



## *Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial*

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### BILLY MERRILL FINLEY

June 24, 1932 - February 5, 2007

Stillwater High School Class of 1950

13th Annual Memorial Induction Ceremony

October 4, 2008

Billy M. Finley, who lost his battle with cancer on February 5, 2007, had many passions in his life; education, service to his country and others, and sports. He was very gifted athletically and earned a spot as a starting defensive end on Coach Ralph Hamilton's 1950 squad, Billy's senior year. His parents would not let him go out for sports until he finally talked them into allowing him before his senior year. Harvey Thurman said, "Bill was one of the smallest players on the team. His can do attitude helped, but Bill made the team because of his toughness."

His Stillwater High School experience definitely shaped his character and helped develop the character that would impact future generations as a role model. He was an educator in Perry, Oklahoma serving as teacher, coach, principal and County Superintendent. His former students, athletes, and colleagues remember him as a genuine good guy. Bill made an impact on everyone he knew. He was an honest friend. He made each person feel like they had unique potential and could accomplish anything. He cared enough to let people know what he expected from them. It was his way of showing that he cared about them to help them structure confidence and self discipline in their life to help them become successful.

He loved Perry and Stillwater schools and was an athletic booster the majority of his life. He loved to coach and watch young people develop through competition. He believed athletics taught great lessons for success in life such as sacrifice to reach attainable goals, cooperation through teamwork, and never giving up. Bill always felt that making decisions quickly, under pressure and being ready for them is the essence of how athletics molds individuals for success.

Bill served his country in the U.S. Navy. He built a successful career growing the Ditch Witch organization, and was always involved in everything supporting the community and its people. Up to the time of his death, he continued to serve the schools as a bus driver.

Bill Finley was a great husband, father and grandfather. He took his son, Brad, to sporting events until he started school. He never missed Brad's games, even his college games home and away. They spent many important hours together. Bill was loyal to family and friends and always supportive of them. What a true Pioneer!

*Presenter  
Paul Rogers  
Stillwater High School Class of 1967*