

High School Hall of Fame Speech

Before I begin what I'd like to say tonight, I want to acknowledge Loren Laird, my Warrior football teammate in 1959. He was an inside linebacker on the stingiest defense in the state that year. In the championship Douglas game, the first unit defense didn't give up a single first down for three quarters when they left the field to let others play.

Russell Laird, Loren's father, was also a star football player in the 1920s, which means Loren represents a family that has been part of Worland high school athletics for almost a 100 years.

Will Loren stand and be recognized?

I want thank you, Mark, and all in the School District who made this happy time together possible. It's great to be home in Worland and also great to be honored by people who know you best.

I have to say, though, that Warrior football might have been better represented by others, many others, including Howard

Cook who led Colorado over Clemson in the 1957 Orange Bowl. And by Glen Patterson who was an all Big Eight tackle for Bob Devaney's powerful Nebraska teams of the late 1960's.

As for me in 1959, Warrior football was a *non-contact* sport. How was that? Because the Warrior offensive linemen – all-stater Dick Yingling, Larry Coggins, Larry Kitchel, Dean Frederick, and Jim Storer – all of them big, fast, and talented – simply overwhelmed the kids on the other side of the ball.

And the three Warrior running backs – Sonny Shearer, Lloyd Snyder, and Tommy Boyles – were all legitimate first team all-staters. So **why risk contact** when I could hand the ball off to one of them. I was good at that.

More than in any other sport, a football team takes on the character of its head coach. Our coach was Wimp Hewgley whose Warrior team featured controlled aggression – in other words, **combining mind and heart to produce a fierce desire to win**. You could say the same about assistant coaches Clarence Daniels, Bill Martin, and Dan Hansen.

In 1998, I was on CSPAN late at night for some reason.

There were five people watching. My mother, three people in Wisconsin, and Coach Clarence Daniels. He tracked me down and called me. He said, “We had a great championship season, Grant. You know, you never made a mental mistake, but Coach Hewgley and I, we didn’t think a whole lot of your physical skills.” What I really wanted to say but didn’t was this: “Coach, it’s been 40 years. Love me for my body.”

For the championship game in Douglas, the high school chartered 8 or 9 passenger cars from the Burlington Railroad that took 750 Warrior fans to the game. We had more people on our side of the field than the home team had on theirs. That memory is one of the best in my life.

I want thank a few Worland teachers who gave me such a good start in life.

Miss Crist was my second grade teacher. A pretty woman with flaming red hair, she taught me how to add and subtract numbers with three and four digits. I thought I had become a magician, and developed a big crush on Miss Crist. But wouldn’t you know it. That very year, she went off and **married**

somebody else.

Then there were two eighth grade teachers, Charlotte Young and Joe Kienlen. From Miss Young, I learned to love American history and American politics. From Mr. Kienlen, a physically powerful and temperamentally gentle man, I learned not to get too wrapped up in success and not to get too wrapped up in failure.

From Roy Swartz, the high school chemistry teacher, I learned that the world I could see all around me was made up of tiny atoms and molecules that all had a precise shape and structure. This understanding of my physical surroundings made me a magician for a second time.

Debbie Hammons' father, Dan Healy, was a mentor of mine. He taught me that you could learn something from everyone you meet in life. He meant **everyone**, and he was right. I have often been less respectful of others than Dan.

Dan and his wife Martha once came to visit me in Boston, and we went to see an outdoor art exhibit. I pointed at a painting composed of slashes of red, black, green. Laughing, I asked,

“Just what is that?” Martha, nearly always known for her gracious composure, said sharply, “Stop that, Grant. The painter is sharing part of his life with you. Not the painter, but you are the silly one.”

I was a six-year member of the Durkee Ag Four-H Club. Ben and Harry Strauch, Betty Claire and Glen Swing, Ruth Bower, and Marion Barngrover were all busy people, but they were among many others in the ag community around Worland who wanted to give the farm kids all the advantages the town kids had. Let me thank them now.

I owe the most to four farm people. My parents, Tom and Mary. And my grandparents, Shuichi and Yae. Without them, I had nothing and would have come to nothing.

I feel much the same way about the people and the town of Worland. I don't know whether it takes a village, but I do know that **it takes a town.**

Thank you again for honoring me.