. They tore up the dark sand down there as they tooled up and down the beach.

Soon the party broke up and we pulled down the camp. The guys went home. I helped load the poles and tarp into the van and then Randy and I drove off to Wayne Manor.

Randy's father soon took us to the Honda House in Greenville. I looked over a bike with great curiosity. It was out of my price range but I figured I could talk my father into it. I figured wrong.

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## Victory and Honors

Sometime in the early spring of the school year Ms. Bratton came around and asked me if I wanted to be in U.I.L. Confused as to what U.I.L. might be I asked her and I did not clearly understand her explanation. I figured I had nothing to lose, so I just nodded O.K. She happily signed me up and I just returned to my drawing.



Herman was asked to go to U.I.L. also, by virtue of a charming little tale he had written for children. Ms. Bratton liked what she had read and thought that Herman might do well in the Spring Meet. Herman accepted.

I was legally but unhappily stoned on my medication almost all the time. I was perpetually numb. I didn't pay much attention to things that went on around me and I forgot about a lot, too. I just drew my cartoons, chatted with my buddies, thought about Boles Girl, and wondered about my future. I was experiencing something I'd just as soon do without; my own private purgatory. Every now a little beam of light would reach down in the Pit, but it soon sputtered and faded away, leaving me to grope alone in the darkness for a way out. I was scared when I wasn't stoned. Somehow I kept going.

One day about 20 of us were summoned to a room next to the Home Ec room. This room was richly furnished and pannelled like the den of a common house. I don't know what this room is used for (and at the time I didn't care) but we were told to huddle on and around a couch in there. I dared to sit next to Cathy Smith who seemed to be a little uptight about me sitting there. Herman sat behind me. It took a bit for me to figure out what was going on. When I saw Ms. Baldwin with the camera I knew this was some sort of yearbook picture. Oh well, one more.





After the shot I forgot all about that and when the yearbooks came out I vaguely remembered the picture and what it was for.

After our camp-out I felt some better. I had purged a few demons that night and I was feeling better when I came to school on April 1st. I had made a sort of peace with myself. At school there was the usual April Fool's stuff. Some of it turned out not to be so funny.

We were sitting in the first class of the day. I was not entirely awake yet, but not quite stoned on my medication at this time. Randy Price came over to me.

"Charlie! Guess what!"

I looked over at him. He had a friendly smile on his face and an eager look in his eyes. Herman was nearby.

"Whats up, Rabbit?"

"Boles Girl sent me another letter!"

Randy got my undivided attention.

"What did she say?" I got a sudden surge of fear that she might be interested in Randy. What a kick in the head that would be!

"She said she is sorry and wants to make up. She wants you to write her again, and everything. She even wants to meet you!"

My mind swam. How could this be?

"I wanna see the letter!"

"I don't got it. It's at home."

"Then we'll go to your place at lunch. I wanna read this letter!"

It didn't make sense that Boles Girl would hang me out to dry then write a letter of appeal to one of my friends. Something didn't feel right, but I was grasping at straws.

"We can take your Falcon, Randy, and it shouldn't take but a few minutes."

Randy thought for a few moments.

"Naw, I wanna eat in the cafeteria."

I cajoled, pleaded, begged, but Randy rebuffed me at each turn. What was the deal here? Then he lowered the boom.

"April Fool, Charlie."

My eyes glazed over. April Fool? **April Fool?!** I wanted to go out on the main road and just lay there until someone ran over me and put me out of my misery. April Fool indeed!

Randy laughed about it, Herman called me a "Persistant Fool!" and then Randy apologized. Ha ha. They had their laughs. Thanks a lot fellas.

On April 2nd, to my subdued and hazy surprise, they put all of us U.I.L. participants on a bus and trundled us away. We zig-zagged through Hunt County and wound up at Cooper, of all places. This was before lunch. I had never seen Cooper school in the daylight before, and I had no idea where the heck I was or really why I was here. To me, it was just another field trip. Once I realized what was up I got real nervous and I started bombarding Ms. Bratton and Ms. Baldwin with question after question.

Good Grief! I was in Cooper! This is deep in enemy territory! Had I known where I was I think I would have flipped out! As it was I just had to let it slide. I found a distraction that Boles Girl might be somewhere in this red brick school house. Ah, to see her again! What didn't occur to my soggy brain was the fact that this was a 17-A meet and Boles Girl was in 36-B. If she was attending a U.I.L. meet somewhere it was miles away. Even if she was here what could I do? If I came up to her to try to talk to her she'd probably run away or sic a boyfriend on me. I had to put these thoughts out of my mind.

I looked at the clock on one of the walls of the school and took another one of my medications, right on schedual. I calmed down in minutes and I was soon feeling that terrible lost feeling of numbness that comes with this. I was pulled back into my fuzzy, dark, netherworld where I could think my own thoughts. I was virtually alone in this fog. It was horrible, but the doctors said I had to do this. I hated it.

We were escorted to our respective events. I entered a classroom I'd never seen before and would never see again. I sat down and some lady explained the rules of the event to us. She talked for a while and I was in such a state that I could only absorb part of it.

I was trying to mentally compose a letter to Boles Girl to apologize. Perhaps she would understand and give me a second chance! I came back to reality when the papers were passed around and one was placed on my desk, face down. We would be timed in this event. We had to re-write the story in a shorter, easier to understand format. This would be a piece of cake! Each of us was assigned a number to identify our papers with. That way they could not identify who or from what school to the judges.

On the word "Begin", we all flipped over the yellow paper and started reading. It was a story about teaching children with educational toys and the like. It was dumb reading and very over-written. I put my number on the paper and proceeded to rewrite.

In a short while I had a simpler, easier to read story that I felt was okay. I re-read what I had written, shrugged, and gave it to the monitor. A guy, struggling with the story, saw me get up and looked at me with disbelief. I had finished and he hadn't even started yet! I had seen that look before, when we had scored heavily on an opposing football team in the 3rd quarter. It was the look of impending doom. He had lost, and knew it.

I was allowed to leave the room, now that I was finished. I wandered around the halls of the school for a while. Herman was still in his event someplace. I then talked to Ms. Baldwin and Ms. Bratton. Both of them asked me how I thought I had done. I just shrugged and hung around for a while. I didn't care all that much. As bad as things had been going lately I didn't expect to do well.

Soon I wandered back to the bus and found good ole Coach Taylor. He was my anchor, and he was my first Coach. I needed to have him near me like a drowning man needs a life preserver.

Coach Taylor knew something was seriously wrong with ole Charlie-O, but he wasn't sure what. He guessed it was just over failing my Army physical. He didn't know the half of it! Still, he figured that if I wanted to tell him about what was eating at me I would someday.

We chatted a while, and he sent me to get a cola at a nearby cafe. I wasn't thirsty, in spite of the warm spring day, but I'd sure as heck get my Coach a cola if he wanted it. He gave me the money for it, and off I went. In a short while I returned. I handed him the drink and sat down in the bus. Coach Taylor gave his drink a disgusting look after one sip.

"Charlie, did you urinate in this thing, or something?"

Amused, I said no. What was the problem? Apparently the syrup was out at the fountain in the cafe and nobody knew it. Coach Taylor had almost all carbonated water.

Because we were where we were and money was most precious to a teacher, Coach Taylor decided to investigate.

"I'm gonna see about this," he said, and went to find out why he had ended up with such a lousy tasting concoction for his hard earned money.

He left the bus and I went back to pondering my questionable future. Coach Taylor got a better tasting replacement drink, and we settled down in the bus. I began to doze in the pleasant springtime warmth. Herman came on and sat quietly reading a sports magazine.

We had about 20 individuals entered in U.I.L. Girls dominated in numbers, being of a more intellectual bent than most guys at Lone Oak. Guys from other schools who were considered real brains were here. Of the Senior Class from Lone Oak only Julia Mahand, Herman Crist, Vicki Pipkin, and I were here.

I certainly felt out of place. In my event I had been surrounded by intellectual looking females and well dressed boys. I figured I didn't have a snowball's chance. That would fit right in with the way things were going. I fully expected nothing at all out of this.

Ms. Baldwin and Ms. Bratton found me all but asleep on the bus. They roused me out.

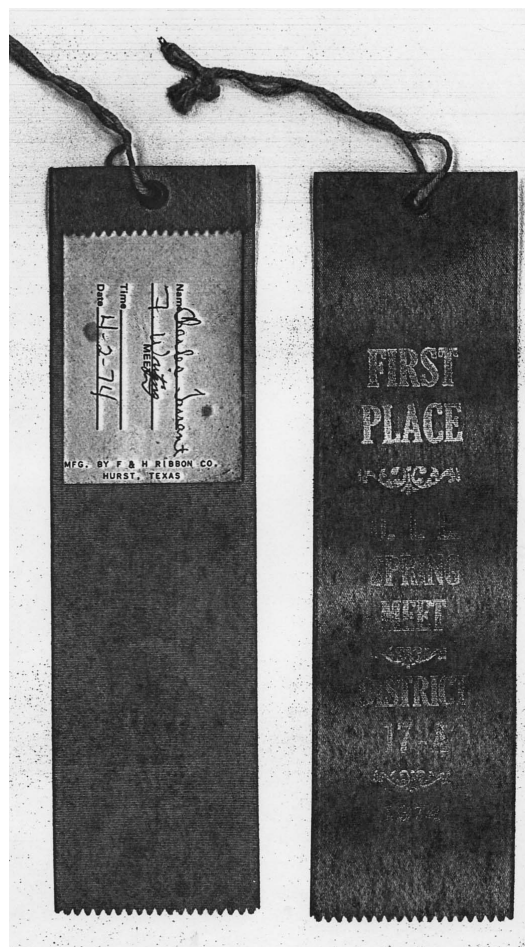
"Come on, Charles, they're giving out the awards!"

So what? Well, if these two pleasant ladies wanted me to go, I'd go. This was a great big hairy deal over nothing, in my opinion.

Scratching my oily scalp I followed the two ladies back into the school house. I then stood there while the awards were passed out.

I couldn't believe it when my name was called in Feature Writing as First Place! I almost fell on the floor! Ms. Baldwyn and Ms. Bratton were delighted. Good grief! I had won!

The adrenalin rush had countered the medication and I there while I was handed the first blue ribbon I had ever won in my life. It had my event on it, and my name on the back on a cardboard label. I was totally speechless. The two teachers who brought me here beamed smiles at me.



Of the 20 or so people that Lone Oak had sent to U.I.L. in 1974 only 3 would go to Regional. They were Lana Slemmons and Tina Abbot in Debate, and me in Feature Writing.

I was solidly floored by this. This was the first individual award I had ever won. I held the ribbon like it was a newborn baby. This was completely my single victory. I was honored and humbled by this. What had I, such a cad and scoundrel that not even the girl I loved would write to me, done to deserve such an honor? I was not worthy of it, though I had won it.

I showed Coach Taylor my ribbon. He congratulated me soundly for my victory. I had been in the contest with over 10 other people and I had come away victorious. The Captain wasn't dead yet! I clutched the ribbon to my chest in a private moment and gave thanks. I had regained more of my destroyed self-esteem, and recaptured some of my sullied honor.

Once at Lone Oak word spread of my victory. Some of my classmates looked at me with awe and respect. I had done what none of them had done before; I had won first place at a U.I.L. meet. I had brought honor and glory to the class of 1974.

Even Jimmy Payne remarked "He must be one smart guy!"

I was pleasantly surprised by all this. I was carrying the colors for Big Red alone for the first time and I had won! I was going to Regional!

That night, while the rest of the household slept, I carefully typed out a letter to Boles Girl. I put a lot of what I had left of my soul into it. I also figured that if the police came for me or I got a summons from the courts I would just have to deal with it and face the consequences.

I told Boles Girl that I had fallen completely in love with her. To me, she was no mere sex object. I was there for much more than that. I had wanted a girlfriend, a lady. I was sorry if I hurt her. I also told her I didn't much care for her turning me in to her house parents, in spite of the fact that she was perfectly in her rights to do so. I asked to be given a second chance.

I sleepily staggered out to the mail box and put it in there about 1 a.m. I then wrapped up in my quilts in my bed and dozed off wondering if I had done the right thing.

Back at school my District Champion ribbon was on temporary display in the trophy case by the main hall. It would remain there for almost a month.

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## The Last Mile

In a great runner's agony I pushed as hard as I dared, then forced myself to push even harder. My breath came fast and hard. I was up around second place! I could see the leader, running easily along. This felt like madness.

All day I had waited for my event, the Mile Run. I had no idea where we were. The track was tarmac and I had a better time of it than on a normal dirt, cinder, or grass track. This was my last ever track meet and I was putting everything into it I had. In the back of my mind was the dark thought that I could die, right now, doing this. Men a lot more educated than I was had said so.

Forget them! I wanted to at least place in this event! I heard Rabbit, Gunner, and couple of other people cheer for me. This had to be my mile!

I then started to fade. I had blown myself out. I started to wheeze like an old steam engine. I zipped past Coach Taylor who was keeping my time. He saw what had happened and he turned into my cheerleader.

"Come on, Charlie! They're giving ribbons for the first six places! Hang on!"

I began to fall back in the race as other young men passed me. I dropped rapily from second to fifth. I couldn't catch my breath, and it would be so easy just to fall on the tarmac and stop this pain. Instead I kept pushing myself. I couldn't quit. I wouldn't quit. It wasn't the Buffalo way.

Coach Taylor cheered me on for each lap. He did everything he could do but grab me and push me along. I was spent.

A guy passed me and I was in 7th place, too far back for a ribbon. I heard the bell ring, meaning that this was the last lap. I kept pushing, my skinny legs pumping and my feet slapping on the tarmac. I threw my fogged over glasses to Randy.

On the last 220 yards I started my kick. I had trained to do this every time I ran a mile in practice. It was automatic. All I had to do was mentally flip a switch in my head and I turned on the afterburners.

I was catching up to the 6th place man. He was more exhausted than I was. His coach told him I was coming up fast. The kid looked back at me and started pushing.

I grit my teeth until I thought my jaw would break. My body protested this abuse, but I could not let up. We both dived for the finish line at the same time, but he was just a fraction of a second closer. He had beat me. I finished 7th.

Spent, I staggered around on my cool-down lap. If I stopped walking my muscles would bunch up in a most unpleasant fashion and I would get terrible leg cramps. I walked with my hands on my head, gulping down air.

Mr. Fannin came up and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Way to try, Bulchor."

I staggered under his hand. He gave me a look of concern and walked away, realizing I was exhausted. I had given all I had. He was proud of me for my effort.

I got my wind back after a while. My team mates on the track squad all said the same thing to me. It looked like I was going to win this one meet but it was too bad I had finished 7th of 8 guys.

Coach Taylor came to me and told me my time. I had ran the mile in 5 minutes, 35 seconds, a full ten seconds off my time of last year.

Later I sat on the bus feeling worn out from the exertion. I had no ribbon to show for my efforts. I was dissappointed in myself, but my friends heaped praise on me. That praise surprised me, and I had a hard time figuring it out.

I soon dozed off in the seat and nobody bothered me. I stayed there until we got back to Lone Oak. It was Friday, April 5th, 1974. I had ran my last mile.

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## The First Spring Break

Randy Price and I were getting our books out of the big wooden lockers at the area near the breezeway.

"What do you mean there aint no school next week?" I asked, "What is it, a holiday or something?"

"No, man," Randy bundled up his escaping books on his stomach, trying to keep them from hitting the floor, "It's called Spring Break. We get a whole week off."

"Far out! Who thought that up?"

"I don't know, but I'm glad they did."

I stacked my cigar box on top of my clipboard and books. Off we went to class, occasionally stopping to pick up a dropped book.

Springbreak; a whole week off in the middle of April! Who was crazy enough to think that up? I'd certainly like to take them to lunch! Just before the last month of school and after the last real sports activity we had it was just ideal to break. It was a whole, entire, unbroken week off!

Randy and I sat with Herman and we chatted about what to do with a whole week off. I had no plans at all. Herman just wanted to fish and relax at his lakeside home. Randy wanted to go to Mexia and visit his mother. None of us had any plans to spend any time together, as much as we liked each other's company.

School let out with an enthusiasm rivaled only by Christmas break and the last school day of the year. I happily went onto the bus, excited about this sudden vacation, and relieved to be away from the tedium of school work. I think Coach Taylor was also happy. This gave him a chance to spend some time with his family. There were no practices, no ball games, no track meets, just idle time and evenings off.

Our small fleet of busses rolled off in a cloud of gravel and dust, weaving around the formidable fleet of students' cars also jockeying for the gates. Everywhere students of all ages were happily driving, trotting, skipping, or walking to homes all over Lone Oak. Spring Break, the first ever, was here!

Mr. Brookins looked out of his office window at the throng abandoning the school. He smiled to himself. Spring break was going to be a big hit! He walked out into the hall. A grade school boy came pattering down the hall, remembering something he had left behind.

"Don't run," Mr. Brookins softly said to the boy.

The power of that voice slowed the youngster to a brisk walk.

"Yes sir," he acknowledged, and exited the building. Once outside the building he once more broke into a run, happy in his holiday freedom.

Now the halls were eerily quiet. It would be so for a week. Mr. Brookins checked out his beloved command, this old school building, in the way a captain checks out his ship. He closed lockers left open by impatient students. He bid each teacher goodbye as they left. He then tried to make up his mind if he wanted to wait here for the busses to return or go to his own home in town. He decided to wait. There could be a breakdown or, Heaven forbid, an accident. He went back into his office and did some paperwork until all the busses returned.

Freedom! I got off the bus on the far side of the road from my house and waited for it to pass. I checked the mailbox out of habit. No mail from Boles Girl or anybody else. I entered my house,

tossed my books and comics on the couch, and lazily shambled to my bed for my after school nap. I crashed out without seeing anyone else in the house.

There was a lot I would do in this week. I would hang out at the store with Rickey Graham and he would shock me to my toes by telling me he was getting married in June. I wished him the best. I would go hunting in the woods in front of my house, carrying my Dad's .410 shotgun. I would tromp around the woods for hours, not firing a single shot all day. I would play some football with Benjy and his buddies. I would have a ton of fun doing little things that made life good and interesting.

On the first Saturday Randy and his father, Wayne, got me and we went to the Yamaha House. I looked over the motorbikes in the place. Back then a Yamaha was a two stroke motorcycle, contemptuously called a chainsaw on wheels. It made a buzzing noise that could be heard for miles. The bike I looked over was 200 dollars cheaper than the comparable Honda. I figured I might get Dad to buy it for Graduation or something. Guess again.

That night Dad and I went round and round arguing about motorcycles. He didn't want his only son to end his life messily on the pavement from riding a motorcycle. I was mad at him and sulked about it for days. What I didn't know was that he was going to give me my first car when I started College next fall. He merely bided his time. This thing for motorbikes would pass once I had a car, and all the mobility that went with it. Mobility brought freedom, and that was what I really wanted, after all.

Part of my time was spent in the rocking chair or sitting on the floor watching T.V. shows that I had been missing. I drew a lot in the comic strips for my buddies. I hoped I could end this series of comics on a positive note by Graduation time. I spent some time tinkering with my models, but nothing major.

In the larger world many interesting things happened that I had given only passing interest. Patty Herst and the S.L.A. were running amok in California. Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth's record of 714 home runs. There was a gasoline shortage in Greenville. I had too many things happening very close to me to worry about things 'out there'.

Randy was going into the Marines. Rick was getting married, as I had said. Jerry McGee was getting married too. Dad was having a new house built for us and it was to be moved to some land he had bought south east of Lone Oak. Dad even took me to the lumber yard where it was being built in Greenville to see it under construction.

This was really neat because it was the first really new house we would ever live in! This house was being built especially for us, and us alone. I'd even have my own room. I looked forward to it.

Rick's Father, Doc Graham, had a huge house-boat dropped next to the station. He was going to try to put a new hull on the thing. The big tub was really beat up all over, and probably good for not much more than scrap. If the guy came up with the cash Doc was going to rehaul the thing. Doc had built Liberty Ships in WWII, so he knew boats. Rick and I climbed all over the hulk, and I was not really over impressed with the boat. I had been on ocean going boats out in the Gulf. Compared to them this thing was a scow!

The old worn out houseboat would sit there between the Station and a house next door for over a year, deteriorating even further. I never knew if Doc rehulled it or not. I remember that he did get a lot of underplating for it.



Springbreak ended all too soon and on Monday the 15th of April I stood again bleery-eyed at the bus stop waiting for the yellow monster. It was time to get back at it, but just for one more month and a half.

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## Western Days

"Say it aint so, Rabbit," I said.

"Yeah," Randy Price came back, "Some group of teachers decided it would be cool for us to dress up like goat ropers."

Herman leaned back in his study-hall chair and crossed his arms.

"I aint gonna do it!" he protested.

"Heck, Rabbit, I don't even have any cowboy boots," I said, "I haven't worn boots since gradeschool!"

Randy shrugged.

"Are you gonna dress up, Rabbit?" Herman asked.

Randy thought for a moment.

"I dunno. I don't even know if I got any cowboy duds."

Western Day. I shook my head. Herman and I disliked Country and Western music and a contemptable attitude for the clothes that go with it. As Nerds we simply did not wear that sort of thing. This was a predicament of sorts.

The Rabbit was somewhat more flexible. He'd wear boots and jeans because the ladies liked them. Randy would also suffer through the nasal twanging of Country music for the same reason. He could also slow dance to country music and girls just loved to slow dance. Randy knew what he liked, but dressing up for it in school was a bit much.

I scratched my head, ignoring the flakes, and a plan hatched in my skull. I would dress Eastern, instead of Western! Ha!

So it was that Western Day arrived and I got on the bus wearing my white turtle-neck sweater, white jeans, deck shoes, white socks, and yachting cap. I looked like an Ivy League yachtsman, all I needed was the pipe! Randy Price took one look at me and guffawed. One of the black girls in school saw me and said I looked like a milkman. I was grooving on all this. I wanted to stir it up a bit, and man, was I stirring.

There was not much in evidence that this was Western Day. Very few people had dressed up. A few girls did, like Susan, and they looked nice, but not many other students.

All in all Western Day was a bust. Are we going to have a Square Dance? Are you kidding? Not much happened and not many kids dressed up, but of the few kids that did I was the only Captain in the bunch.

Herman was pleased. Defiantly wearing his regular clothes, he didn't see many Ropers about. Randy hadn't gone out of his way to dress unusually, and it didn't bother him one way or the other. I think there were more boots in evidence than usual, but that was about it.

Rock and Roll forever!

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## How Coach Fannin Saved Rick

Caught up, as I was with school, Boles Girl, the Military, and my life in general, I was unable to see that the one man who needed my help the most wasn't getting it. Rickey Graham had become totally disenchanted with school. He got no scholarship offers, and he saw no real future ahead, except maybe to join his father in the welding business. To do that he didn't need a diploma, so he simply stopped coming to school. He felt like he could support his future wife on what he could make.

Perhaps I could have talked him into coming back, perhaps not. Still, he did need somebody to talk to, and we just were not as close as we were before. He was getting married to a girl I never met before, and when he did she did not like me at all. I avoided her after that, and in doing so avoided Rick. We drifted even further apart.

I didn't even discuss Boles Girl with Rick. I don't know how much of it he knew, but in all my notes I find no references to talking to Rick about her. Had I done so I think Rick might have taken me over there to see her. Yet, he was now engaged, and he had other people to occupy his free time in town. It was not like it was.

Coach Fannin became concerned with Rick's not coming to school. On his own he went to the station one day to find him. Rick was in the welding shop, tinkering with his car. Coach Fannin parked his car and walked over to Rick. Rick was smoking a cigarette.

"Hey, there, Rick. Whats going on?"

"Nothing, Mr. Fannin."

Rick was surprised to see the Coach. He stood there respectfully. They shook hands.

"Why aren't you in school?" Mr. Fannin asked him.

"Aw, Coach, I don't think I need it any more. I'm gonna quit. I feel like I'm not getting anything out of school these days."

Coach Fannin reached into his pocket and pulled out an envelope.

"Rick, this here is from Rice University. They are interested in you as a football player. But for you to even think of going to Rice you first have to graduate. If you're going to up and quit school on me I'll just go on back and tell them you are not interested."

Rick's eyes lit up when he saw the envelope.

"Rice University is interested in me?"

"They are, Rick."

Rick took the letter and held it like it was the Holy Grail. Mr. Fannin waited, his arms crossed, for the reaction.

"I'll be in school tomorrow, Coach, I promise. I'll be there for the rest of the year!"

Coach Fannin nodded. Satisfied, he shook Rick's hand again, then walked back to his car and drove away. Coach Fannin knew that Rick's chances of actually getting a scholarship to Rice University were slim, because of Rick's bad right eye. Still, this gave Rick the incentive he needed to come back and complete his school.

Rick showed me the letter later the same day. He was excited and happy with the prospects, more so than I had seen him since football season. Rick returned to school. Rick would keep the letter for the rest of his life. Coach Fannin went to a lot of trouble, had pulled some strings and saved Rick from dropping out, just because he cared enough to try.

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"The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not

to hate them, but to be indifferent to them;

That's the essence of inhumanity."

George Bernard Shaw, Irish born Playwright.

"I have loved to the point of madness; That which is called madness,

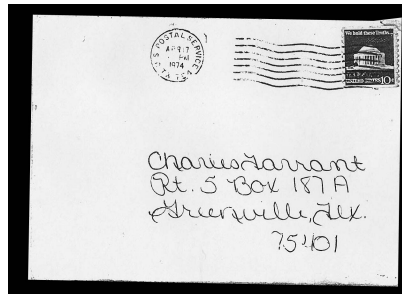
That which to me, is the only sensible way to love."

Francoise Sagan

## Hitting the Bottom

Randy Price wouldn't admit it, and Herman would deny it, but all 3 of us and several other class members believed in a code of honor and chivalry. There were certain ways to treat females. We did not strike them, we did not mistreat them, and we did not insult them. I had violated two of these hard and fast rules in Randy's eyes. I had mistreated and insulted the Boles Girl. I had sullied my honor by acting like an idiot cad and a bounder. Randy had eventually forgiven me, especially after Boles Girl had turned me into her houseparents. I hadn't forgiven myself, though. I felt as though I owed Boles Girl an apology. In my last letter I verbally cast myself at her feet and told her to do with me as she would.

I got off the bus on 17/Apr/1974 and out of habit I checked the mailbox. I was surprised that there was a letter inside. I picked it up. It was from Boles Girl! I got a surge of fear mixed with great curiosity. Well, I had stuck my neck out by writing to her about 2 weeks ago. Now I had to find out if I got it chopped off.



Boles Girl gave me a subtle hint on the envelope itself. There was no return address. I took the letter into my house so I could read it in the relative privacy of my own room. I sat on the bed and opened the small white envelope and pulled out the 2 hand-written pages of notebook paper inside. I started to read.

She did not address me as Mr. Tarrant or Sir, but Charles. She seemed a bit confused, but after rambling a bit she got to the point. She admitted that we had both made mistakes. She had also forgiven me for insulting her and causing her some anxiety. She told me it would be wrong to keep on writing, and she then said that she had met someone else.

Oddly, she said something intament about how she felt inferior when dealing with guys when her sister is around. It seems she met this guy at her sister's house on Spring Break, and he wrote to her afterwards. This made her happy that this guy liked her.

This left me scratching my head. Why should such a good looking girl feel inferior? I was glad she was happy, though. I read on.

I had hit a nerve when I had asked her if she was trying to hurt me by not writing back. She countered by saying that she had been through a lot of pain herself for the last 3 or so years, and she didn't want to hurt anyone else. She had just about ripped my heart out by her silence for the past 3 months! I think I woke her up to what she was doing.

She explained that she didn't turn me in. She was upset and her houseparents had asked for the letters.

She then gently refused to give me another chance, letting me down easy. It was now over, once and for all. This was it.

I sat there, contemplating what I had just read. She had accepted my apology and forgave me for my boorishness. I had regained my honor after I had thrown it away. She had picked it up, dusted it off, and graciously gave it back to me. That meant more to me than gold, but then she meant more to me than that.

I put the letter down, put my head in my hands, and thought some more. I had won and I had lost. I had regained some of my dignaty after debasing myself before her, but she would never be my lady, never go out with me, and in the times to come when I would go to Boles Home and look for her we'd hardly talk to each other at all.

Oddly, at least once when I was talking to another girl there she came over to get in on the conversation. If she didn't want to have anything to do with me, why on earth did she do that? I never ever figured her out.

Herman couldn't understand the situation either. He would look at me and say "Whats there for her not to love? You're not an evil or horrible guy! Whats there for her not to love? It doesn't make sense, Charlie."

No, it didn't make sense, but you can't make someone love you. I had wrote to Boles Girl in the beginning of a desperate, dark, and confused time in my life. She gave me back my honor by this forgiving, even though I believe she flat out lied about meeting a guy, and I believe she lied about not turning me in. These were just ruses to get me to go away and leave her alone. She was, however, within her rights to do this. She thought enough of me to at least make me think she was with someone else and that she had not snitched on me.

I had hit the bottom of the Pit. Now I had to find my way out. It would be an incredibly long healing process and during it even new and deeper wounds would be tore. Still, I had my honor again and I could now go on. It would be a full 10 years before I could get my act together and begin the process of rediscovering who I was. It would be a long journey out of the Pit, but it began here.

Dreams die hard!



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"Go forward, always go forward. You must not fail.

Go until the last shots are fired and the last drop of gasoline is gone. Then go forward on foot."

General George S. Patton, April, 1943

## Regional

### The Battle

Ms. Baldwin made repeated announcements to me that I needed to be on the school grounds at 6 a.m. to get in her car so she could take Lana, Tina, and me to Kilgore for the Regional U.I.L. meet. I would nodd and she hoped my medication-numbed mind would retain this. She had figured out that what was wrong with me was because of my medication, so she repeatedly bugged me to be sure I got the message. I wrote it down and she even told Herman to remind me. I couldn't get much worked up about this, as important as it was, but it meant a heck of a lot to her.

On Saturday the 20th of April I had my Mother drop me off at the schoolyard early enough to go to Regional with Ms. Baldwin. I stood there in my yachting suit, clutching my clipboard in case I wanted to draw something. Ms. Baldwin was delighted to see me in spite of the fact that I felt like 4 miles of bad road. I was awarded 'shotgun' position in the car, as we called the front passenger side, so I got in and promptly dozed off.

In the back Lana and Tina chatted happily but kept it low because I was out cold. All three ladies were mildly amused when I started snoring.

I was wearing the best set of leisure clothes I had. I didn't want to cram into a suit because it was a warm day. I woke up about three quarters of the way there.

"Ah! You're back!" Ms. Baldwin said, "Enjoy your nap?"

"Yeah. Where are we at?"

I was informed of our location. I looked around and took off my yachting cap and put it in the seat. It was okay to wear this thing around friends and in allied territory, but I was going out in public so I had to be cool and show restraint. The inside joke of the yachting cap might give the wrong impression to the uninitiated.

Soon we pulled onto the grounds of Kilgore Junior College. It was a rather large complex of imposing white brick buildings. It reminded me slightly of the Lone Oak School building back home. We got out of the vehical, and I stood there waiting for instructions. Ms. Baldwin tried to figure out where we were supposed to be, and what time our events were.

This was the Region III Meet of the University Interscholastic League. Of the 16 events here most would be over by noon. My personal event was to happen at 7 a.m. I wasn't even fully awake yet. Ms. Baldwin found where I was supposed to be at and put me there. I sat in a large class room with a number of other people. I was slightly dazed by my medication and lack of sleep. I wondered what was about to happen. I wasn't nervous. With what I was taking I couldn't get nervous if I tried. So I just sat there on low idle as a series of papers were passed out to us. I put my clipboard on the floor.

I waited patiently for this event to begin. The desk I was sitting at was the big brother of what we had in Lone Oak. It had the formica top, the plastic seat, the underseat basket, but it was a full 1/3 larger than what we had at Lone Oak. This made me feel like a gradeschooler, dwarfed by the size of the unfamiliar desk.

We were given the usual spiel about it being a timed event, and I half listened to this as usual. On the 'Go' word we flipped the pages over, put my assigned number on it, and began to read.

In a few minutes panic set in. What I was reading made very little sense and I was supposed to rewrite this mess into a shorter, more coherent story. I put my pen to paper and stopped dead in my tracks. I couldn't think of what to do. I was stumped, and a feeling of loss began to fill in the panic. What was I going to do?

I sat there like a statue with the precious time ticking rapidly away. I had to write something, but what? I quickly re-read the paper. As I frantically tried to think of something the words of Coach Jack Brookins came to my mind.

"It doesn't matter if you win or lose, Charles. If you do the best that you can, if you give that 110%, then you know you did everything you could. So go on out there, do your best, and let the chips fall where they may."

I set my jaw and just started writing. The more I wrote the easier it got. I was soon rolling right along. The words began to flow and fall in line. I had only about a quarter of the work left on the re-write when the umpire called time.

I was dissappointed that I had not finished. I felt pretty bad about that. I exited the room with everyone else in the event, then I found a bench to sit on in the hall until Ms. Baldwin found me.

"How did you do?" she asked.

"Not too good, Ms. Baldwin. I didn't finish."

She thought for a moment, then spoke.

"They don't judge you on wheather or not you finish, it's judged by content."

That made me feel some better.

"I had writer's block," I said, "What a totally lousy time to get writer's block."

Not far away Lana and Tina were envolved heavily in the Debate event. They would be in there for hours. I sat there with Ms. Baldwin in the hall and tried to decide if I wanted to draw, sleep, or find some food.

Tina and Lana were fighting for first place against the normal competition and against the Coin Toss. Putting up a fight in their debate that was definately one for the books, they made it past two coin tosses all the way into the finals. It took most of the day to do it and during that time Ms. Baldwin paced nervously and fidgited just like a coach on the sidelines. I merely sat there in my medication induced haze and vegetated. I couldn't even think of anything to draw.

The girls came out for a breather and Ms. Baldwin went exploring the campus with them. They came back after a short tour. The judges for my event had reached a decision and I wasn't in the top 2 finishers. Ms. Baldwin went into the judging area and boldly went through the trash cans for the ballots. She liked what she found and called me over to show me.

Out of a fairly large group of District Champions in my event my number was on every ballot! I was even rated as high as second on one of the ballots! That pleased Ms. Baldwin and the girls and wowed me. As I stood there trying to take all this in Ms. Baldwin figured out my final placing was 5th over all. This was a most respectable finish! There were approxamately 21 other people in my event, as figured out by the pamphlet I was given for being there.

Tina and Lana went back to their event and continued the debate. Battling down to the wire and very tired by now, the two ladies congraduated themselves for finishing second in the event.

Then the boom was lowered on them. Tina and Lana were told that there was no second place at Regionals for debate. They would not go on to the next level and they would get no reward for their efforts. The two young ladies were angered, but maintained their composure. Raising a fuss would gain them nothing.

The overall competition came to an end. Still bleary eyed and emotionally exhausted I returned to my seat in Ms. Baldwin's car and we took off for Lone Oak again. Lana and Tina had finished in second place and had nothing to show for it. I had placed 5th. U.I.L. had finished at last for Lone Oak in 1974, and with some bit of glory for all of us involved. Ms. Baldwin was not disappointed.

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## Dark Arts and Evil Deeds

(An Encounter in the Woods)

Trying to find an anchor in what was going on around me and to try to understand it better I began to look in many directions. One of the biggest waste of time was the brief and useless dip into astrology. I bought an astrology book for my Zodiac sign and I consulted it daily for several weeks. The daily passages in there were as vague as they could get. Sometimes it said something like "Avoid complicated machinery", or something like "A good day to stay home and read a book".

I would follow the advice as well as I could. I avoided machinery, read books, got together with friends, and all that stuff until I got tired of all the uselessness of the cheap little book. I tossed it and never again consulted Astrology, Palm Readers, Fortune Tellers, Gypsies, Voodoo Priests, Witches, Mind Readers, or Old Drunks Down By The Corner. This short experience left me with a very cynical view of all types of fortune tellers, from innocent fortune cookies to oracles.

When Bio-rhythms came out in the late 70s I was one of the first to look at this gimmick with a great deal of skepticism. When the technique eventually fell under its own weight I was not surprised.

In a lot of instances I got to the point where I believed only half of what I saw and nothing of what I was told. In spite of this I still had my lucky talismans and I still had a feeling that luck drove my decisions. In the long run it made no difference one way or the other. History is written as it happens, not before hand.

In school Vicki Pipkin was the closest thing I had to a real female buddy at Lone Oak. My sense of humor would often have her rolling her eyes in disbelief, but she was usually there when I wanted to talk to her. Oddly, I never told her about Boles Girl. But then I never told any girl at Lone Oak about Boles Girl.

Vicki Pipkin knew I could cartoon but she could actually sketch from life. She knew how difficult it was to draw something so when I whipped up one of my full page cartoons in less than 10 minutes I had her respect.

I liked Vicki Pipkin a lot, but I had no fantasies that she and I were anything but friends. We certainly felt at ease in each other's company. Once, however, there was a major exception.

They took us on a "nature hike", loading us on a bus and trundling us some distance to Lake Tawakoni so we could "commune as a group with nature."

Yeah, man, groovy. Commune with Nature. Right on.

I was at home in the boonies so I just took off into the trees by myself. The rest of the class split up into little groups as befit their individual tastes.



Bored and wondering why in blue blazes we were out here on such a hot, muggy day with no food and no water, I moved around silently in the underbrush. I broke into a clearing with Vicki Pipkin clear across on the other side. She saw me, but paid me no attention.

Being in a playful mood, I shrugged and figured "what the heck?", so I decided to have a little fun with Vicki Pipkin.

"Here I come, ready or not!" I hollered, and ran after her.

Vicki Pipkin screamed and took off like a deer. I stopped dead in my tracks right in the middle of the clearing, confused and surprised. What kind of deal was this?

I could hear Vicki hollering as she ran through the woods, "He's after me! He's after me!"

I figured I'd better make an appearance before this got out of hand. I came out into the open to see Eddie Bell and someone else coming to the rescue. When they saw me they just stopped and laughed.

"Oh, it's just Buzzard!" Eddie Bell said, grinning.

The group that was nearby just laughed and went on. I had enough of 'Communing with Nature', so I went back to the bus and sat there, wondering what on earth was with Vicki. Did she really think I was going to attack her? Did she really believe I was some kind of animal that would do that?

I told Herman and Randy and they thought it was hilarious. To my thinking that if it had been Sheron Stewart or Martha they would have stood their ground and threatened me with body harm. That was what I expected, anyway. I would laugh it off and it would go down as a non incident. When Vicki Pipkin beat feet and hollered for help that was too much.

Later on at school I sincerely asked Vicki what she ran away for. She bluntly refused to answer, as embarrassed by her conduct as I had been confused. For the rest of the year I would occasionally pick on her about it. Vicki and I still remained friends but she never did tell me what was in her mind that day when she fled.

Actually ole Vicki Pipkin was somewhat insecure around males. A lot of us were insecure around females, but I don't think she understood that. She would often spend her time in quiet contemplation, trying to sort out her thoughts. I caught her in such a moment and the shock was probably a bit much for her. As I could escape in my drawing, so Vicki Pipkin could escape into her sewing. She was as close to Martha as I was to Herman or Randy. In those little ways we were alike.

I was very sorry I had frightened her. If I had come into that clearing and saw some other guy attacking her I would have unquestionably given my life so she could escape. Vicki Pipkin was my friend and I cherished all of my friends. The fact that she was female and very pretty only made it unique.

When I signed Vicki Pipkin's yearbook for her I put the question in there, "What did you run for?" I guess it was to be forever our private joke.

Vicki Pipkin gave me a picture of her that I still have. On the back it says "To Charles, You are a great guy and I think a lot of you. Put yourself to it and you'll go far in this world. Love, Vicki"

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## Music and Players

Rickey Graham was a powerful influence on my early music listening days. He had an 8-track in his car I recorded everything I could on my tape recorder off of it, complete with the noise of the cars roaring along on Highway 69. I really discovered what songs I liked and what I didn't. I also recorded songs off a radio that my father got for me. I'd put the recorder's microphone in a cigar box and put the radio speaker down on top of that. It filtered out a lot of external noise.

I had no particular group that I liked above all others at that time. I just recorded what I thought sounded cool and listened to it at my leisure. I did gravitate toward Simon and Garfunkle and Creedence Clearwater Revival. I just loved Frigid Pink's version of House of the Rising Sun. I listened to some Black Sabbath from time to time. Their music was good, I just couldn't understand the lyrics.

Rick also loved Creedence, snapping up everything they had on 8 track. He also liked a song called Mississippi Queen done by just about anybody. Rick also liked Elvis. Rick would listen to Country Music because he said the girls liked it. Well, Herman and I considered that compromising on our principals, so we listened to no Country.

Lynn McGee was into Iron Butterfly. He listened to In a Gadda Da Vida regularly. The drum solo was a big hit with him.

Gunner liked the Woodstock Album, mainly because of the proliferation of 4 letter words in it. He'd have the thing playing in an 8 track player and he'd sit in his car, grinning at the naughtiness of it.

Randy Price's number one song was China Grove by the Doobie Brothers. It was pretty much his theme song. Randy was also partial to Joe Walsh.

Herman liked Jethro Tull and collected albums by the group. He also turned me on to the Moody Blues that we both ended up being big fans of.

At our banquets we requested Rock and Roll Hootche Coo to be played by the live band there.

Elton John was catching on among us. Most of his lyrics made no sense what so ever but at least we could understand what he was saying. Rocket Man was a big hit with Rick and me. We'd be driving along singing the song right along with the radio. In addition to Black Sabbath I was very fond of Led Zepplin. The screechy sounds let me imagine jets dogfighting.

My favorite soundtrack album from my school days was Easy Rider. The thundering sounds of Steppenwolf was popular with Born to be Wild. The Pusher was listened to because of the repeated swearing in the song.

The Edgar Winter Group put out a song called Frankenstien that sounded too cool when it came to a special part. It sounded really neat as it switched from speaker to speaker on the track.

There were a fistfull or songs and all kinds of music from Acid Rock to simple ballads that we listened to. The radio played them all day until they had to cut back power at 6:00 p.m. Then we'd all listen to our 8 tracks.

The 8 track cartridge was about the size of a slice of bread. It fit into a slot in the front of the player, just like a slice of bread into a toaster. It was a continuous play tape with 4 different 'sides' recorded in stereo for 8 tracks. Small cassettes, like I used in my tape recorders, were there but nobody would shovel out between 5 and 8 dollars for something that small. In the 70s it had to be big if we put down cash for it, or it was considered a rip-off. Size was everything.

The 8 track cartridge was an engineering nightmare. The thing was prone to breakdown in numerous and destructive ways. Repeated playing of the cassette caused great wear on the mechanical parts inside the cassette. It would bind, break, or come unwound into the guts of the player causing a volley of swear words by the owner as the tape is hastily extracted. The tape couldn't be lubricated, and repair was almost impossible.

The cassette had a strip of conductive tape at the main splice where it would pass over a set of contacts and activate a solenoid that changed the tracks automatically. This piece of tape lost adhesion from repeated play and the oven like heat of a car interior in summer. It sometimes broke, came unglued, or jammed in the system.

If a tape came unwound for whatever reason getting it back into the cassette was a time consuming task of constantly pulling on the tape until the slack was taken up inside. This didn't guarantee a functioning tape, and it often came unwound once more when used again.

Speakers were usually mounted on the rear deck behind the backseat next to the rear windshield. The wires were run under the rear seat and along the door plates to the dash board. Everything was spliced together directly in the stereo and fuse box. The connection to the fusebox could be set up so the stereo could be played only if the ignition was on or it could be set up to be able to turn it on any time. Hooking up just one wire wrong resulted in a fried stereo system. (Trust me, I know.) The stereo was suspended on a rack bolted directly under the dashboard, usually underneath the glove compartment. Stereo and radio had separate speaker and power systems, but some enterprising people figured out ways to combine the two. Eight track players with radios built into them were virtually unknown, but coming into use.

The tapes were kept in a caddy that looked like a fancy tackle box. The outside was usually made of fake leather or alligator, often times very glossy black. The inside was felt lined in red with a rack for about 16 tapes. The caddy protected the tapes from heat and moisture, kept them from scattering all over the car, and extended their playing lives a little. The caddy often had a suitcase like handle on the lid so it could be easily carried. It also let thieves carry it out easily. Theft of 8 track tapes was common, and caddies were locked in car trunks to protect them.

The tapes often ended up scattered all over the front seat and floorboard of a car. Broken tapes vainly waiting for repair wound up in the backseat with their tape wrapped around the cassette. Eventually they'd fall to the floorboard and from there they'd be tossed out at the next car cleaning. If an 8 track tape lasted more than a year of nearly constant playing it was lucky. Once it broke down it was on its way down and out. Dearly loved tapes could be repaired and cautiously played, but eventually they too had to be junked.

The 8 track player itself was robust beyond belief. Dirty, hot, and used relentlessly day after day it usually did its job well. Tapes were fed into it for hours on end and it came through most of the time. A good deal of the breakdowns were not the fault of the tape player, but of the tape. Even when a tape wrapped around the capstan and the player "ate" it that wasn't the fault of the player. A tape eaten by a player could not be extracted without often having to break the tape. The player was cleaned by inserting a simple dry cleaning cassette that could actually damage the tape heads if the owner used it too much.

Listening to music at home was done with the radio and a record player. The 45 r.p.m. singles were very popular and could be stacked on a spindle so they could play in sequence. It made studying less boring. Very few people had earphones so the music only lasted as long as a parent's tolerance for the noise.

Big 33 r.p.m. albums were listened to and they costs as much as the 8 track tapes. They lasted a lot longer too, unless left in the sun where they'd distort and melt.

In spite of broken tapes, skipping records, double tracking players, radio stations that faded in and out, and all the other agrivations, we thought we had some first class music playing machines. It was our form of travelling music.

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"Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth."  
Shakespeare, "A Midsummer Night's Dream"

## Starcrossed Lovers

1974 had been, so far, the worst year of my life. Everything seemed to just go wrong. For someone else, though, it was something entirely diffrent.

Martha had been getting better looking by the year. In her Senior year she was very beautiful. Somewhat concious of this remarkable change she adjusted her wardrobe accordingly. She wasn't too flashy or even tacky. She just tastefully showed off what she had, a sort of 'in your face' for all those years of putting up with us.

The powerful hand of destiny reached out and touched her one wet, rainy night at a football game when Lana introduced Martha to a fellow named Bill. Martha took one look at Bill and felt something exactly like I felt in the Quinlan Gym when I locked in on Boles Girl. For reasons she could not explain she felt strongly attracted to this fellow Bill. She chatted with him in her usual way, but the more she talked to him the more aware she was that the rain had messed up her hair, spotted her glasses, and ruined her makeup. Though curious about the fellow she was agast at what her apperance must be. Her trip home was all stars and flowers inspite of the fact it was raining outside the car she was driving and is was chilly winter. There was something about Bill she liked.

Later, taking a typical female route, Martha decided to "improve" on what she had. She lost weight, not that she really had to. She cut her hair diffrent, and she got contact lenses so she could ditch her glasses.

When Martha got rid of her glasses all of us noticed immediately. My first thought was that she had broken her glasses again and she was at school blind as a bat. I discovered she was wearing contacts when she removed one from her eye to get a bit of dust out.

"Dust doesn't fit very well between my eyeball and this contact lens," she informed me, as I watched on with fascination.

I was surprised at this sudden change in her, but I just shrugged it off. Girls do daffy things from time to time, and Martha was one daffy girl. She was almost impossible for me to figure out, with her dry wit, reserved attitude, and stunning good looks.

Martha arranged to see Bill again, this time at the Greenville Y.M.C.A. where he was playing "Y" league basketball. Lana escorted her up there and Martha was all excited about how Bill would react to her new looks. She had spent hours getting nervously ready to see him. Once they arrived at the Y-gym she and Lana sat up in the folding bleachers. All a-tingle with excitement Martha watched as Bill waved to Lana and came over to chat.

Martha sat there trying to be cool while Bill spoke at length to Lana. After a bit he had to leave and Martha watched him go with misty eyes.

"He didn't talk to me!" she sobbed to Lana, "He didn't even look at me!"

Lana was as confused as Martha. What was with Bill?

Martha was all broken up and cried her eyes out all the way back to Lone Oak. This was awful! Why didn't he speak to her? Did he not want to talk to her? What was wrong?

Martha cried herself to sleep in her room that night, confused and hurt by being stiffed by Bill. She wanted it to be a big hit and it had gone so wrong.

The answer was found a few days later when Lana found Bill and proceeded to chew him out.

"Why didn't you talk to Martha!"

"She wasn't there!"

"She was sitting right next to me!"

Bill did a double take.

"THAT was Martha?"

Martha had so radically changed her looks that Bill, who had only seen her once before, simply did not recognize her! He apologized to Lana and sat there scratching his head in confusion.

Martha had not improved on what she had, she just changed it a little. She was equally sweet looking as her traditional self or her "new" self, but vanity was a different and deciding factor.

A second meeting was arranged at a nice restaurant. Because of Martha's strict parents she only had enough time to go to Greenville, eat, and come home. So it was arranged for a pleasant meal at one of the nicest restaurants in Greenville. Once more Martha went through the ritual of making herself look as nice as she possibly could.

Happily hopping into Lana's car with Lana's date driving they went up to Greenville and the restaurant. The three of them sat there at their table, waiting for Bill to show. The clock ticked on. Still no Bill.

"Let's go ahead and order something to eat," Lana suggested, "Bill can order when he gets here."

Martha agreed, sitting there very uncomfortable and wondering why her beau didn't show. A glass of wine was served with the meal and just before it was time for them to go Martha drank it down. Unaccustomed to the alcohol she got very buzzed by it.

Somewhat intoxicated and upset Martha staggered out of the restaurant. They got her into the car.

"I been stood up," she mournfully hiccupped, "This aint fair."

Once more she cried all the way home, the main difference being that she was a little enlivened this time. That made it easier to go to sleep that night.

Bill managed to get in touch with Lana again, telling her that he tried to contact both Martha and her and tell them he couldn't make the date that night. He still would like to meet Martha again. Another meeting was quickly planned.

Martha had conflicting feelings about this. Of course she had "first date" jitters. This was increased by the fact that each time she had almost gone crazy with anticipation she had been let down hard. She wanted to meet Bill really badly, but did she dare get her hopes up in the stratosphere again?

With emotions ping-ponging between fear and hope she was elated when she discovered that third time was the charmer. Bill was there! Happy as a little girl on Christmas morning, she went to Greenville with Lana and her date, and Bill. They had a very pleasant evening dining and chatting. Martha just glowed. It was wonderful.

But the evening wasn't over.

En-route to drop Martha off at her parent's house to end the evening, a car began to follow them. Curious about this, Martha and her friends wondered what was up. Lana pulled into the Martha's driveway and the car came in behind them and stopped. A rather drunk, loud, and lost individual got out of the car and staggered over to the driver's side window of Lana's car.

"I am drunk yall," he bellowed, "I am supposed to git to Tawakoni to meet my lady and I am lost, ya see. Can you all tell me where I am? I am drunk."

The guy could be heard for blocks in the quiet of Lone Oak at 10 p.m. With eyes as big as saucers Martha looked at the drunken fellow then at the open window into her father's room.

"Oh no!" she thought, "He'll never let me go out again!"

Martha covered her head and tried to crawl under the car seats. What else could go wrong?

Lana and her date finally sent the fellow on his way. He staggered to his car and even offered to pay them for their trouble. They politely turned the guy down. He got into his car, waved, and zig-zagged out of town.

"I'm doomed!" Martha thought, "It's all over!"

Telling her friends goodbye Martha gathered her handbag and cautiously entered the house. She waved goodbye to her friends and braced herself before closing the door.

To her surprise nobody was up. All was quiet except for the peaceful snoring coming out of her father's room. He apparently hadn't heard the drunk in the driveway! Delighted, she went to her room.

Not far away Lana had to wake up her mother and tell her what had happened. Both ladies got a big laugh out of the incident.

For all the hard luck Martha was having in meeting Bill it was a wonder they met at all.

Later on things went very well for Martha and Bill. They hit it right off. By April Martha's father was allowing them to go out regularly. Happy in each other's company, they were soon totally and unconditionally in love. By May they were engaged, and after Martha graduated she and Bill were married a few months later.

This was true love like we read about in Romance Novels. These two great kids are still happily married to this very day.

Love at first sight and True Love can happen. As can be seen, for some people, it really does. It is a wonderful and glorious thing.



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## Karma

### Off Season Practice

Exercise; it felt good. We were on the new field, going through the off-season drills. It was all familiar and brought back memories of glory and untarnished honor. I loved it. What was different here was that we Seniors were not on the front row anymore. We were now back in the pack, our day up front had gone. The Juniors were now leading the drills, getting their feet wet as to what was expected of them for next year. We were passing the torch to them.

I didn't care that my spot on the front row had come and gone. I figured that this was what was normal and expected. We ran a lot and did some simple pass routines. Soon we got back to the old fashioned way of doing things, just like last year.

To add the spirit of competition to the off season we had games of touch football. We were divided up into 4 teams again. We usually played on the old 8 man field behind the school. I was surprised this time Herman was here playing touch football with us. That was cool, I thought.

On my team I had Gunner for a quarterback. He was tall and he could toss a ball just far enough to get the job done. Randy Price quarterbacked the team Herman was on. With this wild and

crazy crew we started our traditional football tournament with gusto. For some of us it would be our last time ever to play any type of football as students at Lone Oak.

Around and around we went, in our shorts and t-shirts, playing with a wild abandon that impressed our coaches. They knew a lot of us were not ready to put down the pads and graduate yet. Victory was each team's goal. We fiercely fought for it.

Exercise and adrenalin in the outdoors let me shake off some of the cobwebs that occupied my brain a lot lately. It made me feel positive and alert, but my slow reactions were made slower by the medication I had to take. In spite of this I managed to give it my all and often I caught many passes from Gunner for long gains and the occasional touchdown. Being on defense was different, however. I had difficulty moving fast enough to cover someone. They often got by me, and that bothered me a little. Not too long ago I would have easily caught such a guy as I was now chasing.

It got rough sometimes. We'd tackle each other when we got too close, and there was the flying 'touch' to stop a runner. Nobody really seemed to mind. This was fun. Most of the time nobody knew who was leading in the standings, and to be honest, nobody cared.

The Coaches served as referees. They kept this all in fun stuff from degenerating into a playground brawl. With the Coaches watching everybody behaved themselves. Dirty tricks were kept to a minimum and the Coaches called penalties. Pass interference was the most common.

One of the most memorable plays came when Randy called a pass play. Herman knew Randy was going to throw the ball to him. On the snap Herman did a down and in and Randy fired the ball at him. The problem with this pass was that Coach Fannin was between Herman and the ball. Coach Fannin had just enough time to draw up before the ball bounced off him.

I was near this, covering my zone. I saw the ball hit Coach Fannin and bounce high up in the air. Herman stopped and tracked the ball. Everybody just kind of stopped, watching. Herman stepped under the ball and caught it. He then took off, hotly pursued by several of us.

"Dead ball!" Mr. Fannin called.

Herman complained loud and long.

"Dead ball my foot! The ball didn't hit the ground!"

Coach Fannin had ruled and that was it.

Being partisan about such things, I sided with Coach Fannin. Had I been on Herman's team I would be against Coach Fannin. The game went on and the fun continued.

This was our last chance to play football together, and it was all in fun.

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## Airmobile

We were in class, bored as usual, when the chattering thunder of a helicopter grew louder and louder until it became frightening. The noise pulled us out of our boredom and woke some of us



up. The dark green helicopter passed overhead rattling the room and swooped down on the old 8 man field. Immediately faculty and teachers escorted us outside near the helicopter.

Sergeant Sheppard, grinning as usual, and a couple of guys I didn't know got out of the little OH-58 'Kiowa' Light Observation Helicopter. This was part of a recruiting blitz put on by the Greenville office as we got close to graduation. The helicopter was as attention getting as a sports car and it was a fast way to get all over the area. Somebody must have pulled some major strings to get this helo for this recruiting drive!

Sgt. Sheppard shook my hand, remembering me, and asked how I was doing. I told him I was o.k. and I proceeded to oggle the helicopter. To keep kids from damaging the fragile parts of the helicopter the pilot was on one side of the helicopter and the crew chief was on the other. The rotorblades were stationary as the engine was shut down for our safety. I politely talked to the crew chief and looked the high tech piece of military hardware over. I had no idea what Sgt. Sheppard was doing.

After a while we were ordered back from the helicopter as it was cranked back up. The crew chief got out and looked the outside of the bird over, doing a quick pre-flight. He walked over and handed me a styrofoam brick that was nearby, so it wouldn't get sucked into the turbine engine. The soldier then got back into the helicopter.



The helicopter built up its rotor speed and lifted off of the old football field in a wash of dust and wind. It shot through the uprights of the south goal post, pulled a brief hover, then thumped noisily away west.

"Why did that guy give you that piece of styrofoam?" a Junior High kid asked me.

"So it wouldn't get caught in the engine," I told him, and I gave the styrofoam to him. I watched the helicopter fly away with a great sense of longing. It faded to a dot then disappeared altogether. I figured it was representative of my military career. I figured wrong.

Early in 1978 I would be able to join the Texas State Guard as a Rifleman. I trained for over 10 years with the National Guard, got my commission from the State of Texas as an officer, and I rose to command one of the best units in the State of Texas. I would meet some of the finest men I had ever known. But in 1974 I figured I had no military future at all. The world can be full of surprises.

I would have a military career that was full of adventure and very satisfying. I was given numerous citations and awards. I would have the respect of my men and I, in turn, admired them greatly. I was to meet such living legends as Crews McCulloch of the Special Forces. I would command units in the field. I would work with U.S. Army Rangers, Police Departments, and military units of all discription.

None of that was even a gleem in my eye in 1974. It wouldn't be easy, but I would get there. I would be a soldier.



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## Special Honors

Life was resting fairly heavily on my shoulders at my young age of 19. I had been told I had an infirm heart, my chosen career was denied me, the girl I loved did not love me, and I had absolutely no future plans to speak of. Before I judged myself too weak in spirit I remembered that others had committed suicide for substantially less! I couldn't understand that, and I still do not. The thought never really crossed my mind because it would be giving up and quitting. I was, at the very least, a Buffalo, and Buffaloes do not ever quit. I would tough this out, no matter what.

One day they put us in our red-orange cap and gowns with shirt and ties and took our graduation photo for the Greenville paper. My medication was really hitting me hard by this time, and I do not remember where or when we did this. I only vaguely remember standing behind a row of chairs and not much else about it.



On another day we loaded up and went to a small church in Lone Oak. There in we were given a lecture by a Greenville Police Detective on the evils of crime out there in the real world. He spun us a horror story of a local murder in the county area that he discribed in great detail. I guess he was trying to scare us into the straight and narrow. I personally yawned and just listened to him ramble on. I had read about this murder in the Greenville paper and he gave me no surprises. Rickey Graham felt the same way. The detective apologized for grossing us out. His problem was that he had delt with delinquints and deviants so much that he had trouble dealing with a room full of basicly educated and God-fearing kids. He made a bad impression on some of us.

On May 19, a Sunday, we schedualed our Baccalaureate Services in the gym. I do not recall going there, but I must have because I have a folder listing our names and other parts of the ceremony. I guess I was there. I can't recall anything or any part of the ceremony. If I was there I was simply too numb to really care.

The school passed out honors and awards to the graduating class. Julia Mahand, the most all around girl in our class, was given the title of Valedictorian. She had a grade average of 96.31. She had it all; brains, beauty, and atheletics. She planned to attend Kilgore College, study Computer Science and Business. As near as I know she was the only member of our class with such forward looking goals. She could not have chosen a better career with the computer revolution of the 80s and the Yuppie boom on the way. All she had to do was succeed in college, survive the Disco era, and she was on her way.

Elaine surprised me by getting Salutorian. She had a 93.78 average, but she had no plans to go to college. Her plans were to marry David Dillon and retire early. She would eventually do just that.

There were class members who were given special duties for our graduation, but none of them were in my group. For the most part Randy Price, Gunner, Herman, James Kelly, Rickey Graham, Gonga, and myself were all-so-rans. I was to recieve an unlooked for special honor, however.

School was winding down. That the entire Senior class would graduate without exception was a known fact. It was also a bit of a surprise for some people who thought they knew us. More than a few of us were looked upon as dolts, lazy, and some of us were thought to be downright stupid, if not a little crazy. That some of us hadn't been thrown in jail yet was a bit of a surprise to these people.

Transferrals, dropouts, and marriage had already claimed roughly 28 of us. The 25 that remained were thought to be as honor laden as they could ever be, including me.

I was sitting in the English class room, participating in the happy banter that we could get away with now that we were Seniors. Ms. Bratton called the class to reasonable order and said she had a special award to present. I looked up from whatever nonsense I had going with Herman and Randy and wondered what was up this time.

Ms. Bratton held up a palm sized plastic box with a small brass medal on a blue foam cushion inside.



"This is the English Award," she said, "It is given out to the most outstanding student in the class for creativity, ability, and other qualifications."

I looked the class over from my seat near the back. I figured Julia or Elaine or some other girl would get this. I was already thinking about returning to what Randy, Herman, and I were doing.

"This year the award goes to Charles Tarrant."

I felt my jaw drop in disbelief. She had to be kidding!

There was applause from my classmates. Randy gave me a push out of my seat sending my unbelieving body on it's way.

"Get on up there, boy!"

Ms. Bratton handed me the simple little box with the dull brown medal inside. I had that humble feeling again. The medal was one inch tall and about a half inch wide. It had the lamp of wisdom on top of an open book and a shelf of books engraved below that. Under this design was the word "English". I stared at it with mute incomprehension. What had I done to deserve this honor?

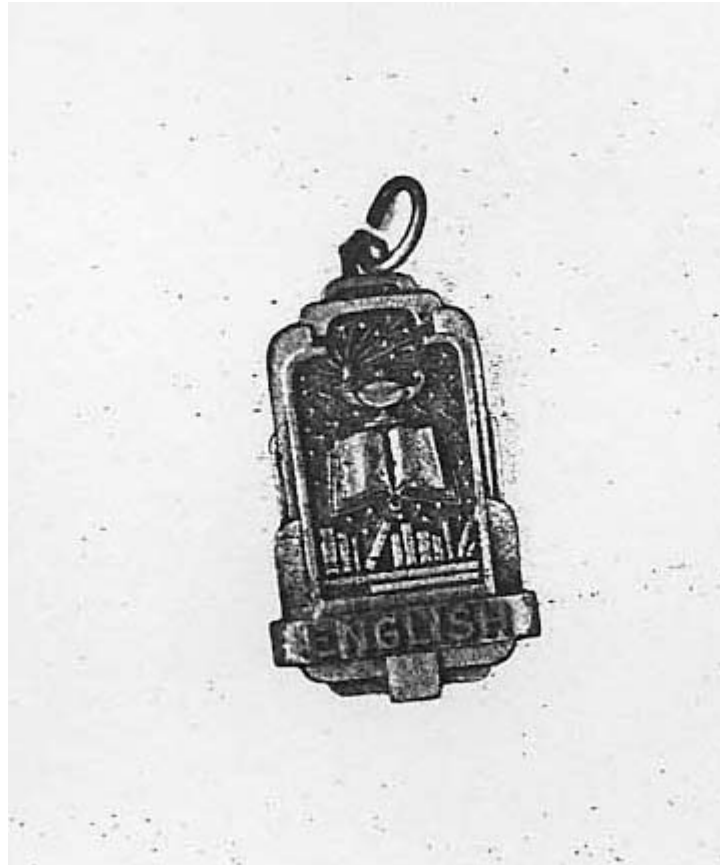
"Speech!" someone called.

Startled out of my shock I looked up. David Dillon was calling "Speech! Speech!" and was soon joined by Randy, Herman, and most of the class.

I grinned and thought rapidly to a speech I had seen in a comedy movie on T.V.

"Fellow War Winners...." I began, laughing.

The class reacted with typical eye rolling and laughing. I thanked Ms. Bratton and I returned to my seat. I opened the box and let Herman and Randy see my latest acquisition. As simple as it was to win this little piece of brass it was one of the those unexpected honors I had come to cherish so much. I kept it with me, box and all, for a long time and the medal hangs on my wall today.



Randy dubbed it the "Teacher's Pet Award". I was still very honored to have it, and Randy and Herman were genuinely happy for me. This was just about the best the way to end the school year, just before graduation.

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"There is a tide in the affairs of men.

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life

Is bound in shallows and miseries."

Shakespeare: "Julius Ceasar"

Pre-Graduation

Ms. Baldwin and Ms. Bratton both had told me that I should go to college and "study journalism". With no future plans I supposed I should do just that. College would happen after "One Last Summer". A lot of us would take this one last summer, just to get our heads right to the fact that we were no longer in school, there would be no football practices for us in August, and no more busses to catch on cold mornings. After spending most of our lives doing that it would take some getting used to being in the adult world.

Danny Bowman, Robert Vice, Julia Mahand, Martha Sale, Eddie Bell, Herman, and myself were the only ones I know of who had plans for college. Of that group Herman and I were the only males who weren't going there to play football. The only college ball I would play would be in P.E. class with other former jocks.

Randy Price was bound for the U.S. Marines. This blew his mind a little and for the rest of the summer he would be acting odd and over aggressive. That was just Randy's way of dealing with stress. He was going this route alone. That scared him.

Gonga was heading for the Navy. He held no grudges against us at Lone Oak in spite of the awful treatment he recieved from all of us. His parents even invited us to a cook-out at their place, but I don't know how many attended. I didn't, for my own reasons. Gonga would do very well in the Navy, as a See Bee. He later went on to college.

Gunner's mother, who ran the "Bean Pot Cafe" in front of Lone Oak where we had so many good times, staged a major feed for the entire Senior class. Nearly the entire class was there. We were fed what was called "Hot Steak", essentially it was a chopped steat on toast wedges, smothered in cream gravy. I ate mine with gusto, washing it down with Dr. Pepper. I think there was some live entertainment. It was as nice as any banquet I had been envited to. I enjoyed myself a lot.

There was an awkward moment when several people just up and left. This ticked off Gunner, but I didn't pay it any attention. I was one of the last to leave, and I thanked Gunner's mom for a good time.

Cooking for the entire Senior class put Gunner's mother back about 100 dollars back in 1974. It was darn nice of her to do that.

This cafe doesn't exist anymore. The building lost structural integrity back in the 1890s when it was gutted by a fire. It was rebuilt internally and lasted a full 100 years before a corner of the building seemed to have walked out about 3 feet and collapsed. The building was then torn down, for saftey reasons. It was nice place and I remember it fondly. The fire station was built over it.

Not much else happened of real note after this. A lot of us had cases of anxiety over not being in school anymore. Some of us took to weekend drinking, some found other less destructive ways to deal with it.

Butterflys abounded in all of us. We were on the threshold of adulthood and a lot of us wondered if we were truely prepared. All of a sudden 18 years old didn't look so grown up anymore. Suddenly getting married and having a job didn't look so secure. The looming graduation looked us straight in the face and scared the bejabbers out of a lot of us. This was a big and frightening step. On May 20th, 1974, it happened.

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"There is a divinity that shapes our ends,

Rough-hew them how we will."

Shakespeare, "Hamlet"

## The Graduation of the Class of 1974



I looked this fellow over. He was gaunt, and unkempt looking. His dark blond hair was in disarray and would not stay where he put it. The eyes had a tired, sad look to them, as if this individual had seen far too much of life, too fast and too soon.

"Ah, well," I thought, "This is as good as it gets."

I put my clip-on tie on and tried to do something with my fly-away hair. The young man in the bathroom mirror did look like just one heck of a mess.

Sitting on the couch next to my neatly folded Graduation Gown was a 6 inch hollow blue plastic trophy. One the base was a decal that said "The World's Greatest Leader." I had seen this novelty in a hardware store and I could not resist getting it for Gary Dooley. It fit just right with a mildly obscene song Herman, Randy Price, and I sang about him being "Our Leader."

I took my medication on schedual and my Father and I got in the 1968 blue Chevy my father owned. We drove off to Lone Oak. This car and I would go to College next year. It was mine to use for that time. It was to be the mobility I craved.

It was the 20th of May, 1974. It was Graduation Night.

Upon arrival at the school I was directed to the Science Building. My Father went on into the auditorium. I scratched my flaking scalp and entered the Science room. Most of my classmates were already there, milling nervously about in their own cliques. Even this close to the end of our school days we still stayed with our own.

I located Gary Dooley. Herman and Randy followed me, big smiles on their faces.

"Gary, on behalf of the Class of 1974 I want to present you with this special award for your unique qualities."

I handed him the blue trophy.

"The first of many awards to be given out tonight," Herman said.

Gary accepted the trophy in the spirit it was given. He read the base, snickered, and looked at all 3 of us.

"You guys!" he laughed, "I'll get you for this!"

I don't know if he kept the trophy or not. He may have left it in the Science Room. Only Gary knows but he has probably forgotten.

We got into our nylon and polyester Graduation gowns. We had the things on a couple of times before so we had very little trouble getting into the things now. The problem was that the guys were having trouble getting used to the medieval-era garment. It was long, flowing, with bell sleeves. The girls, being used to long flowing garments, were at ease. Often we'd see the guys hitching up the sleeves. Sitting in the thing made it ride up in front. Accustomed to pants and shirts for most of our lives, wearing a gown was an experience. Still, the red gown was nice looking, if uncomfortable.

Next we put on the mortar-board. The entirely useless hat was worn cocked to one side or square on top of the head. The girls secured the thing in stylish ways to their heads with hairpins.

The tassell, complete with a tiny plate that said "74", was worn on the left. The tassell was red and white and reminded me of a cheerleader's pom pom. The guys had trouble with the strings of the tassell sticking to their whiskers.





***Posed pictures for the yearbook. We turned in these gowns after the photo shoot.***

Ms. Baldwin had drilled us in the procedure of the graduation ceremony. She helped some of the students with their speeches. A lot of us were still nervous as cats, perhaps all of us.

As soon as we were all squared away in this ridiculous garment Ms. Baldwin gave the signal. We marched up the east side of the school and down the halls where we had spent so many wonderful days. We passed our lockers, the class rooms, the Principal's Office, and turned the corner toward the auditorium. We discovered that we were moving at a nervously brisk pace.

Down into the breezeway we went, past the surviving wooden lockers that just a few short days ago held my last highschool books and my space opera comics. I had managed to end the comic strip on a high note with Herman's cartoon family sitting down to dinner and everything coming to

a happy ending. I felt like that was one of my best accomplishments. All in all I still felt pretty down and dissatisfied as my medication began to work its sinister magic.

We passed the restrooms where boys had tried their hand at poetry and young girls had fist fights. Mr. Brookins was kept very busy having each new experiment in poetic obscenity painted over or scrubbed away. In the Boy's Room was where Boris the rubber spider was buried at sea, and Julia would never see him again. Now Julia is Validictorian, Homecoming Queen, and as always, a first class lady.

On into the latter half of the breezeway we marched. On my left is the door where I ran out in disbelief and saw the charred ashheap of our sports cathedral; the old gym, on that 8th of April. On my right is the icecream freezer where selected members of the Pep-Squad sold us icecream on a stick on hot spring days. Next to that is a door that now leads to the new gym, sight of last years' graduation, and the screaming horror that was our last terrible basketball season. We were the first teams in that gym, but it would be for others to sponge that stain of a greatly disappointing season.

Onward we went. Next to the north breezeway door is a simple candy machine, beyond that is an open area of the breezeway. On the southside across from that is one of the Janitor's storage closets. Then came the stairwell.

I could see the auditorium now. It is jammed with dozens of people who have come to see us graduate. By the stars above I do not know hardly any of them!

Down the stairs we went in single file. I looked at the door to my old 7th Grade room where Ms. Oney was driven to distraction by my drawing and all of the class antics we did. The room was now being used for a library in '74. In there I had read books on the military, auto racing, football, and any subject that struck my fancy. I had also looked through the yearbooks in there, cringing everytime I came to my 1965 yearbook photo. These yearbooks were butchered by kids who cut out photos, doodled on the pictures, or mangled and defaced the books in many ways. The sin of defacing historical records is on their heads.

To my left on the south side is the lunch room. I'd never eat in there again. From eating totally delicious meals of fond memory to gagging on the horrible potato salad, I shall forever miss the gastronomic adventures this place put us all through.

Into the Auditorium we went, ushered to our spots. School dignitaries in suits sat in chairs arranged up on the stage. There was Mrs. Betty Jo Moore, Rev. Francis Sale, Mr. Dial, Ms. Mary Mahand, Mr. G.A. Pipkin, Mr. Ben Dooley, and Mr. Brookins. It was quiet in the auditorium. No record player scratched out "Hope and Glory". We went to our assigned spots on the front right seats and formed three ranks. Then we sat down.

No sooner had we gotten into place than we rose for a prayer. This was soon followed by our school song, sang for the last time by us as students of Lone Oak High.

We sat down again. We'd stand up and sit down about half a dozen times. Our class honorees, Elaine, Julia Mahand, and Danny Bowman, went up on stage to deliver their speeches.

I was acutely buzzed by this time and I only half listened to Elaine and Julia as they gave the usual high sounding and optimistic speeches. It was done in the manner that only naive teenagers can do. Each speech was received with warm applause by us and the audience.

Flashbulbs popped and shutters clicked. I don't recall a movie camera. Everytime some graduate would come to the podium it was like a lightning storm.

I focus my eyes on the things on stage. I expected our diplomas to be rolled up and tied with a ribbon, in the standard steriotypical style. I didn't see any such thing up there. I blew my tassell away from my thin moustache and wondered what the deal was.

If they gave us a scroll it was a fake. Our real diplomas were in a white envelope, safe and secure. the parchment diplomas were probably too fragile to risk rolling and tieing. This was a one time only thing in our lives, and it had to be done well. Regardless of if we would get the envelopes or the fake tubes, we all waited with impatience.

Danny Bowman came up to give his speech, about our class history. I greeted this with a big yawn. Tell me what I already know, Sheepdog! I made an effort to pay a little attention anyway.

Danny started confidently enough. Then he did a Freudian Slip by saying "Us parents" when he meant "You parents". He caught it, blushed deeply, flashed his big toothy smile, and corrected it.

"Us parents". Yes, that was appropriate. From 1969 to this year we had averaged about 1 marriage a year. From the Bulldozer to Philip Andrews, Spider, and Eddie Bell himself, the title of the "Parents in the Class of 1974" was a known fact.

The crowd chuckled at Danny's gaff but he managed to finish his speech with out any further mistakes.

We stood up again. Mr. Dial presented us to the Board of Education and then the awarding of Diplomas began. We were like on a conveyor. When one person would go up on the stage to recieve their diploma the line would move down one seat to take that person's place. As the awardee came off stage they would go to the end of the line. When the diploma issuing would be finished we'd be back in alphabetical order, right back where we were when the ceremony started.

I stood there in my assigned place between Sheron Stewart and Robert Vice, wondering and wishing. Sheron didn't seem to like my being this close to her, but it was probably just nerves. Either way, it was her problem, not mine. Robert betrayed no emotion.

I so wished Boles Girl cold be here to see me graduate. I'd love to have her beam a confident smile at me as I recieved my dipolma. I also wished Sandy could have been with us, but she was probably going to her own graduation. I wished a thousand diffrent things in those short moments, all of it in vain.

Up on the stage some bizarre things began to happen. Some graduates were having problems finding the exit to the stage curtians. Gunner snagged his gown on something back stage and tore it. He could be heard swearing, but as he came down the exit steps it was as if nothing had happened.

As each of us recieved our diplomas and exited the stage with it a professional photographer took our picture. Mr. Trimble asked us ahead of time if we wanted a picture and I had said yes. He would keep them for us until we could arrange to get them. I never got mine and I suppose Mr. Trimble kept it.

Sheron went up on the steps and I was next. My name was called and I went up into the wings and then onto the stage. I did not look at the crowd filling the auditorium. I had at least learned that in my years of sports. The crowd doesn't exist.

Jack Brookins and Mr. Dial looked at me as I came on stage. They were proud of their accomplishment of getting another class successfully through the system. I received my diploma from a School Board member, I think it was G.A. Pipkin or someone. I shook the hand of whoever presented it and took the diploma with my left hand, as had been rehearsed. I had been carefully watching the gaffs of some of my classmates as they fought the tan curtain to get off the stage. I knew where the exit was. It was just like what I did in a pass drill.

I found the exit and as I tried to cross the threshold into the wings I stumbled on something. I don't know what it could be. There was nothing on the floor to trip me. I had no obstacles to step over. Something had made me noisily stagger as I entered the wings. Old superstitions say that stumbling on a threshold warns of danger within. I'll let the reader think of that what they will.

I exited the stage wings, went down the stairs, and got a face full of flashbulb. Dazzled, I managed to locate my seat and stand there in line until the last of us had graduated. According to alphabetical order and using our real names Eddie Bell was the first to receive his diploma and Elaine was the last.

Some individual awards were presented, like the scholarships to Danny and Robert. On signal we all switched our tassels from left to right, signifying graduation. Then we turned and faced the crowd and we were presented as the Graduates of 1974. We were warmly applauded.

We then marched in reverse order out of the Auditorium. It was over.

Out on the parking lot we shook hands and held on last get-together as the Class of 1974. There was an autograph card inside the top of the mortarboards, and some friends autographed each others. I was content with one last time with my friends.

I had walked with Giants. I had played football with spectacular athletes like Danny, Robert, Eddie Bell, Rickey Graham, Frankie Payne, and others. We had 2 District titles and 2 Second in District titles to claim. I had been on the best basketball squad in the history of Lone Oak, and I had been on the floor when we gathered the first district title since 1946. I had a big hearted and loyal friend like Rick. I had my best school chums like Herman and Randy Price. I had hobnobbed with noble ladies like Julia, Vicki Pipkin, Shirley, Martha Sale, and Sheron Stewart.

Though my future at that time looked dim, I revelled in the last moment of all of us together in one spot, for the last time ever. In that parking lot the Class of 1974 met for the last time as one. We made promises we would never keep. Some of us never intended to keep them anyway. We would never again get together as we had this evening.

We scattered to the 4 winds, saying goodbye to each other. We had careers, families, and the unknown future before us. I knew then and I know to this day that I had truly walked among the greats.



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"Set your goals high, Charlie-O,  
and strive to achieve them."

Coach Taylor, 1972.

**"For over a thousand years Roman conquerors returning from the wars enjoyed the honor of triumph, a tumultuous parade. In the procession came trumpeteers, musicians and strange animals from conquered territories, together with carts laden with treasure and captured armaments. The conquerors rode in a triumphal chariot, the dazed prisoners walking in chains before him. Sometimes his children robed in white stood with him in the chariot or rode the trace horses. A slave stood behind the conqueror holding a golden crown and whispering in his ear a warning: that all glory is fleeting."**

**- Gen. George C. Patton**

## Epilogue

I have stood on the 50 yard line of the Lone Oak football field, camera in hand. I have taken hundreds if not thousands of pictures of every sports related event I could get to. I wear my third reporduced Letter Jacket to special events like homecoming and Senior nights. I became one of at least 3 sideline photographers in the Lone Oak area, and am welcome at schools all over this area. Some even consider me good luck to have on the sidelines. I'm amused by that.



Lone Oak has a band now. I've heard my school song played on musical instruments for the first time. The band has as many kids in it now as any of my old football teams.

There are two high school teams and 2 junior high "Middle School" teams at Lone Oak now. The J.V. squad has as many on it as does the Varsity. They wear full red uniforms and helmets decorated with stripes and decals that we would have scoffed at in my day. But they look great.



### ***Buffaloes 2001. The highest scoring season in Lone Oak history***

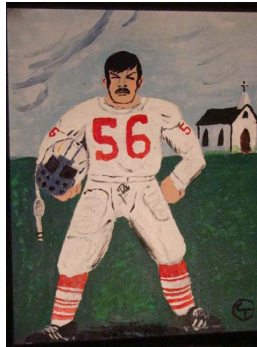
Much has changed since I left Lone Oak long ago. A bit of it is a shock. Some of it I like, some of it I don't. But that's just me. Traditions change with the times.

The Pep Squad is now called the Red Blazes. It is only about half the size of the drill team in my day, but there are about a dozen girls in the cheerleading unit.

So much has changed. There are a great amount of kids involved in the Friday Night Festivities now.

They still cry "Go Big Red!" and chant "Go Red Go!" but not like we used to.

I remember my friends Rickey Graham and Bobby Underwood. Both had died early deaths, less than a year apart, on motorcycles. I wish so much they could be here. Rick left behind no male heirs, and Woody left no children at all to my knowledge. None of Rick's kids attend school here. I loved them like brothers, especially Rick. He was my best buddy in life.



The Class of 1974 had a reunion in '84 and I did not attend. It was nostalgic I was told, and the last time they saw the great Clyde Ross alive. Mr. Ross passed away not long after the reunion. His loss was strongly felt by all who knew him.

Not everyone attended the reunion, and that was unfortunate. When the class went to Wind Pointe Park at Tawakoni for a night time picnic it got wild and boisterous. They blew off a lot of steam, I suppose.

Danny Bowman went to Howard Payne University, stayed two rough weeks, and came back home. He now works for Lone Star Gas and is (of all things!) a Referee! Who would have thought that a guy who railed against the Refs as much as the Sheepdog, would have eventually become a Ref? Danny got married twice and now has a nice family. He is well thought of in the community and this part of the state, both as a man of integrity and sportsmanship.





***Danny Bowman***

Eddie Bell played college ball at E.T.S.U. in Commerce. It almost killed him. Always trying too hard, he had a heart attack. He and Karen are still married, and Eddie Bell does very well in the business world. His son often comes to the games.



***Eddie Bell***

Herman Crist married his highschool sweetheart and raised a family. They eventually divorced. He has been married twice. Though I miss him, he and I rarely even talk on the phone. He'd rather not hear about Lone Oak anymore. I leave him alone.



***Herman H. Crist III, esq, in Farmersville***

David Dillon married Elaine and they settled down with a family. Somebody told me that he is a lay preacher, but I haven't had this confirmed.

Gary Dooley surprised me. He married, got a family, and became a rabid sports fan. He coached little league sports with the attitude of a fanatic. Not bad for a guy was a study hall potato all through high school, I think. His 6 foot plus tall son was a major basketball player for Lone Oak.

Shirley Funk married, divorced, married again, and has a clutch of children. Life has been rough to her and her siblings and I lost track of her when she went down to San Antonio. Her brothers died in nasty car wrecks and her mother was shot and killed by a man. Her younger brothers and sisters ended up in Boles. She was a nervous wreck last I saw of her. I wish for her the best, always.

Rickey Graham divorced his first wife, joined the Marines, and married again. He was the only guy I ever knew who wasn't changed or intimidated by Marine Corps Basic Training. He became an HH-53 Helicopter Crew Chief. He left the Marines, and worked briefly at E-Systems in Greenville. We met again, and became close friends once more. We had many good times in that short while, and relived our old school days. He later joined the Navy.



The last time I saw him alive he had on his Clint Eastwood "Fist Full of Dollars" hat and was with his wife and kids. He was on his way to Florida. We had a nice good bye chat and then in less than a month he was dead, killed on his motorcycle while going to a Florida Naval-Air Station.

His Funeral was the first one I had ever gone to. I put on my U.S. Army Class A Uniform and my black beret to honor him. I went there with a friend I had in Greenville named Brian Gluck. Vicki

Pipkin and Lana were there, too. They were the only people I recall who came there who were fellow alumni and not relatives.

Rickey Graham was laid to rest not 30 yards from Woody in the Wieland Cemetary. The Navy gave Rick full military honors. He was only but 26.



Rick left behind a legacy outside of Lone Oak. I had a friend named Chuck Buchanan who wanted to join the Marines as an infantryman. I took him to see Rick, in Rick's apartment in Greenville. Rick talked to Chuck, and Chuck listened. Chuck signed up in the Marine Air Wing for Helicopters after that.

Chuck went on to personally meet the President of the United States, serve in the Presidential Helicopter Fleet (Marine One), and then went as a Marine liason for the Bell Osprey Tilt Rotor at Bell Helicopter. He helped test the new tilt-rotors.



All that happened because Rick just talked to the boy. Rick had touched so many lives in so many ways. I don't think he ever knew how many. I was able to tell Mr. Fannin of his part in this too. From Coach Fannin, to Rick, to Buchanan, to the President of the United States, and the Osprey Tilt Rotor. Quite a legacy.

Johnny Hooten went to Dallas where he is a supervisor for a company there. He still lifts weights and he is built like Arnold Swartzenegger.

James Kelly married and ran a gas station in Greenville for a while. He lost his wife and dissappered for a very long time. I saw him again, and he is married and has a family. Interestingly, he went "Country and Western", dressing like a cowboy.

Julia Mahand went to Kilgore College, became a Kilgore Rangerette, got married, and has about 4 kids. She does not come to Lone Oak anymore, and her crumbling house sat abandoned with furniture inside. The garage was falling down around a car parked in there. In the late 90s the house burned down.

Julia almost became a member of my family, engaged to my cousin Kenneth. But my family squabbles broke that up and eventually led to my cousin's suicide as his life fell totally apart after that. Julia is beloved and missed. I would have honored to have her as a family member.

Gunner met a girl at Boles Home and married her. They had two kids and then broke up. Gunner's bullet is still on the District Trophy we won our Senior Year.

Randy Oakes married Elvira and they had a nice sized family of good atheletes. Randy works for Lone Star Gas and Elvira teaches school.

Frank Payne worked for E-Systems and lives near Lone Oak. He died at a friends house in the early 2000s. He had a son, Clay Payne, who was a great football player for Lone Oak.

Jimmy Payne owned a body shop in Lone Oak where he worked on the type of cars he used to draw. He was married and had a family, and his business was one of the most successful in Lone Oak. He died in a motorcycle accident just outside of town.

Vicki Pipkin got married, had a daughter, then her marriage broke up. She lives outside of Greenville and works at E-Systems. She usually organizes our reunions and similar get-togethers. She still looks the same she always has, and is still just as wonderful.



Ronald Posey met my Boles Girl at Boles Home and she was quite taken by his charm. Gunner introduced them. The disastrous relationship didn't work out, however. Married about a year, they divorced and Posey then found and married someone else. Ronald Posey has a family in Lone Oak. They lived next to the football field downtown.

Randy Price would retire from the Marines in twenty three years. He was quite happy with his globe trotting career, and raised a family.. The man I called Rabbit and I are still friends, though we don't see each other much. Hes been married a number of times, and has several children.



***Sgt Randy Price***

Gonga would join the Navy. I saw him at E.T. briefly when he was with a girlfriend, about 1986. I haven't seen or heard of him since, except for a couple of insulting emails on line.

Sheron Stewart married somebody and left Lone Oak. I don't know where she is or what she is doing. I bought her 1972 yearbook by accident from a fellow who was selling old yearbooks. I still have it.

Martha Sale married, got her teaching degree, and is still teaching and married to the same man. I haven't seen her since just before the '84 class reunion.

Robert Vice left Howard Payne when Danny did. Robert married Nandale and they have a family. Robert works for Fritoe Lay and has served on the School Board at Lone Oak. He and I get along well today. His son Ryan Vice was an outstanding quarterback at Lone Oak.



***Robert Vice***

Elaine married Dillon and raised a family. It is what she always wanted to do. She is a supervisor at Mary of Pudding Hill. Her attitude hasn't changed.

Philip Andrews divorced his first wife and ran a lumber company in Celeste when I saw him in the early 90s. He still has an astonishing way with the ladies.



***Philip Andrews, 1997***

Ricky McCallum married soon after leaving school. He went on to live in Forney and has two daughters in the school there. He drives an 18 wheeler for a living. He has remembered everybody but me, so I guess when he said to me "Forget you!" he finally did.

Dan Webb became an engineer and lives in Chahuahua, Mexico. He's been married a number of times and has lots (and lots) of children.



***Dan Webb***

I went to college and hung around at Boles Home. Herman accompanied me there from time to time, riding herd on me. As outsiders we put up with a ton of crap there. Still, at Boles I met a cute blond called Pat Phelps and she and I hit it right off. After almost a year she and I had a miscommunication and she ran away, unable to deal with the place. I saw her only once after that at a Boles Home reunion, and never again since. She had gotten married soon after she ran away from Boles. There was nothing I could do.

The Boles Girl herself had a very rough time soon after she left Boles Home. I would be a witness to the trials and tribulations she would go through for almost 5 years. As much as I wanted to be involved, to help her, and to be a meaningful part of her life she would continue to put me off. To her I was neither friend or enemy, just a guy "who used to write" to her. I was just a mixed up guy who was always there, and once I told her I loved her. She never understood why. I don't think I am sure myself. Once I got her a birthday present and for something like two days we were friends. It didn't last. It couldn't. We just never hit it off.

She eventually found someone that fit her ideals of what she wanted. Boles Girl now lives in Sulphur Springs with her husband and family. I do not know where, and I do not seek her out, though I sometimes talk to her brother from time to time. Boles Girl and I make a effort to avoid even seeing each other. There are a lot of unexplained emotions there and it is believed that it is best for all that we do not see each other. If she was to ask me for something I would give it to her without question or seek anything in return, but if we ever meet again it is to be on her terms only. She'd rather I just go away. I try to do that.

In 1985 my family doctor took me off my medication. My attitude and life in general improved almost immediately. Without the depressant and by having a great circle of friends that I met after I left school it enabled me to finally get my act together, and pretty much get over Boles Girl. My heart is sound. I didn't need the medication and have had the murmur since I was born.

I had my military career, went all over the State of Texas, became a military officer, commanded the Sulphur Springs unit, and had lots of great adventures. I have no complaints, and I am content. Some Vietnam Vets I served with in the 49<sup>th</sup> Armored Division accepted me as one of their own. It was a great honor. Life is good once more.

Back in Lone Oak we are always seeking another championship season. These boys and girls here in the school follow in our footsteps. They do not know who we are or what we had done. They live their own adventure, as we had lived and are still living ours.

One can look up in the home bleachers. There are a few familiar faces here, like David Lemons, Troy and Shiela Haynes, and Jerry McGee. Danny is probably calling a game someplace. Others have children on the team, in the band, the Red Blazes Drill Team, and in the Cheerleaders.

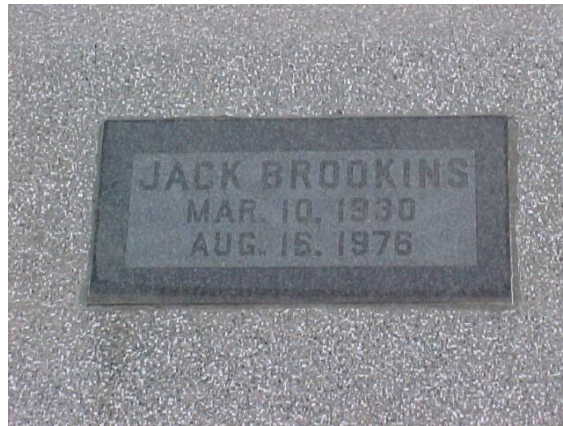


***David Lemons, daughter, and wife.***

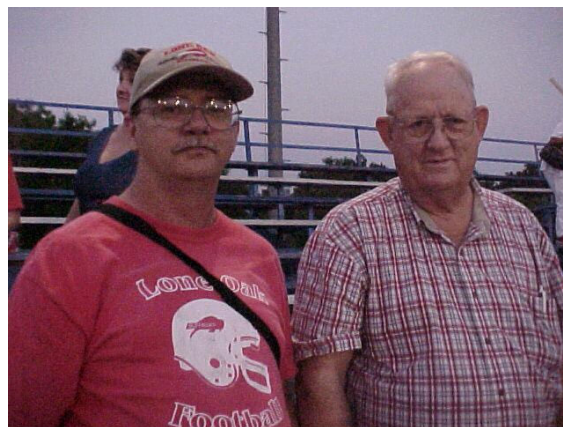
I had stayed away from Lone Oak for almost 15 years of self imposed exile. The changes in the school have been amazing. It is not the same school anymore. A grade school had been built south of the town, and a new high school building, gym, and football field were planned by Mr.



Fannin, who was Superintendant. These would be built in time. All of this is an improvement but something is missing.



That something is Jack Brookins. Coach Brookins passed away in 1976. As he lived in legend so his death was legendary. It is said that he sensed death was near and had taken a man he had met in the hospital there. The moment Coach Brookins passed on it was said his faithful dog howled once and died. He was a most remarkable man and with remarkable abilities to inspire and direct, he is missed by all of us who knew him as coach, principal, and teacher.



***Me with Coach Fannin at Wolfe City***

Mr. Fannin himself led a team of Lone Oak Buffaloes to second in State in 1977. He went on to head all of Lone Oak school, and had directed it's continuing improvements and growing in size. The facilities he left behind when he retired in 1997 are his tributes to his love for the Buffaloes. There is a quote that fits his achievements:

"Si monumentum requirus, circumspice"

(If you seek his monument, look about you.)

Christopher Wren

There are athletic awards in school named after Coach Brookins and Coach Fannin. That is the high regard these two men are held in by this school. I gave one of these awards away during an "All Sports Banquet". I considered it quite an honor to do so.



In Mr. Fannin's office was a bad painting I gave the school, representing how it felt back in the old 8 man days. Mr. Fannin had hung it up there with pride. Some folks have even commented to me about it.

When Mr. Fannin passed on they held his funeral in the gym he made such effort to have built. He wanted bleachers on both sides, just like our old wooden gym of so long ago. It was a fitting memorial. They dedicated the football field to him as "The Field of Dreams". A plaque is on the flagpole stand at the north end for this dedication.

Mr. Fannin went to great lengths to save Lone Oak School when it was in danger of losing its accreditation.

The old school building is used as a ministry now, and the badly worn "new gym" is used by Y league. The classrooms in the gym area are used for education of troubled youths.

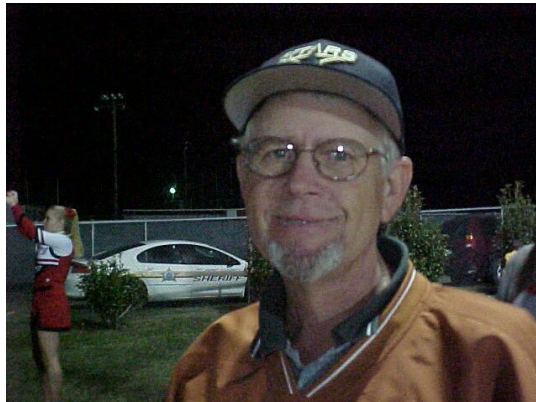
The town itself hasn't changed much. It is just steady. For many years before and for many years after I went to Lone Oak High there have been children, teachers, and countless others "Living the Adventure". Peggy Bedingfield and her mother even started a Newsletter, the first newspaper of any kind in Lone Oak since the 40s. I became a reporter for them, where I did historical color, sports, and a cartoon called "Urchins" about girls at a New Mexico girls home who are basketball playing powerhouses.

Steve Bell became an insurance executive and was once married to a Dallas Cheerleader. He makes an effort to go to Lone Oak games when they make it to the playoffs. "Ah the joys, of the Alpha Male....."



***Steve Bell***

Larry Hukill comes to a few Lone Oak games and he and I have pleasant chats and good memories of the "old days", including our "Rocky Jones, Space Ranger" adventures.



***Larry Hukill***

Neel Dunlap sometimes comes to a game or two. His son Garrett was a center for the Buffaloes. All the bitterness he had has pretty much vanished, and he's a proud father of a proud Buffalo.



***Neel Dunlap***

At this time in these places, I thank God I got to be with the people I was with. We were a pretty elite bunch. Good at some sports, and better than most at it, we were also a brainy crew.

Most of us tried to excell at everything, be it sports, culture, or academics. Others have told me they graduated from Lone Oak and didn't feel prepared. I did feel prepared. My time in college has shown me that I was well prepared, as were most of my classmates.

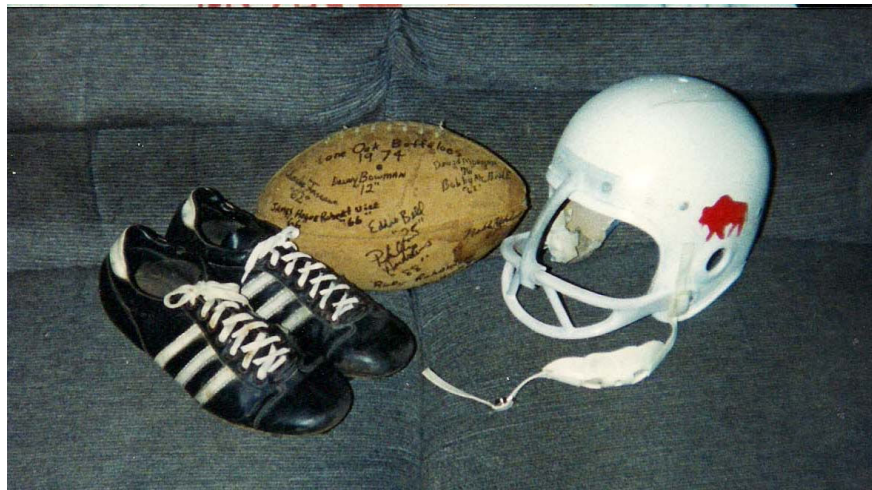
Even today, with many of us middle aged, most of us feel that we can do anything we put our minds to. We owe it all to what we did in school. Our teachers, for the most part, were at least excellent. We remember them all. Running through all of our psyches is a strong sense of competition, personal honor, and fairplay. A lot of us became little league coaches and umpires in our spare time.

Topmost of all of this is a sense of never say die. No matter how bad it got a lot of us did not quit, did not run away, or give up. Quitting would have been too easy. All of us faced a time of crisis after graduation, and most of us overcame it.

My friends, my classmates, and all of my coaches and teachers are a special group to me. They are to all of us who have known them. We shall never forget them. They help make us what we are.

I like to watch the Buffaloes as they go on to victory and another championship. The Adventure never stops!

"Go Red!!!!"



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## Awards and Honors

### Charles Tarrant

Undefeated, Junior High 8 Man Football, 1969-70

Last 8 Man Junior High Squad, 1969-70

First 11 Man Football Squad, 1970-71

Player-Manager, Football, 1971-72 (Only one ever known to do this)

Celeste Basketball Tournament Champions, 1971-72

District 36-B Basketball Champions, 1971-72

Undefeated in District, Basketball, 71-72

First District title since 1946, Basketball, 71-72

Centurions, 100 points over Caddo Mill's 57, Basketball, 71-72

Defeat of State Champions La Poyner, 54 to 57, 18/Feb/1972

Bi-District Champions, 36B Basketball, 29/Feb/72

Regional Quarterfinalist, Basketball, 3/Mar/72

Last Team in Old Gym, Football/Basketball, 71-72

Mile Run, 71 to 74

Second in District 17-A, Football, 71-72

Cast Vote for Homecoming Queen, 71-72

Cast Vote for Homecoming Queen, 72-73

First 11 Man Junior Varsity, 72-73

Junior Varsity Center, 72-73

Concrete Cowboys, basketball without a gym, 72-73

Longest Road Trip in Basketball, no home games, no gym, 72-73

Second in District, Football 17-A, 72-73

Leonard Basketball Tournament Consolation Champions, 72-73

Zulus, 1972-73

Class Cartoonist and comic strip writer, 68 to 74

Boys State Alternate, 72-73

Freelance School Newspaper Reporter for "The Bison", 73-74

The Radio Play, 73-74

Cast Vote for and selected Homecoming Queen Julia Mahand, 73-74

District Champions, Football, 17-A, 73-74

"B" Team Starter, Basketball, 73-74

Installation of new wall lockers, 73-74

N.A.S.A. Display Participation, 6/Feb/74

Feature Writing U.I.L. District Champion, 73-74

Feature Writing U.I.L. Regional, 5th place 73-74

English Medel for Creativity, 73-74

High School Diploma, 20/May/1974

Book-keeping Certificate, 1974

Drivier's Education Certificate, 1972

Letter Jacket Awarded for Football, 73-74

Reader's Club Certificate, 1974

F.F.A. 1970-74

Commercial Club, 1972-74

Buffalo Booster Nominee, 1974

Rual Youth Day, Texas State Fair at Dallas, 1970 to 73

Jack Brookins' last football team, 1972-73

Bobby Fannin's First 11 man Lone Oak Football Team, 1973-74

1 loss, Junior High Football, 8 Man, 1968-69

Brian Taylor's first football team, 1968-69

Brian Taylor's last high school team, 73-74

First Spring Break, 1974



Construction of New Field, 1970 to 74

First team in new locker rooms, 73-74

Concessions, Popcorn, homegames, Football, 71-72

First Pep-Rally in new Gym, 1973

Junior High Diploma

First Undefeated District Season, Football, 17-A, 73-74

Second in Celeste Tournament, Basketball, 17-A, 73-74

First to wear Buffalo Emblems on helmets, 73-74

First team in new gym, 73-74

First indoor practice, new gym, 73-74

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## Interviews

Coach Bobby Fannin, Lone Oak Schools Superintendant

Coach Brian Taylor

Steve Bell

Dan Webb

Rickey Richardson

Rev. Robert Cook

Coach Ronnie Hogue, Boles Home

Allen Hooten

Eddie Earl White, Lone Oak Schools Superintendant

David Morgan

Jerry McGee

Randy Price

Wayne Price

Mr. William Dial, Lone Oak Schools Superintendant

Herman Crist

Herm Crist (Herman's Father)

Sidney Nelson

Gary Dooley

Ronald Posey

Troy Haynes

The former Miss Lana Slemmons

The former Miss Shirley Funk

Philip Andrews

Assorted members of the faculty of Lone Oak, Bland, Campbell, Boles, Cumby, Wolfe City, Quinlan, Community, Celeste, Terrel, Rains, and Caddo Mills Schools.

Eddie and Karen Bell

The former Miss Kathy Graham.

Neel Dunlap

Hollis Goode

M.E. Doc Graham

Roy Ohara, the Voice of the Buffaloes

The former Miss Sandy Robertson

Lane Garner

The former Miss Margie Sanders

Jerry and Josie McGee

Shiela Haynes

Hiram Hart

Danny Bowman

Robert Vice



Mrs. Irene Dodd

Rickey McCallum

Johnny Jackson

O.T. Williams

Terry Dooley

Donnie Sanquefeld

Joe Burks

Steve Warren

Randy and Elvira Oaks

The Pyron Family

Jimmy Payne

The former Miss Fonda Payne

Mrs. Pat Burney

David Lemons

Lloyd Turney

Mr. and Mrs. Chambliss

James Lewis

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## Sources

My own notes, archives, and diaries

The Greenville Herald Banner

The Tawakoni News

The Greenville Public Library

The Terrel Public Library

Lone Oak School Archives

Boles School Archives

Shirley Funk, personal notes and High School Yearbooks

East Texas State University Library

World Book Encyclopedia

Robert Vice's Film Collection

David Morgan, personal notes

Steve Warren, Boles Home Yearbooks

The internet

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## Sites Visited

Terrel Stadium

Lone Oak School, entire campuses

Campbell School

Community Stadium, and old abandoned gym

Honey Grove Stadium

Quinlan School, entire campus

Boles Home and School, entire campus

Rains School, entire campus

Bland School, elementary, highschool, and gym

Celeste High School, gym and campus

Caddo Mills School, old gym

Wolfe City, Gym and stadium

Cooper gym

Lake Tawakoni, "Iron Bridge"

Estate of the Graham Family

Abandoned Mahand Residence in Lone Oak

Stately Wayne Manor

Former Graham Gas Station on Hwy 69

Former Jack Evan's Store on Hwy 69

Greenville City "Graham" Park

Empty lot of personal residence on Hwy 69

J.C. Johnson's abandoned store, Lone Oak

Weiland Cemetery

Prairie Valley Cemetery and Community Center

Aunt Coriennes' house in Sulphur Springs

Aunt Dot's house in Greenville

Former Tarrant Gas Station in Sulphur Springs

Various and sundry sites in and around Lone Oak township

Cumby township

Old Greenville National Guard Armory

Lamar School

Philip's Field

Greenville, most sites torn down, moved, or abandoned and in disrepair, including Kress' store, Sears Building, Perry's Store, Sporting Goods, Gibsons, T.G.+Y, Pizza Inn, Texan Theater, Woody's, Recruiting Stations, etc.

State Fair Grounds, Dallas

Six Flags Theme Park, Arlington

Panchos, Arlington

Como-Picton, stadium and gym.

East Texas A & M University Library, Campus, and Stadium.

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## The Class of 1974

Eddie Bell-Football-1,2, 3,4; H. M. Line Backer-2;All-District Det. Back-4; Track-1, 2, 3; Off.Back-4; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; FFA Off.-3; Comm.Club 3; Comm. Club Off.-3; Class Officer-1, 3;Class Fav.-2; Buffalo Booster-2; Bison Stf.-3;Football Captain 4

Danny Bowman-Football-1, 2, 3, 4; Capt.~; All District Off.-2; All Dist. Def.-3; H. M. Off.-3; All Dist. Def.-A; Offensive Player of the Year 4;Basketball-1, 2, 3, 4; Track-1, 2, 3, 4; Tennis 2,3,4; Commercial Club 3, 4; Comm. Club Off.-3,4; Class Off-1, 2; Mr. Personality-1-4; Most

Studios-2, 3, 4; Best All Around-3; Buffalo Booster-2; Football Captain 4; Outstanding Teenager of America 4

Shirley Chisrn~Baskt.-1, 2, 3; Volleyball 1, 2; Drill Team-1, Drummer 2; Mgr.4, UIL-2, 3; FHA-1, 2, 3, 4; FHA Off.-3; Area Repr.-3; Comm. Club 3, 4; Class Off-1; Honor Roll 1, 2, 3, 4

Herman Crist-Baskt.-3, 4; FFA-I, 2, 3; Commercial Club4 Boys State 3

David Dillon~Footbal~2; Tennis 2; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; FFA Off.-3, 4; Comm. Club-3, 4; Class Favorite 4

Gary Dooley-Track-1, 2, 4; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; Commercial Club 3, 4

Rickey Graham Football 1, 2, 3,4; H. M. Def. Lineman- 2-3; All Dist. Def. Tackl 4, H. M. Off. Line~3; Track-1, 2, 3,4; FFA-1, 2, 3,4; Commercial Club~3-4; Football Capt 4, basketball 1, 2

Johnny Hooten Football-2, 3,4; Football Capt.4, FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; FFA Officer-3; Track-1, 2, 3; Comm. Clu~3, 4

James Kelly-Transferred from Greenville, Baskt. Mgr.-2; Track Mgr.-2; FFA-2, 3; Commercial Club~4

Julia Mahand~Baskt.-1, 2, 3, 4; Volleybal~1, 2; Track-3, 4; 3rd P1. 440 Relays-3; FHA-1, 2, 3, 4; Betty Crocker Award-4; FHA-Off. 4; Area

Repr.-1; Drill Team-1, 2, 3, 4; Football Sweetheart 4, Bison Staff 4 Class Officer 4 Most Courteous-4; Girls State Cit.-3; Eng. Award-3; History Awar~1-3; UIL Per. Speakin~1st Place Dist.-2, 3; 2nd Place Regional-2; Spelling-2; One Act Play-4; Outstanding Teenager of America-4

David Morgan-Football~3, 4; Cap;~4. basketball-2, 3; Tennis 1, 2, 3, 4; Track-1, 2; Comm Club-3, 4; FFA-I, 2, 3, 4; All Dist. Off. Guard-4

Randy Oaks~Football-2, 3, 4; Capt.4 Track 3, 4; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; Bison Staff-4; Comm. Club4; Buffalo Booster-4; Best All Around 4

Frankie Payne Football-3, 4; H. M. Off.-3; All Dist. Def. and Off.~4 Track-2~3; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; FFA Officer-3, 4; Mr. LOHS 4; Comm. Clu~3, 4; Most Dependable 4; Football Captain~4

Jimmy Payne FFA-i, 2, 3, 4; Comm. Club 3,

Vicki Pipkin-FHA-1, 2, 3, 4; 1st V. P.-3; State Repr.-1; UIL Ready Writin~2; UIL Typin~3; One Act Play-3, 4; Drill Team-1; 2nd Lieut-2; Capt.-3,4; Annual Staff-3~4; Editor-3; Co-editor-4; Comm. Club 3, 4; Comm. Club Officer-4; Class Favorit~2; Best Dressed-2; Miss Personality-3; Miss LOHS; FFA Sweetheart~4 Who's Who 3; Most Outstanding TeenageAmerica-3; Class President-3, 4; Typing; Award 3; Honor Roll-1, 2, 3, 4

Ronald Posey-Football 4; Capt.~4 Track-1, 3 FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; FFA Officer~; Comm. Clu~3, 4; Best Dressed-4; Outstanding Teenager of America -4

Randy Price~Footbal~1, 2, 3, 4; Capt.~4 ; Basketball~3. 4; Track-2, 3,4; FFA-1, 2,3,4; Comm. Clu~3, -Most Handsom~4; FHA Beau~4

Martha Sale~FHA-1, 2, 3,4; Area Repr.-1; FHA Officer-2; Class Officer-2, 3, 4; Drill Team-1, 2; 2nd Lieut.-3-4; Comm. Clu~3, 4; Comm. Club

Officer~4; Annual Staff-4; UIL Typin~3; Class Favorite~4; Most Dependabl~3

Steve Stephenson-Football-2, 3, 4; Capt.-4 Basketbal~3, 4; Baskt. Mgr.-3; Track Mgr.-1, 3; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; Comm. Clu~3, 4

Sheron Stewart-Cheerleader -3; H d. Cheerleader~4; FFA Sweetheart-3; FHA-1, 2, 3,4; Bison Staff-3; Comm. Club~3, 4; Annual Staff-3, 4; Editor~4; Drill Team 1, 2; BestDressed-3; Most Beautiful-3; Best. All Around~4

Charles Tarrant-Footbal~3, 4; Mgr.-2; Capt.~4; Baskt.-2, 3, 4; Track-2, 3, 4; Comm. Clu~3, 4; FFA-1,2,3,4 UIL District Feature Writing Champ-4 (5th in Regional) English Medel Award for Creativity-4, Boys State Alternate-3.

Robert Vice~Football-1, 2, 3, 4; All District Def. and Off.-2, 3, 4; Defensive Player of the Year~4; Football Capt.~4; Basketball-1, 3, 4; Track-1, 2, 3, 4; Tennis~2, 3; Commercial Clu~3, 4; Officer-4; Class Officer-1, 2, 3, 4; FFA-1, 2, 3, 4; Officer-2, 3, 4; Most Courteous~3, 4; Beau~4; Outstanding Teenager of America-4

Elaine Weatherly-Drill Team-1, 2; 1st Lieut.-3-4; FHA-1, 2, 3, 4; Area Repr.-3; Comm. Clu~3, 4;Annual Staff~4; Bison Staff~4; editor~4; Honor Roll-1, 2, 3, 4

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Thanks to everyone who made this story possible.