

Pepperdine Football Memories Through the Years; 1946-61

By Dick Dornan
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MALIBU, Calif. -- For 16 wonderful and memorable seasons, Pepperdine football captured the hearts of its fans and local community through the passionate play of its players and leadership of its coaches. From the tough-nosed running of fullback Darwin Horn in the late 1940s through the inspired performances of quarterback Jay Roelen in the mid-50s to the Waves final game in 1961, Pepperdine football symbolized an era of dreams, hope, accomplishment, fulfillment and togetherness.

The following editorial recounts and shares the fond memories of 36 special men who dedicated their time and commitment to playing or coaching football for George Pepperdine College. Sit back and enjoy reading these anecdotes as former Pepperdine gridiron greats reminisce and reflect upon some very special times playing the game they loved representing the school they so admired.

1946 – 1950

As I entered the home of Pepperdine's most decorated football player in the beautiful hills of Rancho Palos Verdes, I was immediately greeted by the warmth and kindness of Darwin Horn. Standing at 6-foot-3 with a physique that still had the resemblance of a competitive and determined running back, Horn welcomed me with open arms and escorted me into a room where former Pepperdine standouts Harry Nelson, Keith Dolan, Monte Lefton and Ed Hyduke awaited my arrival.

Dressed in their white Pepperdine alumni sweatshirts, Horn and Nelson introduced me to "the gang". Dolan and Lefton had driven up from San Diego while Nelson and Hyduke commuted from nearby. Having been served a nice, warm cup of cappuccino by Nelson, it was time to discuss the inception of the GPC program and their time spent playing there. In many ways, these five men were a part of the birth of Pepperdine football and its subsequent glory years.

In 1946, George Pepperdine College had an enrollment of 1,200 students, 300 of which lived on the Los Angeles campus (34 acres located in the Vermont Knolls area, just a few miles south of downtown). World War II had come to an end and many young men who served their country were returning home to the lives they left behind. For many, starting life anew meant enrolling in college. The GI Bill allowed them to leave the service and get an education.

Al Duer, Pepperdine's Director of Athletics at the time, introduced Warren Gaer as the school's first head football coach. This was Gaer's first position on the college level after coaching 10 different high school football teams. His coaching resume began in

Missouri Valley, Iowa, in 1935 and concluded 10 years later in Milwaukee, Wis. Gaer played collegiately at Drake University in 1932-35, captaining the team his senior year.

In September of 1946, Duer and Gaer assembled 50 young men to form Pepperdine College's first intercollegiate football team. As of May 1, 2010, only 24 players from the original team remain alive (18 linemen and six backs).

Horn (FB; '46-'48), Nelson (HB; 1946), Dolan (C; '46, '48, '49) and Lefton (G; 1946) were part of the first Pepperdine team. Gaer was head coach from 1946-48 and then left to become head coach at Drake, his alma mater. Assistant Ray Richards succeeded him at the helm for the 1949 and 1950 seasons.

Horn co-led the nation in scoring in 1947 with 115 points in just nine games and was named to the Little (College) All-American team in 1946 and 1947. Darwin Horn is Pepperdine's all-time record holder in the following areas:

RUSHING YARDS, Career: 1,577 yards

RUSHING YARDS, Single Season: 564 yards

RUSHING YARDS, Single Game: 120 (is *second* all-time to Ron Wootton who ran for 126)

RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS, Career: 38

RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS, Single Season: 19

RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS, Single Game: 3

POINTS SCORED, Career: 234

POINTS SCORED, Single Season: 115

POINTS SCORED, Single Game: 18

Ed Hyde (HB, QB; '48-'50) finished his distinguished career as one of the all-time great quarterbacks in Pepperdine football history. He was named to the Little (College) All-American team in 1950.

Hyde finished his collegiate career setting several school passing records. He set the single-season mark of 1,260 passing yards in 1950 and the career mark of 2,383 passing yards over three years. Hyde threw for a school-record 25 career touchdowns, including a personal-best 11 touchdowns in 1950. He passed for school-records of 166 career completions out of 368 career attempts.

All his records were eventually eclipsed in 1957 by Jay Roelen except for career touchdowns. Hyde still owns that record and it appears to be his forever.

Gaer instituted the single-wing formation on offense during his three years as head coach. He led Pepperdine to an 8-1 record in 1946, 9-0 in 1947 (National Small College Champions) and 4-5 in 1948. Highlights included a 16-game winning streak, Will Rogers Bowl champions in 1946, the only undefeated and untied team on the Pacific Coast in 1947 and the nation's top-scoring team with 350 points (beating Michigan by just five points) and the nation's best defensive team allowing only 26 points total, both occurring in 1947.

The George Pepperdine College football team had secured a perfect record and was named the 1947 National Small College Champion in just its second year of existence. Excellence at its best!

Let's now enjoy what these special men had to say about their coach, teammates and GPC.

On Head Coach Warren Gaer:

Darwin Horn- "He was a very special person. As a matter of fact, he was so special that in 1990 15 of us and our wives went back to Iowa to honor Coach Gaer. We had a great weekend. We actually got to spend a week there. What a great time."

Harry Nelson- "We had a nice little reunion; a bunch of us old goats. It was fun. But the thing I remember most about Coach Gaer was that he always kept track of us after we left Pepperdine. When I saw him at the reunion in Iowa and at the 25-year reunion in Malibu, he always knew what I was doing, where I was. I worked at USC for nine years and he asked me how I was doing there. He remembered me and always knew what I was doing."

"I wasn't a star on the team. I played for just one season ('46). We had Darwin, the Drager brothers, Elmer Noonan, Terry Bell, Keith Kenworthy, Ted Kiapos, etc. Gaer treated me like I was just one of the guys. I was fortunate to be in the same group with the guys."

Keith Dolan- "He was very friendly. The first time I had met him we were walking up the promenade and he said, 'I want you to know that the players I already have wear barbed wire suspenders.' Terry Bell was up trimming trees and coach said, 'that's one of our players.' "

Ed Hyduke- "Gaer treated me marvelous. He was a good ole homeboy. He was Iowa-bred."

Why They Chose Pepperdine:

Darwin Horn- "Monte Lefton and I went down to USC in August of 1946. We were going to play football at USC since we always played together. We went down there and we agreed to not play at USC and play someplace else. So we jump in the car and Monte says, 'They are starting football at Pepperdine so let's go down there.'

"To show you the difference, nobody talked to me on campus at USC and nobody stopped to say hi or anything like that. But we get down to Pepperdine and people are coming up and saying, 'hey, how are you doing' and 'boy, you guys look like football players, why don't you go and see the coach he lives right over there.' So Monte and I went over and Coach Gaer wasn't there but his wife was."

“Martha says, ‘I know Coach would like to talk to you two, won’t you come back at 6 p.m.?’

“So Monte and I came back at 6 o’clock and knocked on his door. Coach said hi to us and said, ‘Boy, I would love to have both of you but I only have one suit (uniform) left.’ I looked at Monte and we agreed we weren’t going to Loyola. Coach said, ‘I would like to give you one (Darwin) and the first uniform that comes back we will give to him (Monte).’ So we agreed to go back down the hall and talk. We talked and said, ‘let’s do it.’ We went back to coach and said ‘Okay. It’s a deal.’ And he said, ‘Okay. We are starting practice tomorrow.’ Mine came and I got my uniform and Monte got the first one right away. It worked out well. What a difference in campuses.”

Ed Hyduke- “Darwin was responsible for me coming to Pepperdine. We played on a softball team one summer and he told me, ‘Don’t go to Loyola, don’t go to SC. You come to Pepperdine.’ That’s all I heard that summer in this one ear. We were buddies and we played high school football together.”

Harry Nelson- “I was there in February of 1946. A 24-year old freshman. I came from Huntington Park High School. I didn’t play football. I was on the track team and had some speed. I wanted to be a coach. So I got there and went out for spring practice. There were 18 of us. Fortunately, Gaer allowed me to play for him. It was a great learning experience for me. I was very fortunate.

“The big payout to me is all the guys I got to be associated with. There was a bond that occurred. Ninety-eight percent of us came out of the service. We were there to get an education and guys knew what they wanted to do. A bond occurred and that’s why we still get together all these years.”

On the Success of the Inaugural 1946 Season:

Keith Dolan- “I think it was the maturity of the players because most of us were service guys. We had a *bell* and a *horn* that were pretty doggone good.”

Ed Hyduke- “I will never forget that headline, ‘The Horn sounded and the Bell rang.’”

Darwin Horn- “A lot of those guys had played ball at other colleges and some us had played ball in the service so that certainly added to the maturity.”

Monte Lefton- “The biggest thing was that we came through a war. We were alive and we had our future ahead of us. And we made it.”

Ed Hyduke- “Another thing was the formation, the single-wing. A lot of people ran the T-formation. It took teams an extra three or four days to gear their team to defend it.”

On His Close Friend, Ed Hyduke:

Darwin Horn- “You know something. If he (Hyduke) would have come to Pepperdine in August of '46, we would have gone undefeated two years in a row.”

On the Will Rogers Bowl in Oklahoma City (a 38-13 win over Nebraska Wesleyan):

Darwin Horn- “We were behind 7-0. First time that we were behind at halftime all year. We went into halftime and they had this pot belly stove and we were all around it. We were cold. We were freezing.”

Monte Lefton- “We won on a frozen turf. We got to stay an extra two days in Oklahoma City because it was too cold to come back. Got snowed in. We stayed at the Biltmore Hotel. I think Pepperdine lost money in that deal.”

Darwin Horn- “I understand that the school got \$2,000 for playing in that game.”

Monte Lefton- “Did they really? Well, you and I ate that much up in the restaurants.”

Harry Nelson- “We were one of five teams who were considered for the Orange Bowl but we weren't offered.”

On Playing Loyola in 1948:

Darwin Horn- “We played Cal Tech the week before and we beat them, 14-12. We did not look good. There was a group of Loyola guys up in the stands yelling, ‘Wait ‘til next week, wait ‘til next week.’ Boy, we showed them.”

Ed Hyduke- “They scored and kicked off to us. I looked up out of the huddle and I saw that Loyola had two safeties and nobody over the middle. Gaer had let me call the plays. So I told Terry Bell, ‘Terry, go up, break over and I’m going to hit you with a long one.’ And we did and it worked. He caught it and went for the touchdown.” (Hyduke threw a 40-yard pass to Bell who caught it at the Loyola 29 yard line and sprinted the rest of the way for a 69-yard touchdown pass to tie the score, 7-7, in the first quarter. The Waves eventually won, 14-13, behind Terry Bell’s 95-yard kickoff return in the second quarter).

Ed Hyduke- “Have you heard of the story that a guy could stop on a dime, make a fake and give you a nickel? That was Terry Bell.”

On a Nice Tackle by a Loyola Player:

Darwin Horn- “I was at a retirement party a few years ago and sitting at the table, a guy across from me said, ‘You are Darwin Horn.’ I said, ‘Yes, sure am.’ He said, ‘You probably don’t remember this but I have to tell you a story.’ He said, ‘I played defensive halfback for Loyola and one time you came through the line and into the secondary and I had to tackle you.’

“He hit me so well. I remember it vividly. We were tumbling around and we got up and I reached out and said, ‘Nice tackle’. And he remembered that. I remember this guy coming from the secondary and just hitting me. If he hits you well and safe and doesn’t hurt you, you have to compliment the guy.”

On Your Fondest Memory of Pepperdine Football:

Darwin Horn- “The Arizona State, Tempe game in 1947. They had beaten us the year before. I had never seen a team play so very well in all my life. It was an astronomical night. I remember leading up to the game. There was no frivolous business going on. Boy, did we ever put it together! Great game. Best game we ever played. We won 27-6.”

Ed Hyduke- “Beating Loyola, 14-13, in 1948 was a great game. Loyola had 11 players who went on to play professional football.”

Darwin Horn- “Wasn’t that a great win!”

Ed Hyduke- “And the year we beat Brigham Young at Sentinel Field in ’49, 28-14. They had a ballclub that was something else.”

Darwin Horn- “You guys played a great game.”

Harry Nelson- “I have three. In the Whittier game, it was the only time I handled the ball as a quarterback in the single-wing. Normally I would take the handoff from Darwin and then lateral the ball to Dale Drager.

“Don’t ask me why but Bo Williams, our center, looked at me and I had the premonition that he would center me the ball. We didn’t have a play where the center would snap the ball directly to the quarterback then. That son-of-a-gun did. I try to go off of right guard and maybe made a yard or two. Not much. At halftime, Gaer didn’t say one word about that. And I couldn’t figure that out.”

Darwin Horn- “Hey, I pushed you a little over on that one, Harry. You know that.”

Harry Nelson- “1946 vs. Arizona State, I took a punt and got hit right in the ribs. I go down and Darwin ends up playing right half back.

“Versus Loyola I played defensive back. There was a pass that I could see coming. I looked dead ahead and there was nothing down there. So I jumped in front of the receiver to catch the ball only I missed it. It was over my fingers. He caught the ball and I didn’t get any repercussion from Gaer on that either. Don’t know why.”

Keith Dolan- “For me it was playing Compton (Junior College). The reserves got to go play Compton in ’46. I had to play the whole game. We won, 7-0. High point of my

career since I didn't get to play much behind Bo Williams. Bo was an outstanding ballplayer.

"The first college game we ever played was against Whittier College and we won, 13-0. Then the next one was against Arizona State down at Tempe. We lost by one point, 13-12. Darwin couldn't make the extra point!"

Monte Lefton- "I always remembered the way the first string included the scout team throughout the season. The scout team was known as the 'rinky-dinks'. We were a family."

Darwin Horn- "At the Will Rogers Bowl, we were yelling, 'Put in the rinky-dinks.'"

Keith Dolan- "We yelled back, 'you already did.'"

Harry Nelson- "We had such great camaraderie."

On the Camaraderie of the Team:

Keith Dolan- "Remember the big bonfire we had before the first game? On the campus itself. I always thought that helped bring us together. Everybody was there."

Ed Hyduke- "You could walk down that campus and pass 10 people and you would know nine of them."

Monte Lefton- "And the other one was Darwin saying hello."

On the 60th Anniversary Celebration at Firestone Fieldhouse in 2006:

Ed Hyduke- "That was one of the greatest things from the standpoint that those kids at that university got up and cheered. Just unbelievable. They knew none of us. Here's a bunch of old men out there and they are cheering for us. They loved us."

Darwin Horn- "Who's not to love us?!"

Keith Dolan- "They stand up and give us a standing ovation. The people that go there really appreciate us."

On the Uniqueness of the 1946 Team:

Darwin Horn- "Four books have been written by players from that team. I have written two. Harry has written one and Keith as well."

Harry Nelson- "I wrote a book called *Following the Flame*. I'm the only guy on the face of this earth that's been to 17 summer Olympic games. I've gotten requests from the

Guinness Book of World Records to substantiate it so I could be in their book of records. By the way, I have an editor named Keith Dolan.”

Keith Dolan- “I wrote *Sports Almanac, USA*. There is a sporting event in U.S. History for each day of the year. It’s 365 anecdotes.”

Describe in a Few Words Your Experience of Pepperdine Football:

Darwin Horn- “Great moments forever.”

Ed Hyduke- “Great moments of Pepperdine football history.”

Monte Lefton- “A great experience and a great opportunity that led to camaraderie that we all feel toward each other. A good, warm experience. A lot of friends.”

Keith Dolan- “What impressed me the most were the friendships and a winning spirit.”

Describe in a Few Words Your Experience of Pepperdine College:

Darwin Horn- “Friends forever.”

Harry Nelson- “It’s hard for me to describe in a few words. It allowed me to have an education that I wouldn’t have had otherwise. And with the people like here today and the friendships and associations that have been for a lifetime. Nothing is manufactured.

“The atmosphere of the school too. We had the opportunity to play croquet out by the library and all of a sudden you look up and here comes the president out there with his sleeves rolled up to play croquet with us. We also had the opportunity to be reading and studying in the library at night and a guy named George Pepperdine would walk in and sit down and do some reading. You could always talk to him. He was a very humble man. How many guys get the opportunity to know the individual whose name is on your diploma?”

Ed Hyduke- “An opportunity fulfilled. They took me in with open arms.”

On What Pepperdine College Did For You After College:

Darwin Horn- “It’s continuing. It’s just continuous.”

Ed Hyduke- “The help that you had without even knowing. Also, I learned a lot about the Christian life. I reaffirmed my faith in individuals.”

Keith Dolan- “It allowed me to become a better student and gave me a foundation for going further. It encouraged me to pursue an educational career.”

Monte Lefton- “The experience was much more gratifying that at UCLA (where he transferred to). I have friends that have lasted a lifetime from Pepperdine.”

Harry Nelson- “The individuals of the school have always been helpful in job opportunities. I was very fortunate that they helped me out. We’ve had a good life.”

On the Football Players Scholarship Fund Presented to a Fifth-Year Student-Athlete:

Ed Hyduke- “I will tell you how great this group is. I went to Dale Drager’s funeral in Costa Mesa. When I got down there, I looked around at the facility and there were football players from Pepperdine from *all the years*. On the way home, I said to Dave Gorrie, ‘We got to do something Dave so that Pepperdine College remembers that we had a football program with a bunch of great individuals and a very fine football program.’ So we started up a foundation there with a scholarship that goes to a kid who needs an extra semester. I believe we have given 18 scholarships thus far.

“We started it and it’s just been a tremendous thing. We have helped men and women. That’s part of the camaraderie. The togetherness.”

On the Annual We “Made It Through Another Year” Together Luncheon:

Harry Nelson- “On the way home from Cal Poly Pomona (Nelson and Horn were on a committee for the retirement of John Scolinas), Darwin and I were talking and we had heard that Bob Quine, who was a tackle on our football team, had just died. We started talking about other guys who we had played with on the team who had died, not only that but also on the baseball team, track, etc. We had a small school and knew many people in class. So we said, ‘why don’t we have a lunch in January for one purpose only: to celebrate having made it through another year together?’ That started over 20 years ago and continues to this day.”

Two other members of the original Pepperdine football squad in 1946 were Ted Kiapos and Keith Kenworthy. I visited with Kiapos (G; ‘46, ‘47, ‘49) and Kenworthy (T; ‘46-‘48) at the home of Ted Kiapos where we enjoyed coffee, laughs and memories of a long and special friendship. Kiapos and Kenworthy have been friends since their freshman year in high school in 1939. They started many games together on the tough offensive line of the Waves.

Why They Chose Pepperdine:

Ted Kiapos- “I went to Pepperdine for an education.”

Keith Kenworthy- “I went to Pepperdine to play football.”

Ted Kiapos- “We went to Washington High. A lot of us came to Pepperdine. Different years. Dale and Jack Drager, Chuck Calvert, Dick Dankworth, Bob Downey, Bob McCluskey and Ron Whitson. The Draggers and I used to play sandlot football together. Keith and I went to see USC and they told us we were too small. So when smaller guys are outstanding, it pumps you up!

“I joined the Navy in my senior year (February of '43) of high school. I spent three years in the service and I became a first-class medic. I had all my requirements for graduation at the time from high school.

“I came to Pepperdine in 1946. Played offense and defense. I'm glad we went to Pepperdine. It was a good three years. Could have been four but I didn't play in '48.”

Keith Kenworthy- “From Washington High I went to Compton JC and played one year. When I was at Compton, Duke Snider played quarterback. He could damn near throw the football the length of the field. It was unbelievable.

“From there, I went into the service in '44 and played football at Williams Air Force Base and we were Southwest service champs. I was only in the service for 23 months and then when I got out, we (he and Ted) got together and decided to go to Pepperdine. It was amazing all those high school guys ended up at Pepperdine. It really made a good nucleus.”

On Their Friendship:

Ted Kiapos- “Keith and I were always very close in high school.”

Keith Kenworthy- “I worked for Ted. His father owned Old Mega Shoe Polish. I worked in the back and Ted did his homework in the front. He had a beautiful factory. Old Mega Shoe Polish at that time was a really popular brand. I think they sold it to the Army during the War. So we would work down there and then we would leave and go to school. We would stop by the house and his (Ted's) old man had a wine cellar. We would have a couple glasses of wine. Those were the good old days.”

On Pepperdine Football:

Keith Kenworthy- “I came in '46. I played football while I was an L.A. Fireman. Played both ways. I averaged 53 minutes per game out of a possible 60. One guy played more than me and that was Dale Drager. He was a brute. My left arm is still stronger than my right simply because of Dale in practice. Coach Ray Richards had us down against three dummies and he (Dale) would come between one of them. Richards says to me, ‘Oh be careful, he's going to hurt you.’ I'm waiting for him and he comes. I went down real low. He hit me like he always did. He hit my shoulder and all I did was stand up and he flipped over. Some kid standing there said, ‘boy, you sure took the wind out of his sails’. But that tackle cost me hundreds of dollars because I was going to a chiropractor for years. And still my right arm isn't as strong as my left. Just that one tackle.”

Ted Kiapos- “Dale Drager knocked me out twice. I was leading that 29 play around end and I had to hit the linebacker. I would try and block this guy with my helmet. His knee would hit me on one side and Dale was right behind and his knee would crack me on the other side. My head was like a melon and I went out. Twice it happened.”

On the Great 1947 Team:

Keith Kenworthy- “If I remember this correctly, some of the teams we played had minus yardage. They actually lost more yardage than they made. When we played the single-wing, we were unstoppable. Terry Bell made the yards, Darwin scored the touchdowns.”

Ted Kiapos- “We were the highest-scoring team and the lowest scored upon. We just got together as a team and we gelled. That was the whole thing. Darwin, to this day, says that he can’t believe how the guys came together and put together the team that we did. Defensively, we were practically unstoppable. Offensively too. We just did our thing. It was inexplicable. We just gelled together. We made a team out of it and we were feared.”

On Terry Bell and Darwin Horn:

Keith Kenworthy- “Terry knew how to set up a block like nobody else. As for Darwin, if there wasn’t a hole, he would run right over us.”

Ted Kiapos- “I think my back is the way it is because of Darwin. He would run all over me.”

On His Nickname, “The Greek”:

Ted Kiapos- “Bo Williams gave me the nickname. Then the team and coaches picked it up. I loved him. A wonderful man.”

On Bo Williams:

Keith Kenworthy- “The most dedicated football player that I ever knew. Boy, was he tough!”

On the Will Rogers Bowl:

Ted Kiapos- “We won that game. We were losing, 7-0, at half. We went into the second half and kicked the crap out of them. Won 38-13!”

Keith Kenworthy- “I was co-captain for the game. We were losing at halftime. Terry Bell comes in late at halftime and he has lipstick on his lips. I said, ‘we are losing and

you are out there screwing around'. He said back to me, 'you could have been there too.' He was kissing the homecoming queen! Good second half after that."

On Playing Whittier College in 1946:

Keith Kenworthy- "I lost 13 pounds in that game. Let me tell you why. Coach Gaer was nuts. He would not let us have any water on the field. So we would suck water out of the towels when we came out.

"I can remember standing on the field, listening to the National Anthem and getting chills up and down your spine before the kickoff. I can just see myself out there. That game was where I made first string. We won too, 13-0."

On Playing Arizona State, Tempe in 1946:

Keith Kenworthy- "We lost 13-12 in Tempe. We missed both extra points. Not only that, the referees let them kick their extra points three different times. They called us offsides and we weren't offsides. We were playing on their field."

On Playing Arizona State, Tempe in 1947:

Keith Kenworthy- "When we played Arizona State again, we beat them 27-6. They had some guy named Whizzer White. I remember after he scored a touchdown he ran by the stands and was giving everyone the finger. He was a jerk. I remember tackling him and he yelled, 'who the hell was supposed to block that guy?' Their coach thought they were going to be undefeated. That was fun."

On Playing Loyola in 1947:

Keith Kenworthy- "The officials remarked that they saw more hard-hitting in that game with us than the Notre Dame game they had officiated earlier in the season." (Notre Dame was the national champion in 1947)

I had the distinct pleasure meeting with two other players from Pepperdine's first team of 1946. Howard Geiger (T; '46-'47) and Ron Whitson (HB; '46, '47, '49) attended the MITAY banquet (Made It Through Another Year) in January 2010 and I had the opportunity to talk to them in person about their football experiences.

On the Beginning of Football at Pepperdine:

Howard Geiger- "I knew Mr. Pepperdine. I feel that I was responsible for him allowing football to come to Pepperdine because he talked to me about it. He was afraid that there would be beer drinking, whiskey drinking and so forth. That the football players

would stand up for the attention or something like that. I told him that he was wrong. We might have a beer but we wouldn't be any disgrace to the community or the college.

"Right after that they had the announcement that they were going to have football at Pepperdine and I told them that I would be the first one in line, which I was a little late and I think somebody beat me. But I was there most of the time."

On the 1946 and 1947 Seasons:

Howard Geiger- "That's right. We only lost one game. We went to the Will Rogers Bowl game and I think the referees were the biggest part of the people who attended. There wasn't anybody there at all to watch us play the game and win the game."

Ron Whitson- "Well, it was really a lot of fun. Particularly the first year because nobody expected us to do anything. A brand new program. I always remember that we were going to play Loyola, who turned out to be our arch-enemy, and their football coach got on the radio and he was interviewed. He was asked 'how's your team doing, how's your schedule?' and he said, 'the schedule is good. We've got one easy game with Pepperdine.' Well, they were dead. Absolutely dead once that got around the locker room. We won that game and it was kind of a special feeling. It was just a lot of fun."

On the Will Rogers Bowl:

Ron Whitson- "I remember our trip to Oklahoma City. We played Nebraska Wesleyan. They were touted as a real good team and we had lost only one game. They had us down, 7-0, at the half. I was thinking what will Coach (Gaer) say since we were never behind before? We go in at halftime and he says, 'we're just cold.' We didn't even have long socks. It was snowing on the field. It was really cold. We went out in the second half and outscored them, 38-6. Won the game, 38-13. Everybody told us that we really put Pepperdine on the map. That was kind of nationwide news."

On Terry Bell:

Ron Whitson- "He was phenomenal. He was a little scat-back. Only 5-foot-6 or so. I played behind Terry and behind Dale (Drager). Way behind. They were really good. He was like a bouncing ball. So fast. Somebody would hit him and he would bounce and get back up. He was a tremendous athlete."

On the Camaraderie of the Team:

Howard Geiger- "All the guys stuck together. Always. We all supported each other all the way through school."

Ron Whitson- "The camaraderie was really good. We kind of broke into two different groups. The backs and the ends were one group and the linemen were the other group. We had parties together and had a lot of fun. I enjoyed the Pepperdine experience."

On His Pepperdine Experience:

Howard Geiger- “Very special. Pepperdine has been in my heart ever since. I actually lived in a room at Vermont. I was intimate with the college itself. I knew all the big shots in the college so it was quite an experience for me to get to talk to them and they were always available to us. They all enjoyed the football games too as much as we did.”

On Darwin Horn and His Teammates:

Howard Geiger- “I was responsible for having brought him to the college. I worked in a company with Darwin’s father who was an engineer there and I was the salesman. I talked to Darwin about coming to Pepperdine with me and he did. He will tell you that I am the one responsible for him being there.

“The football experience was a great time. I really enjoyed the game. Darwin and I were great friends and Harry Nelson and all of the rest of the team. Keith Kenworthy and I shared right tackle. He was actually first string and I was second string at tackle. I got my letter and played in all the games. Even kicked a field goal every once in a while.”

I had the special pleasure to speak with John Leon (HB, QB; 1948), Phil Daher (HB; '50-'52), Bob Hayes (HB; '47-'49), Bruce “Moose” Murdock (T; '47-'49) and Walt Reeves (T; '46-'47) over the phone as well.

Why They Chose Pepperdine:

John Leon- “Well, I was an All-City running back in 1941 and 1942 and had a scholarship to USC. I graduated from Roosevelt High School in February, was drafted in March and left for the war (Army infantry) in April. I served in the Pacific for six months until October. We were the first group to be sent to Japan for occupation after the war had ended.

“I came back and enrolled at SC. I went out for the team and realized how far behind I was. I was a blocking back. Even a ball carrier beat me to the hole. So I finished the year and left USC. I went and talked to Coach Gaer. He began recruiting me and brought me to Pepperdine.”

Phil Daher- “That’s funny you ask. A friend of mine and I went out looking for a job. He says to me, ‘Hey, Pepperdine is having spring practice, let’s go by and watch.’ When we arrived, Ed Hyduke greets us and tells the coach (Ray Richards), ‘these are two good players.’ Well, after speaking to coach, I said, ‘I’d be happy to come.’”

Bob Hayes- “Well, I originally chose to play at Humboldt State because of the great coach, Joe Forbes. Alabama, Nebraska, Pepperdine and a couple others offered me a scholarship. I got married in Eureka to my high school sweetheart.

“But after my first season, I decided to transfer because I had some roots down there (Southern California). My wife and I moved back down there and lived in a G.I. unit until I signed with the St. Louis Cardinals in 1950. I started college in 1946 and graduated from Pepperdine in 1959.”

Bruce Murdock- “I lived nearby and I thought it would be a good thing to try it. I was the youngest guy on the squad when I joined the team in '47. A lot of guys came from the service and they had plenty of war stories. The main purpose I went was for girls and football. It was fun.”

Walt Reeves- “I was looking for a way to live on campus and if I made the squad, get some asset like a semi-scholarship (room and board). They were beginning a football program. I was in the Navy from 1943 to 1946 and the GI bill helped me come to Pepperdine.”

On Your Fondest Memory of Pepperdine Football:

John Leon- “It was definitely vs. Loyola. They were trying to become the Notre Dame of the west. They had recruited a lot of hot shots. This game we weren't going to give 100 percent. We were going to give 110 percent. They had us 13-7 when Terry Bell ran for a long score (a 95-yard kickoff return). 13-13 now. And I had to kick the extra point. I just muscled it through. It didn't go end over end. It just cleared the bar but it counted. We won, 14-13.”

Phil Daher- “We were playing Fresno State and we were on our own 5 or 10-yard line. They were kicking our butt. It was an off-tackle play and I got loose and went the distance. That was my glory moment of my football years.”

Bob Hayes- “In 1946, Pepperdine came to Humboldt and beat us, 19-6. I gained over 140 yards in that game. The next year I came (transferred) to Pepperdine and Coach Gaer made me captain vs. Humboldt State. We won, 56-0. It was kind of thrilling. I started in place of Terry Bell and had a good game against them.

“In 1949 I was MVP for playing both ways. Coach Gaer decided I was a good player playing both ways. I ran better to my right (as a left halfback) than I did to my left. I started to shine there.”

Bruce Murdock- “I remember playing against Arizona State, Tempe in 1947. My name “Moose” had caught on and on occasion I got to play in the game in the fourth quarter. I didn't play much that year. We were bound and determined to beat them humbly. They had beaten us the year before. It was safe to send “Moose” in the fourth quarter since we had the game won. Darwin Horn had snuck over to the Arizona State band and

asked them to play 'Happy Birthday' for me. But it wasn't my birthday. And the band played 'Happy Birthday'. My birthday is every day. I will never forget that.

"The other game was in 1948 against the University of Portland at an old stadium. We took a train from Los Angeles to Portland. Coach Gaer didn't like to fly. It was raining and raining and the field was a quagmire. It was so muddy. After three plays, you couldn't tell one player from another. After one play Don Clark got up and went to the wrong huddle because he didn't know who was who. Both teams were so muddied."

Walt Reeves- "We played the first and only bowl game in '46. That stands out. We flew there and stayed at a hotel. We played on New Year's Day and it was on the verge of snowing. After we won (38-13), everybody was feeling good about it. We landed back at Inglewood. It was a pretty exciting thing. We had a nice time."

On the Great 1947 Team:

Bob Hayes- "Pepperdine football made me a winner. I'm looking at the 1947 National Championship team picture right now. We had talent and tremendous speed. Just great talent at that level: Darwin Horn, Terry Bell, Bo Williams, Ted Kiapos, the Drager brothers.

"I mostly played defense that season. I was a safety. I began to love defense better than offense.

"We gelled into a fine football team. So did our basketball team, baseball, track, etc. We did everything well as a school."

Bruce Murdock- "We were always good. We were very close. They loved to sing on the bus. We rode on the train one time. My birthday is in October and the guys would sing 'Happy Birthday' to me everywhere we went. It's been that way ever since.

"Harry Nelson and Darwin Horn were good friends. So were Elmer Noonan and Bo Williams. I loved that guy (Bo Williams)."

Walt Reeves- "We had good camaraderie. Coach Gaer solidified that group. They were nice guys."

On his Nickname "Moose":

Bruce Murdock- "I'm a big guy anyway. I weighed 230 or 240 pounds when I played. We were big compared to other teams in that era. A friend of mine and I reversed the first letter of our first and last names. So I became Mruce Burdock. The name sounded like "Moose" and it caught on real fast. We went to classes and everyone referred to me as "Moose". It was amazing how teachers and professors called me "Moose" too."

On Head Coach Warren Gaer:

Bruce Murdock- “He was a good coach. He found kids who wanted a good education and wanted to play football.”

Walt Reeves- “Coach Gaer was a nice guy. It was a very small school and you got to know everybody including your coaches.”

On Darwin Horn:

John Leon- “Dar was a rare individual. Not only was he an outstanding player, a small college All-American, but he was so likeable. You couldn’t help but like him. He was one of the guys. He was just a super individual.”

Bob Hayes- “He is the finest man I have ever met. He is one great guy and was a phenomenal football player.”

Walt Reeves- “Darwin was a football player and a good one at that. He was the mainstay of the team. A real good ballplayer. When he carried the ball, you better get out of the way.”

On Terry Bell:

Bob Hayes- “Terry Bell and I were really tight friends. He was a great athlete and a great person. He was the greatest athlete of his size that I ever came in contact with. The greatest athlete we had was Chuck Gibbon.”

Walt Reeves- “He was a scatback from the word ‘go’. He was so quick. Boy, could he run. He was very fast.”

On Ed Hyduke:

John Leon- “Ed Hyduke and I played frosh ball together and then we got moved up in ’48. We broke up the combination of the Drager brothers. In 1947, the backfield was Horn, Bell and the Draggers. We beat the Draggers out. So now it was Horn, Bell, Hyduke and me.”

Phil Daher- “I was fortunate to make first team in 1950. But after Ed Hyduke graduated, we really never had a good quarterback. Ed was a great quarterback. The 1950 season was a lot of fun. Fun and a lot of excitement. After that, a lot of the guys graduated. The next year we were good and my senior year we struggled.”

On Their Pepperdine Experience:

John Leon- “I had a lot of respect for Mr. Pepperdine. He would come around and talk to all of us. It was a very close-knit school. A very good experience.

"I got my teaching credential from Pepperdine. I went into teaching and worked my way up in the area. I became the first Mexican-American elementary principal in Los Angeles (Brooklyn Avenue Elementary School).

"I received an excellent education at Pepperdine. I had outstanding professors. And of course the guys I hung out with were great."

Phil Daher- "It was an outstanding university. I really enjoyed it. I would recommend it to anyone. It was a super place to be. There wasn't a better place to go. I met people like Dick Meacham and Bob Bland who were good people. Pepperdine people. I enjoyed it tremendously.

"In one sense, I loved Pepperdine. I met my wife there, Patricia Hall. She was the homecoming queen. Now it is 60 years later and we are still having fun and enjoying life. It was a great institution. I loved it.

"The values were excellent. It established my values and helped me become successful. I loved the school's virtues and attitude. I maintained its values the rest of my life. It shaped me up real well.

"But I've always been sad that Pepperdine couldn't maintain its football program."

Bob Hayes- "It meant to me that my transfer from Humboldt State (a state college) to a private one was a little tougher. It helped me get through school. It was tougher than going to a state school. You had to do a little more studying. It took me to the next level. I learned how to study there. Getting my master's degree from Cal Poly SLO was easier than my bachelor's degree.

"I tended bars for 38 years. I spent eight years working at the Open Hearth in Torrance and in 1957 I retired from the El Miguel Country Club in Laguna Niguel. Now I am writing a book called 38 Years Behind Bars.

"I learned a lot about myself. Being able to communicate was important. I learned to meet people more than anything else. I was a shy kid. Guys at Pepperdine were all like Harry Nelson, Darwin Horn and Ed Hyduke. They brought out your personality. It was a great experience."

Bruce Murdock- "They have a good thing going at Pepperdine. It's becoming more famous and more famous each day. My experience was important because of the development of my social life. You learned how to treat other people the right way and how to have a wonderful family life.

"I had a good time and made sure everyone else had a good time. That's my purpose in life."

Walt Reeves- “It was very positive. Getting a football scholarship helped me at Pepperdine and in the service. It was a smaller school so that was good from the standpoint that classes weren’t too big. I lived on campus and you knew everyone else. It was a friendly environment. I have fond memories of all that.”

Shan Deniston was an assistant coach on Coach Warren Gaer’s staff from 1946-48. He coached defensive backs and offensive ends. He left Pepperdine with Coach Gaer when they went to Drake University for six years. Deniston is a 1947 Pepperdine graduate. At age 90, Deniston works out daily by riding a bike three miles each day. I spoke to him by phone.

On Warren Gaer:

Shan Deniston- “He did a real good job. I helped Gaer get a few people. I talked Jack Bighead into leaving Loyola University and coming to Pepperdine. I got John Scolinas from Manual Arts.

“A great memory was Gaer promising he would wear a tuxedo if we made a bowl. Well, he wore a tuxedo in the snow (at the Will Rogers Bowl in Oklahoma City).”

On the Camaraderie of the Team:

Shan Deniston- “It was a bunch of guys coming back from the service. Athletics bring people together in a hurry. The football team gelled real well. There was no animosity between anyone. Everyone bonded so well. It was a great experience for all of us.”

On Your Fondest Memory:

Shan Deniston- “What I remember the best were the friendships with the kids. It is something you cannot replace. It was a great experience. I met my wife there and we have been married for 60 years now. I told my wife, ‘either marry me now or I’m gone’ (to spring training). A week before spring training we got married. For our honeymoon, we took the minor league baseball team, 22 of them, to Niagara Falls. The players threw baseballs over the falls.”

On the 1947 National Championship Season:

Shan Deniston- “After just one year of playing football, it was quite an honor.”

1951 – 1957

This era of Pepperdine football featured three coaches at the helm: Duck Dowell ('51-'52), Gordon McEachron ('53-'54) and John Scolinas ('55-'59). I had the opportunity to meet up with two groups of men to discuss their memories. The first group was with Sid Shue (C; '51-'54), Rich Raymond (E; 1955) and Ted Porter (E; '55-'58). The second group I met was with Pete Martinez (HB; '54-'57) and Sol Henderson (G; '55-'57).

Why They Chose Pepperdine:

Sid Shue- "I was brought in by Bill Boyd who played football earlier at Pepperdine. My background is basically six-man football. They brought me in as a center to play behind Bill Scott until he got hurt. He and I alternated every game after that.

"I remember Dr. Tiner coming on to the field once and trying to find out what nationality I was. He didn't realize I was Chinese. I was the first Oriental to play at Pepperdine."

Rich Raymond- "I played tailback in the service and I had knee problems. So I came to Pepperdine in the summer of 1954 and said I will play basketball. I went out to play for Dowell. I was weighing around 195 to 200 pounds and I was driving to the basket and players were bouncing off of me. I made a layup and Dowell comes over to me and says 'you ever thought of playing football?' So I went out for football.

"I didn't play football in '54 but I played baseball in the spring of '55 under John (Scolinas). My knee went out on me at the end of the season on a stand-up double. John was also the football coach so I came out in '55 and played end."

Ted Porter- "I was recruited by a guy named Dick Dankworth. He had played at Pepperdine. I came out of Hawthorne High School with Jay (Roelen).

"When we went to college, we got face masks. We never had them in high school. My second year ('56) I played on the special teams. The mask was one plastic bar so I took it off right before the kick-off because I thought it was in the way. I broke my nose. Right away I put it back on but it was too late. We had a couple guys in that game break their nose. Then they had to re-break your nose and re-set it. But when they re-break it you look worse than when you broke it. I never did that again."

On Head Coach Duck Dowell:

Sid Shue- "The funniest story on Duck was up in Fresno. We are getting our butts whipped and he says, 'And remember, we got to take that ball and take it in for two.' Hahaha. That was for basketball (Duck was the head basketball coach as well). Duck was smart enough to allow John Scolinas, Robert Montgomery and Gordie McEachron to help him. Duck let them run the program. Scolinas was the offensive mind for the whole thing."

On Head Coach Gordon McEachron:

Sid Shue- “Gordie was more of a football guy as opposed to basketball. Duck’s first two years were very little recruiting. When Gordie came in, the first year we played with what we had. But the following year, he brought in like seven guys from Pasadena City College. Our senior year we had a real good team. We also picked up a lot of guys from Compton Junior College.

“We played Jack Kemp, who was the quarterback at Occidental College. We annihilated them in a scrimmage. That helped build our program up.

“We ran the split-T offense in ’53 and in ’54 we got really good at it. I weighed 250 my freshman year and then about 225 my senior year. I played tackle my senior year when Leon Evans, who played center at UCLA, came over.”

On the 1955 Season:

Rich Raymond- “There were some funny moments. We had three pass plays and (QB) Jay Roelen and I teamed up for two of them and they were successful. Then they ran Pete Martinez on a sweep and he scored a touchdown so we never got to do the ‘sideline and up’ (third pass play). I ran the ‘deep flag’, caught it and ran for 30 more yards. Then we ran a ‘hook’ for 10 yards and then the sweep with Martinez. Going over to the sideline, Sid said, ‘boy, are you lucky!’ Fred Hoover then yelled at the coaches, Bill Rivers and John Scolinas, ‘See what happens when you throw the ball.’ Ha ha. We had so many good receivers in ’55 who were running the ball.

“We had so much potential. We beat San Diego State, 21-0, who became a D-1 team later. We fumbled a lot that year and had missed opportunities. We were not as solid defensively up front.”

On the 1956 Season:

Rich Raymond- “In ’56 Warren VanderSchuit started at quarterback and we were 1-3. We took the team down to Compton JC and scrimmaged them with Jay Roelen. We scored four touchdowns and when we came back, Sid Shue and I begged John (Scolinas) to play Jay. From that point on, Jay started and we won all our games. We ended up 6-3.”

Ted Porter- “When we went to Nevada, we all lined up and Gaer gave us each two bucks. He said ‘Don’t gamble this’. That was our food money. We gambled it of course. Ha ha. All of us got \$2 and you would think we were getting \$2,000. For John to give us \$2 was big. We never got money when we traveled.”

On the 1957 Season:

Ted Porter- “I remember one time when we had a preseason game in Arizona vs. the Barstow Marine Base. Because of the heat, we played at 2 a.m. The quarterback for

them was Veryl Lillywhite who played for USC and the 49ers. After halftime they struggled and we beat them.

“I only caught one pass in the San Diego State game ('57) and that's when Jay Roelen broke the record (total offensive yards in Pepperdine history; breaking Ed Hyduke's record). It wasn't that far, just a few yards. But I caught the pass from Jay that broke the record. He was a small college All-American.”

On Playing Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1957:

Rich Raymond- “Cal Poly had a tackle for them named John Madden. He's opening up holes that you and all of us could have walked backwards through. They were close to Division One.”

On Playing Chico State in 1957:

Ted Porter- “The most harrowing experience that I ever had in my life was when we flew to Chico State in '57. John (Scolinas) didn't fly anymore after the experience he had in Idaho ('55) on his way to play Idaho State. He didn't fly with the team anymore. So we flew to Chico State and we were taking off from Chico when the magneto went out in the right motor on a DC-10. We were just starting to lift when some guy said ‘the plane is on fire’ and you could hear the plane go ‘pow, pow, pow’. You could hear a pin drop. Nobody said a word. The guy slams on the brakes and we go all the way down to the end of the airfield and we are sitting there doing nothing. We sat there for two hours until they brought in a plane from San Francisco. We just sat there on the tarmac. Never got out of the plane.

“What happens three years later is that Madden's school, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, experienced the same thing. They were leaving Toledo, Ohio, and they got airborne and went over and 16 guys got killed. Madden knew many of the coaches and players on the flight. That's why he won't fly anywhere.

“John Scolinas got so sick on the plane flight to Idaho that he started driving his '47 Chevrolet to the games. He would rather drive to Humboldt in his car than fly with us.”

On the Camaraderie of the Team:

Sid Shue- “Over the last 15 years with the advent of the “made it through another year” together, we are close. Especially when Darwin and those guys are trying to bring back all the memories of football. We are a very close group and we all mingle with each other.”

Rich Raymond- “I would say now it's probably better. Back then you had groups from the service, some of whom were married and had children, you had guys from the JCs and you had the freshmen.”

On the Football Program:

Sid Shue “When I coached there ('55-'58), Hollywood Race Track offered us a large sum of money and it would have run our program. We would have picked up a lot of scholarships. But the problem was that the money was derived from gambling and the Church of Christ said no. I mean it would have kept that program running.”

Rich Raymond “We would say training table was two pieces of white bread and a piece of baloney.”

On Wixie Robinson:

Rich Raymond “For his size, one of the fastest and toughest kids. Soft voice but boy could he play big on the field.”

Ted Porter “I felt Wixie really did help me. He would work with you, regardless of position. He would say, ‘try this or try that’. A good person.”

On Jay Roelen:

Rich Raymond “For his size (5-foot-6), he could throw that ball 50 yards with no problem. He was phenomenal. My experience with Pepperdine football was how many good outstanding small guys there were. They wouldn't have played at UCLA or USC because they wouldn't have had a chance to play.”

Ted Porter “The team rallied around him. He was the heart and soul of our team. “In '57, we started a rugby club with Jay. We were an independent George Pepperdine rugby club. We wanted to do something in the off-season to get into condition. So we played against Cal, UCLA, Santa Barbara and San Diego State. Even though there was an age difference, it brought us closer together as a unit. I felt more of team play than I did before because we were playing together after football season but yet we were playing another sport and helping each other. It lasted for two years.”

On Head Coach John Scolinas:

Rich Raymond “He was as tough as a mule. His actions showed a lot of his humor.”

Describe Your Pepperdine Experience:

Sid Shue “Family. Very fortunate. It was more of a family than a college.”

Rich Raymond “I liked it better than UCLA (where he transferred from). Much more pleasant. You were closer with each other than at UCLA.”

Ted Porter- “Extended larger family. You knew everybody. You knew your profs, you knew the students, your athletes and everybody knew you. If you had any problems, people would call you.”

On Pepperdine Football:

Pete Martinez- “My first year ('54) I didn't play much. I was getting discouraged so I told my wife, 'I'm not playing'. She said, 'Why did you go to Pepperdine? You went to Pepperdine to get an education'. She set me straight. She is the best wife.”

Sol Henderson- “I arrived at Pepperdine and went through two-a-days during the summer of '55. At the end of the workouts, he (Scolinas) said I had a scholarship. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been there. There was no way I would have gone if it weren't for a scholarship. I had no idea where the funds would have come from. I was lucky.

“I was the first one in my family to attend college. I kind of felt that I wanted to go to school. If it wasn't for that scholarship, I wouldn't have gone to Pepperdine. Probably would have stayed at Harbor JC. Character building was important from my time there. It enhanced my character. Pepperdine was another strong phase in my life.”

On Playing Nevada in 1956:

Pete Martinez- “The manager of our team told me that (former head coach) Gordon McEachron said, 'Pete's too small, he can't run, he can't catch, etc.' McEachron then leaves for Nevada in '55 and John Scolinas takes over. The next season one of our games is at Reno, Nevada. That was my coming out game. Scored a few touchdowns (three, plus he rushed for 129 yards) against my former coach. We beat them pretty good, 40-19.”

On Head Coach John Scolinas:

Pete Martinez- “All my kids went to college. Stanford, UCLA. Two lawyers and a teacher. I told my kids that if it wasn't for John, none of this would have been possible. He provided me direction and gave me advice on my future. I attribute it to John and the grace of God. John was a great man. We had so much respect for John.

“The cheapest thing you can do is be friendly to people, talk to people. And that was John. He was a giving man. John was that kind of guy.”

Sol Henderson- “Being at Pepperdine helped me embellish my character. I was always a good son and respectful person. I get there and meet a person like John who had this rich character himself. When he left Pepperdine, he still had that rich following behind him. We all still loved him.”

On Pete Martinez:

Sol Henderson- “He was a terror with the football.”

On Your Fondest Memories at Pepperdine:

Pete Martinez- “My last year ('57) I was selected captain. And that blew my mind. I said, ‘How could you guys make that dumb decision?’ At that time, there weren’t that many Hispanics in college, let alone playing football. The Pepperdine football team opened up that experience. It opened our eyes. It opened doors. It was a small school but a dynamic experience. I gained friends like Sol. Now it’s important to make it a better place. To leave behind a legacy.”

Sol Henderson- “The whole overall experience was memorable. I’m playing with guys who went on to become close friends. They became that close because of the school. The camaraderie was special. And because of that, now is a time of giving back. I am willing to share when I can.”

I had the opportunity to speak over the phone with other prominent alumni football players such as Jay Roelen (QB; '54-'57), Ron Cameron (C; '53-'56), Fred Hoover (E; '54-'55), Al Feola (HB; '54-'56), Marv Sampson (QB, HB; '53-'56), Gordon Weisenburger (G; '53-'54), Joe Sedia (HB, S; '52-'55), Glen Sanders (T; '52-'53) and Don Lent (QB, FB; '51-'52). Several of these gentlemen I got to meet in person as well at the annual Football Luncheon at Trani’s Restaurant in Long Beach in March 2010.

I also had the pleasure to meet Ken Reed (E; '55, '56, '58) who was at the annual MITAY banquet (Made It Through Another Year) in Long Beach in January 2010 for all of Pepperdine’s alumni athletes.

Jay Roelen had an amazing career despite being only 5-foot-6. Often being compared to the diminutive former Washington Redskins’ quarterback Eddie LeBaron, Roelen took over the reins at quarterback in 1956 and led the Waves to five straight wins to end the season. During the 1957 season, Roelen re-wrote the record book at Pepperdine and was named to the Little (College) All-American team at the conclusion. He finished his illustrious career with many prestigious school-records:

PASSING YARDS, Career: 2,392 yards
PASSING YARDS, Single Season: 1,428 yards
PASSING YARDS, Single Game: 303 yards vs. Cal Poly SLO; 10/12/57

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, Career: 22 (is second all-time to Ed Hyde who threw for 25)
PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, Single Season: 13
PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, Single Game: 4 vs. Nevada; 09/20/57

PASSES COMPLETED, Career: 174

PASSES COMPLETED, Single Season: 106

PASSES COMPLETED, Single Game: 25 vs. San Diego University; 11/22/57

PASSES ATTEMPTED, Career: 370

PASSES ATTEMPTED, Single Season: 214

PASSES ATTEMPTED, Single Game: 39 vs. San Diego University; 11/22/57

Roelen ended up 12th in the nation in total offense in 1957 as his combined running and passing accounted for 1,298 yards in 247 plays. He edged Stan Jackson of Cal Poly Pomona by only one completion for most completions in the season for small college quarterbacks.

Why They Chose Pepperdine:

Jay Roelen- “I didn’t play much in high school (Hawthorne) but one of our coaches, Dick Dankworth (a football alum), recommended me to Coach McEachron. That’s how I came to Pepperdine.”

Al Feola- “I had many offers to go elsewhere. But I got married and Pepperdine was close by. Five guys came from Pasadena City College where I came from.”

Marv Sampson- “It was a school of local nature. I heard good things about Pepperdine. It had a good reputation for sports. Up until we got there. Then we spoiled it. Ha ha.

“I had so much talent that they couldn’t find a spot for me. Ha ha. I started at quarterback the last four or five games of my freshman year. Sophomore year I played running back and then quarterback again. My last two years I played running back and then wide receiver. I didn’t care. I was just playing.”

Gordon Weisenburger- “Well, to begin with, my first cousin is Rich Raymond who went to Pepperdine as well.

“I had a couple friends who visited UCSB with me. We were all set to go there when one of my friends visited Pepperdine and met with Gordon McEachron. My friend said to me, ‘Why don’t you go talk with him?’ So I went over and talked with McEachron about different things. He explained to me that he was building a football program and was looking for some players. Then he offered me a scholarship and said that ‘being a Washington High School graduate (where McEachron and Weisenburger each went) was good enough.’ It was a split-second type of thing. I made the decision at the last minute.

“I met my wife of 55 years a year and a half before I went to Pepperdine. If I had gone to UCSB, not sure what would have happened. I guess it was a blessing in disguise. I know the hand of the good Lord was involved in it.”

Joe Sedia- “It was interesting. I played halfback in high school in the single-wing. But when I went to Pepperdine, the coaches changed it to the T-formation. They still offered me a scholarship. But I wasn’t that comfortable being a quarterback in the T-formation so they moved me to safety. My sophomore year I pulled my groin. But the rest of it was a great experience.”

Glen Sanders- “I was being recruited by Oregon, Oregon State and Stanford out of high school (Vista HS) in San Diego. I was All-San Diego County. I always wanted to go to Stanford but I injured my knee in my senior season and didn’t get a scholarship from them.

“After graduation, I was a little down and was going to get a full-time job. But on Dec. 1, 1949, I went to a ‘revival’ meeting at the community church. I met Bob Jones Jr. and accepted the Lord into my life. I made a decision that changed my life.

“My mom was active in the community and she heard about a Christian school called Pepperdine. So we went and visited the school and it was everything that I ever wanted. I saw the campus and it was beautiful. Al Duer (Director of Athletics) took me around the campus. He thought it would be a good fit for me and offered me a football scholarship. My mom said, ‘Son, this is where you belong.’”

Don Lent- “I was at Belmont High School when Darwin Horn and Terry Bell were having their great years at Pepperdine. My brother-in-law and I would watch them play. We went to many games in ‘47 and ‘48. We enjoyed their play.

“I had a full scholarship to UCLA so I went there and played frosh ball. Red Sanders (UCLA head coach) invited me up to varsity the following year. But I didn’t like their style of play. I also really had a hard time at UCLA with my grades. At Belmont I was a good student. In my history class, we had over 800 students and I fell asleep a lot. The professor just read from the book. I got a ‘D’ in the class.

“So I transferred in 1950 to Pepperdine and played JV football because of the transfer rules. That was a good experience. We had players like Bob Lampshire and Howard Decker on that team. In my first history class at Pepperdine, we had 15 students and I got an ‘A’. To me that was an education. A small-school atmosphere was great. I was a lot closer to the players. A small-college atmosphere has a lot more to it.”

On Head Coach John Scolinas:

Jay Roelen- “I was very fortunate to have him as my coach. He gave me a chance. He had faith in me and gave me the opportunity to do it. I had some success. I was blessed to have had people who believed in me. He had an impact on everyone who he knew. You tried to emulate him. We loved him dearly. He was like another father to me. He lived a long and healthy life. He did so much for Pepperdine and for everyone who he

came in contact with. I can't say how much he impacted my life and my future. He was an inspiration."

Ron Cameron- "Next to my father, he was the person who had the most influence on me. His ethical ability and ethics that he preached were special. He would put up stickers around the locker room. I will never forget one that said, 'Regardless of the score, keep your poise.' Another one was just one word, 'Equanimity', meaning to keep an even keel. I worked awfully hard for him."

Fred Hoover- "One of the most important persons in my life. I can't say enough about him. He's a tough guy. He didn't look like it but he was. He got it done. I have a place upstairs in my house and I have him all over the place."

Al Feola- "We were close. He was close with all the guys. A good man and a great coach. He was down to earth, truthful and honest. We had a lot of fun with him."

Marv Sampson- "I had a good experience to play for two very fine coaches, Gordon McEachron and John Scolinas. Both gentlemen who were very good. It was a growth experience for me. We had a very good program and they were responsible for it."

"John was a man of trust, loyalty, support, and moral and emotional conviction. I saw the depth of his character in him. He had an indelible and lasting impression on me."

Ken Reed- "When I went to Pepperdine I was in all respects a kid. A young boy who didn't know much of anything. By the time I left I considered myself a mature young man. A lot of this came through athletics and a lot of it came from Coach John Scolinas. Scolinas taught me a lot of things about life as he taught other members of our football team. Before practice or after practice he would get us together and he would instruct us about football but then he would always ask something about some type of a person we should be."

"He would always tell us how we should respect others, respect our parents, how we should work hard, etc. That's what I got out of John Scolinas."

Gordon Weisenburger- "John was a marvelous man. You can't even describe what a type of guy he was. Just a super guy. He was as tough as nails but a saint. I looked up to him all my life. I think the maddest he got was when he would raise his voice and say, 'by golly...'. Ha ha. Gordie was hard-nosed but a good guy too. Both coaches were good guys."

Joe Sedia- "He was a great person. When Gordon McEachron was head coach, many of the players got in trouble on a trip to Cal Poly SLO and several lost their scholarships. When John became coach, the first thing he did was restore all our scholarships. It was great getting to play for a guy like John."

“He asked me to coach the freshman baseball team. I think we lost every game but it was a great experience. It was special that he asked me since I always wanted to become a coach.”

Glen Sanders- “He was the greatest. An inspiration to everyone. You couldn’t get better than John Scolinas. We had the best coaches around.”

Don Lent- “He’s a guy who always helped others. A strong Christian and a real strong person. He did everything right. He told me once to ‘keep doing what you are doing’ (spreading the word of God).”

On Pepperdine Football:

Jay Roelen- “I was fortunate to be at Pepperdine at the right time. It was a bunch of good guys who enjoyed playing football. Stacie Green was a wonderful guy. He was knowledgeable with the game of football and took me under his wings and taught me some things in game competition. I owe a lot to Stacie. Wixie Robinson was a phenomenal football player as well. We had a lot of good receivers: Rudy Osuna, Jim Eckmann, Ted Porter. I was slow as a snail so I had the chance to throw the ball a lot. Pete Martinez was the captain. What a tough, tough player he was.”

Ron Cameron- “Pepperdine football was a period of a lot of vets coming back to school and playing on the team. Many of them came to play for Gordon McEachron. We had a balance of different races on the team. For me that was great.

“McEachron instituted the split-T formation that Bud Wilkinson ran at Oklahoma. When Scolinas came, he changed back to the regular T-formation. I lettered for four years and played all four seasons at around 165 pounds. Played both ways, center and linebacker.

“Some of the uniforms we wore were hand me downs from a semi-pro team (L.A. Dons) who played at Gilmore field.

“I was the single captain of my senior year. It was quite an honor that the team chose me. It was fun to play football there.”

Fred Hoover- “We had some good people playing at Pepperdine. Very gentleman-like. I had to get into that program and when I got there, I wanted to honor that. As I look back, the only thing that killed me was when they gave up football. I had already graduated but they were going to get better. Everything was great. It was a special place. I got to do a lot of things afterwards. I got to coach for many years.”

Al Feola- “We played a tough schedule for a small school. San Diego State, Nevada, Arizona State. We were in over our head. Always tough teams but good for us.

“We had some great players like Wixie Robinson, Stacie Green and Jay Roelen. Marv Sampson was a mastermind on offense. He was very smart. A great one too. Jim Hemsley and Matt Phillips became two of my closest friends.

“John Scolinas and Duck Dowell (the AD) taught us a lot. I played both ways as a running back and defensive back. I played football and ran track for three years. It was great. I had a lot of fun.”

Marv Sampson- “Pepperdine football had such a strong influence on the coaching profession in Orange County. It was just amazing. Many coaches ended up in high school or junior college. Don Webster, Bob Lampshire and Sid Shue. All in the Orange County district.

“The friendships were special. I loved it. It was an eye-opening experience for four years. Meeting people like Sol Henderson, Stacie Green and Wixie Robinson (all African-American) gave me a different mentality and attitude going forward in life. I was never exposed to cultural diversity. These were men of great character. You didn’t judge them on the color of their skin. They were good people.”

Gordon Weisenburger- “A wonderful experience. I wasn’t the greatest football player but we had a great group of guys. I followed the teams after I graduated.

“The majority of guys on the team were PE majors. Most of them taught or coached for LAUSD or in Orange County. Pepperdine and Occidental were the two schools that supplied LAUSD with the most physical education teachers. They remained close for years. I was very blessed to find a teaching job in Los Angeles (Jordan High School) after graduating. I taught (physical education) and coached (football, gymnastics, cross country) in the LAUSD for 38 years.”

Joe Sedia- “We had good guys on the team. We dressed in the little fieldhouse. We had training table. They treated us good. I have had life-long friends from Pepperdine: Gordon Weisenburger, Jim Galceran, Pat Bandy. Great friends.”

Glen Sanders- “I loved the guys on the team. I went to spring ball in February of 1950. As I was watching, I was thinking to myself, ‘man they are fast. What am I getting into?’ Then I met Jack Bighead and Dick Dankworth. They asked me to play touch football. Bighead knocked me unconscious one scrimmage. This is a guy who played in the NFL for the Baltimore Colts and the Los Angeles Rams.

“I left in 1951 to serve in the Korean War. While I was on the military base in Japan, I went to see a movie shown on the base. It was the “*Jim Thorpe Story*” being played by Jack Bighead. I almost passed out seeing Jack. Ha ha. I recognized him in the movie.

“I returned back to school in 1952 and the President, Dr. Hugh Tiner, says, ‘Hi Glen, glad to have you back.’ He remembered me and I will never forget that.

“I played in 1952 and '53. I broke my jaw in 1953 vs. Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. I thought it was time to retire. Ha ha. I think I will study my senior year and get better grades. So I didn't play my last season.”

Don Lent- “I played two years on the varsity. It was a good experience. I had another year of eligibility left but Pepperdine asked me to be on the coaching staff. So I coached for a year (1953 on Gordon McEachron's staff) and kept my scholarship and was able to still live in the units with my wife. Getting that years experience as a coach was so important. Gordie put the T-formation back in and I learned a lot.

“We had some good players. Bob Lampshire played quarterback and could punt a ball 80 yards, Howard Decker, Bob Ferguson and Sid Shue were great players. I met Sid Shue there and we became real good friends. He worked at the Spanish-American Institute and would bring back food over to us at the units. We lived on that food for months.

“Sid was such a great guy. I told him that whenever I got my first coaching job, I would call him and ask him to coach with me. I became coach at Magnolia High School in Anaheim and I called Sid. We coached together for over 30 years. I still see him today at a lot of events.

“Jim Galceran became a good friend of mine. He let me use his cabin in Running Springs for my honeymoon when I got married.”

On Jay Roelen:

Al Feola- “Jay was great. If he had three more inches on him he would have played anywhere.”

Marv Sampson- “The '56 season was quite successful with Jay at quarterback. His leadership and abilities gave us a chance to win every ballgame.”

On Wixie Robinson:

Marv Sampson- “Wixie showed me how the game was entirely different than from what I knew growing up. He never said much. It was the way how he played. With such tenacity. How persistent and quick he was. I've never seen so much speed on the defensive side.”

On Jack Bighead:

Don Lent- “One of the best players we had was Jack Bighead. I played against him for three years in high school. We became good friends at Pepperdine. We were both track athletes. I was a sprinter and he ran the hurdles. He was powerful, had great speed and excellent hands. He took a lot of punishment. He was a real good athlete.”

On Their Pepperdine Experience:

Jay Roelen- “I learned that you can’t be #1 all the time but you can strive to be #1. Don’t settle for second best, be the best. That is what you strive for. I would recommend strongly to anybody to look at the school. I was very fortunate to be a part of it.”

Ron Cameron- “I wasn’t the best player in the world but I never gave up. I was aggressive and liked hitting. My experience at Pepperdine helped me later in life as part of the Navy. I spent 22 years in the Navy and my football experience helped me coach the Navy team at Pearl Harbor from 1962 to 1965.”

Fred Hoover- “My mom and dad felt good about me going there. The atmosphere was fantastic. If I could do it all over again, I would. I chose Pepperdine over USC at the last minute. You never forget the memories. It was a good affair. I can’t think of anybody who didn’t want to be there.”

Al Feola- “The players were really close. A lot of us were married and lived on campus. We lived in army barracks that were marriage units. I lived there for six years. Many of our children were raised there. I really enjoyed my stay there. A lot of good memories and a lot of fun.

“I’m happy I graduated from there and for the people who I met. They encouraged me to be a coach and to be the best that I can be. There were a lot of great teachers who were coaches. They prepared me well. I knew I was going into the field of coaching. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

“I left Pepperdine and began coaching at Serra High School in Gardena. Spent 48 years as a coach at Fullerton JC. Been in football all my life. 52 years as a football coach and 45 years as a track coach. I coach both now at El Dorado High School.”

Marv Sampson- “The Pepperdine experience prepared me for life in the coaching and teaching ranks. I was a political science major. I was well-prepared for teaching (government) and in life because of the mentors I had. It was a driving force behind my success in life.

“It was a great learning experience. Really fun. An outstanding experience. I still talk about the school today.”

Ken Reed- “I wanted to play football after high school. So I went to college to make sure I continued playing football to enjoy it. At first, I wasn’t a serious student. My grades weren’t the grades I should have got or capable of making. In the end, by my junior and senior years, I changed majors and found what I would enjoy doing for the rest of my life. As a result of finding my niche, I became more serious about my grades and about my future. That’s where a lot of the maturity came in. I worked a lot harder, spent a lot of hours in the library and achieved better grades. It all worked out for me.

“A lot of people say that the best four years of your life are your high school years. For me it was my college years. I run into people all the time from Pepperdine who I haven’t seen in years. People who are successful and apply to life what they learned. I consider myself one of those types of people.”

Gordon Weisenburger- “Pepperdine was a very important part of my life. It was a wonderful place. I have life-long friends from there. My best friend today is Joe Sedia. We are very close.

“I attribute a lot to Pepperdine. The Christian influence was very important to me. We had chapel everyday. The school was a big influence on my spiritual life.

“The influence of the coaches was important in my life too. We had a fantastic physical education department. We became close with the instructors like Gordie McEachron, John Scolinas, Duck Dowell and Bob Montgomery. They were all good men. We came under their influence in the classroom. The coaches were concerned about you as an individual. It’s like the Golden Rule. I wanted my kids to be treated the same way that I was treated by my coaches.”

Joe Sedia- “Everybody knew everyone else. Everything was accessible. I worked at the house of George Pepperdine for his wife. I worked in the garden.

“I wasn’t much of a student at Huntington Park High School. I began to see guys who were ahead of me making A’s and B’s in class. I got more serious and turned it around. I became more focused with my student-teaching. All in all a good experience. It was very worthwhile.”

Glen Sanders- “Pepperdine had everything that I was looking for: a Christian atmosphere, fellowship, etc. The experience built my spirituality and prepared me for graduate school at USC. I met my wife in debate class and we have now been married for 54 years.”

Don Lent- “It was awesome. I always wanted to be a coach. Everything I did at Pepperdine would help me as a coach. You take all the positives and negatives that you learn from football and apply them to coaching.

“I achieved a lot there. I graduated with a B.S. degree and as a corrective therapist. I worked with the handicapped for 15 years. I created the “adapted PE program” for the handicapped at high schools in Orange County. I really enjoyed that spectrum working with the handicapped. I also was able to have the state fund for weights for the adapted PE programs. The football teams were able to use the weights as well for practice. It was a great combination. I introduced the adapted PE and weight programs to schools in the Orange County district.

“A lot of good experiences came out of different things. It was a great atmosphere with the Christian program. I had a Bible teacher by the last name of Cope who told me that

'down the road it will happen. It will be like a whirlpool. You will turn and turn and get sucked into it.' Well, my wife and I accepted the Lord and now I am a minister today. I guess he was right.

"The Christian atmosphere was there for you: chapel, classes, etc. A lot of classes that I took were very instrumental in my life. Pepperdine helped develop every part of my life. All my background came from Pepperdine."

On the Camaraderie of the Team:

Ron Cameron- "We had fun together. I had all the respect in the world for my teammates. Jay (Roelen) was quite small but what made him unique was his good arm. He threw a lot harder than Warren (VanderSchuit).

"The all-around best player we had was Wixie Robinson. He was one of the best linemen along with Stacie Green. Wixie made my life miserable at practice. He was in on near every play.

"Sid Shue was my mentor. I backed him up my first two years and I was first-string as a junior and as a senior at center. He was a special player. Sid became one of my best friends ever. He's a well-thought of individual."

Marv Sampson- "Undoubtedly. The strength of the bonding was amazing. We created life-long friendships. Al Feola and I are life-long friends. We were colleagues for over 30 years together at Fullerton Junior College. Fred Hoover is another great friend. It was a bonding experience of 50 to 60 players that I will treasure forever. Guys who would give the shirts off their backs for you."

Ken Reed- "We had a lot of fun. People like Frank D'Alessandro, he was the most fun out of everyone. Wixie Robinson and Pete Martinez. You couldn't be serious around them. You had to join them, haha. A great experience. I think I picked the right school when I decided on what school I wanted to attend."

Gordon Weisenburger- "We all melted together. That is the best way to put it. We developed and became a great team in '54."

On Your Fondest Memory of Pepperdine Football:

Ron Cameron- "In 1953, my freshman year, we lost at Fresno State, 54-2. But I was named the player of the game because the coaches felt that I was the only one who played hard the entire game.

"Playing at Humboldt State in '55 (the Waves lost 26-14). It rained so hard that the field was full of water and the referee had to hold the ball (before each play) otherwise it would float away, ha ha.

“Another memorable game was at Reno in '56 (the Waves won 40-19). It was 14 degrees below zero. The field was frozen. It was my least favorite game to play in.”

Marv Sampson- “After I replaced Warren VanderSchuit at quarterback in 1954, we had a game vs. Santa Barbara. We were undefeated (5-0) and I fumbled four times in the second half. We lost, 13-12. That game clarified to me how to stay focused in not just football, but in life. It was a transformation moment for me.”

Gordon Weisenburger- “I remember in 1953 when Fresno State beat us, 54-2. When we got back from Fresno, Coach Scolinas gave us a pep talk. He said, ‘The past is the past. Put it behind you. We have a game this Saturday night.’ And he went on to talk more about that. It drew the guys together (the next week Pepperdine defeated Los Angeles State, 13-7). It was a life-lesson for us.”

Joe Sedia- “I started the last game of my senior year (1955) vs. Humboldt State and intercepted a pass. John (Scolinas) started the seniors and it gave me an opportunity to finish up with an interception. The quarterback made a bad pass, kind of wobbly, and I caught it.

“Then on special teams I was the punt returner. They had one of their better players coming down towards me. He hit me and knocked me over the bench. I kind of still feel the hit today. Ha ha. The same thing happened again on another punt but this time I did a double-fake on the guy and got past him. That was my football glory.”

Glen Sanders- “We were playing San Diego State in 1952 at the old San Diego stadium. One of our best players, Jerry Bell, couldn't play because his wife was delivering a baby. I had big shoes to fill in for. So I played offense and defense the entire game. I was exhausted. I could barely get up to the top of the stadium after the game to see my parents. But Jerry Bell did the right thing to be with his wife.”

Don Lent- “I have a few. I remember when we played at Humboldt State in 1952 in the cold and mud. I broke off a long touchdown run (65 yards) and was named the player of the game. That was something else.

“In 1951, we had a game in the fog vs. Redlands at El Camino Stadium. I scored a touchdown in the fog and I thought to myself, ‘finally, everyone saw me score a touchdown’ but nobody did.

“A bunch of football players from Pepperdine, USC and other schools got together and we went to Europe over Christmas break on a rugby tour. It was called the Goodwill Tour. We did real well. We played throughout France. It was all paid for. A lot of fun.”

On Creating A Four-Volume History of Pepperdine Football:

Jay Roelen- “My wife, Jerry, and I spent hours, days, weeks and months putting it all together. We worked out of our garage in Laguna Niguel. It was not an easy task. We

collected game programs from a lot of people. It became a labor of love. I spent many hours at the UCLA library and the Helms Hall of Fame collecting information. It became a project that many people got involved with. We started in 1990 and finished in 1992. A total of two and a half years. It was a lot of time putting it together but well worth it.”

1958 – 1961

John Scolinas completed his last two seasons as head coach from 1958-59. Pence Dacus took over the reins of the football program for the final two years in 1960 and 1961. I had the opportunity to speak over the phone with Robert “Tink” Hultz (E; '59-'61), Dick Jepsen (G, T; '58-'61), Ron Wootton (FB; '60-'61), Glenn McFarland (FB, K; '58, '59, '61), Gary Kimbrell (HB; '59-'61) and Dwayne DeSpain (HB; '57-'60).

Hultz set two Pepperdine football records in 1961, both in the same game vs. Long Beach State, to cap off his productive career. They were *most passes caught in one season* (40, broke Jack Bighead's record of 38 in 1950) and *total yards receiving in one season* (590, broke Terry Bell's record of 566 in 1947).

Wootton also is in possession of a Pepperdine football record. He set a school record in 1960 for *most rushing yards in one game* (126 vs. Long Beach State) breaking the previous record of 120 yards set by the great Darwin Horn vs. Arizona State, Flagstaff in 1948.

Why They Chose Pepperdine:

Tink Hultz- “Well, I came to Pepperdine to play basketball on a scholarship. Coach Scolinas saw me in an intramural basketball game on campus and said, ‘You want to play football?’ So I joined.”

Dick Jepsen- “I actually grew up in the area. I went from kindergarten to college in a five-mile radius. I lived in the same house for 19 years which was uncommon those days. It was just close. Little did I know I would be playing football at Pepperdine. It was a tight-knit community.”

Ron Wootton- “Dwayne DeSpain, Denny Aria and Fred Hoover were very influential in me going there. Dwayne lived six houses down from me. All of us went to Lynwood High School. I grew up with Dwayne and Denny. Fred was my high school coach.”

Glenn McFarland- “I went to Banning High School and our head coach, Gene Vollnogle, had played football at Pepperdine. He got me to go there.”

Gary Kimbrell- “I came from Hawthorne High School, same school as Jay Roelen, and I wanted to play football and continue my education in college. I also wanted to become

a coach. So I contacted Jay and he gave me John Scolinas' phone number. I called Coach Scolinas and he said I could walk on. During two-a-days, I made a nice tackle on Purcell Daniels. He was a big running back. Coach Scolinas walks up and says, 'by golly Kimby, you got yourself a full scholarship.' I happened to step up and do what I always do. I came home and told my wife. I was married and living in Normandy Village as a freshman. I had a three-month-old daughter. It was a pretty good feeling. I was fired up."

On Pepperdine Football:

Tink Hultz- "I had never played organized football. It was a learning experience. I knew going out it would be tough but I had a chance. The first year I was getting beat up a lot and you learn real quickly. I remember at the alumni game when I was open for a pass and Solomon Henderson came and hit me hard. He sent me flying. It was a welcoming to football. When we saw each other last year at the MITAY, we just laughed.

"The second year I broke my wrist and missed several games. It takes a couple years to see what was going on. I was fortunate that we passed the football. I caught some, dropped some too. Last year was my time. It worked out.

"It wasn't high pressure. There were games we could have won but we didn't. We never gave up. It was very good to be with the guys you liked. It wasn't a job. It was fun."

Dick Jepsen- "I asked John Scolinas if I could play for him. He said yes and I had the opportunity to play as a walk-on. I got my butt kicked a little. You can't worry about the backside bruises.

"Being a lineman that is where games are won and lost. I played and started all four years on the line. I am one of only 26 players (in the history of Pepperdine football) to letter all four years."

Ron Wootton- "I played well there. Had some good games. I was the leading ground gainer in the two years I played. In 1961, we played some good teams. San Diego State, Long Beach State, etc. We played them tough. Each game was a touchdown differential. We had freshmen quarterbacks, who were really good players, competing against seniors.

"I was so fond of Pepperdine. They offered me the chance to play football. Great guys on the team. Dwayne DeSpain and Denny Aria are good friends. Bill Montgomery became a life-long friend. Just a great guy. Pepperdine had the most caring people."

Glenn McFarland- "It was a key part of my life. I made a lot of nice friends who I kept in touch with over the years: Bob Mulligan, Dick Jepsen, Tink Holtz, etc. We had good camaraderie. On the field, we had to struggle for everything. Everyone lived on medical tape. We were always in the training room getting taped up. We were really beat up playing against the big schools."

Gary Kimbrell- “Without Coach Scolinas and my wife, I don’t think I would have made it. He offered me the scholarship and it provided my education. It gave me the chance to do what I wanted to do and that was keep playing football. I wanted to become a coach and teacher. My wife encouraged me to stay there.

“There were some great guys there. Ray Wrenn was one of them. Tink Hultz was another great story. John Scolinas gave him an opportunity. Vern Wagner was a tough guy. I remember being in the huddle with him vs. Los Angeles State and he had a broken rib.”

Dwayne DeSpain- “The biggest shock was Coach Scolinas leaving. A real shocker to all of us. But Coach Pence Dacus and his staff came in and were really good to us. The system didn’t change. They were positive with all of us.

“Ray Wrenn was a super guy and a good friend. My best friend is Denny Aria. He was a good player with great hands. We had talented guys on the team but we just had a tough go there. We were undermanned. To play a schedule like we did was tough. But there was no doubt about it that we had good camaraderie.

“They gave Denny (Aria) and me a fifth-year scholarship to come back and coach. That was real nice. They did a great job recruiting and had some good young players in the program. The kids were hard-working. Ron Wootton is a good friend of mine. He had a real good season.”

On John Scolinas:

Tink Hultz- “Great man. Worst you ever heard him say was, ‘by golly’. John was a good guy. The coaches knew you were trying. They never yelled at us.”

Dick Jepsen- “He was a jewel. An absolute jewel. I never ever heard him mention a cuss word. Just ‘holy smoke or by golly’. He was just a good person.”

Glenn McFarland- “John taught you about life through sports. How it applies to each of us. Like sportsmanship and respecting each other. I carried it into my coaching at Long Beach City College. I had him speak at LBCC through our boosters. He was a first-class person. Everyone respected him and liked him.”

Gary Kimbrell- “First of all, he gave me that opportunity. You learn things from all your coaches. He was one guy you wanted to play for and not disappoint. You always wanted to do your best for him. He was good at getting people to perform to their max. He always wanted to get the most out of people. He was concerned how you treated other people.

“He taught me two important things: reward effort and treat everyone the same. It wasn’t as significant to me then as it is now. If you worked hard, he rewarded you. He was an honest person. He was just a good man. A great person. He was an inspirational man.”

Dwayne DeSpain- “He was special. He taught us about life. He just didn’t talk about football but about life.

“I remember my first chalk talk as a freshman. Coach Scolinas walked in the room carrying a pan of water. He started to spill it everywhere. I started laughing and then got whacked across the head by a teammate from behind. He left the room and came back carrying the pan again. But this time he didn’t spill any of it. He put the pan down and walked to the chalkboard and wrote the word, ‘Poise’. He talked about having poise in football and in life. Things like that meant so much.

“I invited him to come and talk to the parents at the banquet of my son’s pony team. I can’t say enough about him. At his funeral there were a lot of people. It was very indicative of who he was.”

On Jay Roelen:

Dick Jepsen- “I played rugby with him. He was a natural leader. He was our general but I came after him in football. A person you remember for a lifetime.”

On Gary Kimbrell:

Dick Jepsen- “He played like there was no tomorrow. A really tough kid.”

On Ron Wootton:

Dick Jepsen- “He was a hell of a running back. A tough stud.”

On Dwayne DeSpain and Denny Aria:

Ron Wootton- “Both of them came from Lynwood High School. Dwayne was a guy that I always looked up to. He had a nice career at Pepperdine. I got to share the backfield with him. He had a great influence on me and he was a wonderful leader. He always gave great advice.

“Denny was a quiet guy. A terrific defensive player. I loved playing behind him because he made all the tackles. He took the run while I took the pass.

“They were good citizens. Wonderful people in my life. It was a great opportunity to play with them at Pepperdine. They were good players and better people.”

On Your Fondest Memory of Pepperdine Football:

Tink Hultz- “It would have to be the Long Beach State game (11/18/61). The last game of the season. I had a chance to break Jack Bighead’s (pass receiving) records. I needed three catches to tie, four to break it.

“At the end of the game, I caught a touchdown pass (his last reception of his career) and I kind of broke down. All the emotions just hit me. Bobby Wilhoite came over and said, ‘Come on Tink, let’s go. You are okay.’ And then I was fine.

“On the next series, Dick Jepsen intercepted a pass and ran it back (33 yds) and got tackled just short (on the LBSU 20-yard line) as time ran out. I think we lost, 22-15.”

Dick Jepsen- “I played in 36 games and we won five. Any of the winning games was big time. Schools that we played who were our sizes we kicked their butt. My experience was not bittersweet, but sweet because I got a chance to play.”

Ron Wootton- “Well, I broke the record (most yards in a game, 126) vs. Long Beach State. I remember Jack O’Brien, Bill Montgomery and Larry Curtis (offensive linemen) saying, ‘run my side, run my side...’ Haha. We just kept pounding the ball.”

Glenn McFarland- “I made a 39-yard field goal at Cal Western in 1961 (the next week Glenn ran for 90 yards on 13 carries vs. San Diego State).

“I blew my knee out my sophomore year (’59) vs. San Diego State. I hurdled a guy and we collided. I got hurt and he got knocked out. I didn’t play my junior year. The knee hurt me so my last year I started kicking more.”

Gary Kimbrell- “In 1959, I thought I would be on the bench. We had a game at Reno vs. Nevada and I intercepted a pass. Coach Scolinas rewarded effort and I played a lot after that on both defense and offense. The whole year was great. I caught some passes, ran the ball and made some tackles. It was fun.

“I was disappointed that Coach Scolinas left after the season. The new staff brought in players from the South like Texas, Alabama, etc. They were trying to create a new program. A lot of money was put into the program. They bought new uniforms, pads, helmets, etc. I just wish they had given John Scolinas that same opportunity.

“I never got that chance again like I did in ’59. But I do remember having a good spring game vs. the alumni in ’60. I intercepted three passes of Jay Roelen’s and made some good tackles too.”

Dwayne DeSpain- “I remember being down in San Diego in 1960 and we had a game against San Diego State. It was raining like hell. Very muddy. One of our assistants, Coach John Baker, made us slide through the mud right after warm-ups (the coaches then made the team shower at halftime with their uniforms on). He was trying to get everyone fired up and he did. We played a very good game and lost a tough one, 27-20.

On the Camaraderie of the Team:

Tink Holtz- “It was a small school because you knew everybody. There was great camaraderie. There were different groups but everyone got along.”

Dick Jepsen- “We had a tight group. We’ve kept in touch with each other. Tink Hultz, Merlyn Lund and Larry Curtis. I have maintained a friendship with them for a long time.”

On Pepperdine Experience:

Tink Hultz- “I had a lot of fun with the guys. I am very good friends with Dick Jepsen. We came from the same fraternity. Jerry Fuller and Glenn McFarland I remember well, too. I kept in touch with Jack O’Brien, Whitey Campbell and Larry Curtis.

“I was very fortunate to get a scholarship for basketball and get a chance to play football.”

Dick Jepsen- “It meant everything. I wasn’t prepared. I had to study my butt off. They set me up and I met the challenge. It was a great experience and an opportunity for kids to make their own way. I have fond memories of Pepperdine. A lot of caring people.

“Pepperdine allowed you to be at peace with yourself. To be a good person. I have grown deeper in my faith.”

Ron Wootton- “It was a special place in my life. I went back to Pepperdine for my teaching credential and master’s degree. I’m still a part of the community. They gave me the opportunity to play football. I fitted in real well there. It was an ideal situation. A lot of special people there with great character.

“At Cal Poly Pomona, you are just a number. At Pepperdine, you are a name. People know who you are. It was a great experience for me. There was no other place that I wanted to go to. It turned out real well for me. A great start and a great finish for my career. It was fun. It just ended too short.”

Glenn McFarland- “Pepperdine had one of the best education programs for teachers. They did a great job of developing teachers. I graduated in 1962 and also got my master’s at Pepperdine. I went on to become an assistant football coach at Long Beach City College from 1963 to 1999.

“I also enjoyed the Christian way of life. It carried over for me into my life. It was a process of growing up. It prepared me even when at the time I didn’t know it. I took it for granted back then. It was a blessing in disguise. It was good for me.

“I remember when I was a freshman walking around the campus for the first time. Everyone said hi and was really friendly. That was another reason I went. I wasn’t really used to that from back home at the Harbor. People were super friendly.

"I am very content that I went to Pepperdine and I really appreciated the experience going there. I'm glad I went."

Gary Kimbrell- "It was great. I have a lot of good memories. It was a real positive experience. I had a passion for my family and a passion for football. School at the time wasn't my thing. But I would have been lost somewhere else. The professors were good. They took care of you. It was a good environment for me. I learned to put the pedal to the medal."

Dwayne DeSpain- "It meant so much. Living on campus was great. We went to chapel every day. The atmosphere was great. They were really good to us. I was fortunate to get five years there on scholarship."

"I went back and got my master's from Pepperdine. I went on to become an assistant coach and then head football coach at Los Altos High School. I spent 42 years there as a football coach and Athletic Director. Denny (Aria) spent all those years with me as an assistant. We were fortunate enough to go to nine CIF Finals and win seven. We made the CIF playoffs 24 straight years."

"Coach Dacus taught me a lot about his workouts and how much time his staff spent on film. He was very thorough in his organization. He gave kids an opportunity. It was really special for me."

On Pepperdine Dropping Football:

Tink Hultz- "It was very disappointing. Football is an expensive sport. We didn't play on campus but at Inglewood High School. Our practice field was quite small. We weren't anything outstanding but the guys gave their best all the time. We held our own."

"We had some good kids coming in (for the 1962 season). Pepperdine was getting more speed and bigger guys. We would have been better next year playing smaller schools. We played a lot bigger schools. We didn't have enough size, speed and players to stay with them. But everyone played."

Dick Jepsen- "It was unfortunate. I had finished my career. Our motivation at the time to play football was to be on scholarship and not go to Vietnam. It made us play harder to keep our scholarship."

"They brought in real athletes (Ron Wootton, Gary Lashley, Ray Lumpkin, Bobby Wilhoite, Bill Clark, Ronnie Green, Gene Wilson, etc). They would have been good."

Ron Wootton- "It was a shame that it ended. It bothers me to this day. I was married and was so comfortable there. It was a disappointing time. We had the nucleus to be something special. We had some great assistant coaches. What would have happened if we had stayed together? It was devastating."

“One thing that was unique was that the guys on the team split up when the program was stopped. Many of the guys had success at the other schools. I went to Cal Poly Pomona. But I never felt the same at Pomona as I did at Pepperdine.”

Glenn McFarland- “It was kind of a surprise they did that. I understand why they did it and they had to do it. They over-scheduled (with the big name teams) and the recruiting wasn’t on the same level. It cost a lot of money and they needed to re-evaluate the program.

“We all had a chance to go somewhere else and play. I had one year of eligibility left but I was a senior academically. They offered to scholarship me for my last year and I decided to stay and finish up. That was nice.”

Dwayne DeSpain- “It was hard to see it all drop. Everyone went their separate ways. Denny (Aria) and I went back to our high school (Lynwood) to coach.”

End of an Era

On Dec. 19, 1961, the Pepperdine Board of Trustees made the decision to drop football from Pepperdine’s intercollegiate athletic program. Board Chairman Donald Miller cited the “heavy costs of fielding a competitive team” as the primary reason for the discontinuance of the sport.

Miller pointed out that the costs doubled over three years from \$30,000 to \$70,000 and that the budget would have been near \$100,000 for the 1962 season. Not having an on-campus facility to host games and having an average practice field didn’t make matters better.

Winning only eight games over the past five years didn’t help the situation either even though the school insisted that the record was not important in the board’s decision. In addition, there was poor student attendance at the games.

Many of Pepperdine’s losses came at the hands of much larger Division I schools. While the board understood the football program’s desire to play the best, a winning product was needed for financial income. A proposal was made from the alumni association recommending that Pepperdine attempt to join the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC) in order to compete against schools with similar enrollment and athletic caliber.

Miller stated that the proposal was discussed but ultimately rejected because “we would practically have to double our entire athletic budget if we joined the SCIAC.” Fielding freshman teams in every sport would have been necessary as well as organizing varsity teams in many sports.

“These are things we are not financially able to do,” Miller said.

Thus, the era of Pepperdine football came to an end. The games might have stopped but the friendships and memories will be everlasting. GPC football will forever remain rich in history and tradition.

All you have to do is listen, read and understand what playing for the small school on the corner of 79th and Vermont meant to each alum who donned the pads to represent George Pepperdine College for 16 memorable seasons.

I would like to thank each football alumni that took the time to speak to me either in person or over the phone. Your thoughtfulness, kindness and willingness to share your memories made this project one that I will forever remember. I hope you enjoyed reading these personal accounts and the smiles and laughter that came with it. May God bless each one of you as well as George Pepperdine College. Go Waves!

-- Dick Dornan