



Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial



JIM HARRIS

SHS Coach: Fall 1947 - Spring 1968

Distinguished Service Award

8th Annual Memorial Induction Ceremony

October 4, 2003

Jim was born, raised and attended school in the Walters, Oklahoma area. He transferred to Walters for his Junior year of high school and was a starter in the first football game he had ever seen.

Jim was an excellent athlete and received a football scholarship to Cameron College. He was only 16 when he enrolled at Cameron and after he completed two years, Oklahoma A&M recruited him to play for the Aggies. He was a student athlete and played both offensive and defensive guard until his career was interrupted by the war. Jim entered basic training in 1944. In 1945 he went to Amherst as a pre West Point student and entered West Point only to find out that he was allergic to wool. He went back to regular service and eventually received his discharge in 1946 at the age of 20. Jim returned to Oklahoma A&M and received his B.S. Degree in January of 1949 and his Masters Degree in 1950. While at A&M he met his future wife, Carolyn Hurd, on a blind date. They were married in 1949 and will celebrate their 55th anniversary next April. In 1947-1948 Jim did his student teaching at Stillwater High and Coach Ralph Hamilton asked him to stay at Stillwater as an assistant coach. He accepted the offer and that began his distinguished career at Stillwater High School.

Jim served as an assistant football coach at Stillwater High School for 15 years. He served as head coach and Athletic Director from 1963-1967. During his five years as Head Coach, his record was 43-18. In 1967 Coach Harris produced the AA State Champions, by beating previously unbeaten Okmulgee 15-7. That same season, Coach Harris was named the 1967 Oklahoma High School Coach of the year.

Coach Harris was also the head track coach for many years and was known to have never lost a home dual track meet. He took track as seriously as he did football and produced many individual state champions as well as finishing in the upper echelon in the state team championships.

Coach Harris was given the highest honor by his peers on July 26, 1999. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Coaches Association's Hall of Fame, the pinnacle of a career filled with highlights. Harris was humble in accepting the award, saying "It's not so much for the glory for myself but for the teams that were under my sponsor as a head coach for five years and as an assistant coach, they were the ones that carried out the plans."

Harris' career transcended more than athletics. Even though most of us first knew him as Coach, we were soon learning more than just football or track. We learned that honesty, fairness, discipline, and hard work often overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles; not just in athletics but also in life. Jim led by example and encouragement, he was a positive force in our lives and often pushed us on to succeed even though we sometimes doubted our ability to do so. We had to justify his confidence in us. Harris was mentor and helped us make decisions that would have a significant effect in our lives. His advice, (sometimes unsolicited), was usually right on the mark and it almost always started out with stay in school, go to college if you can. Ask Jim Harris what his greatest accomplishment was and he will not mention the All State, All American, or All Pro football players that he coached. He is rightly proud of their achievements but is most proud of the many student athletes that went on to be citizens of good character, other ones that reflect his values of honesty, fairness, discipline and hard work, the ones that went out into their communities and worked to make it a better place for their families and for the generations yet to come. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Jim Harris, who has without question led by example and who had inspired us to be better citizens.

Coach Harris continues to touch the lives of students at Stillwater High School. He has supported bond issues and actively promotes the Stillwater School System. He founded and is active on the Board of Directors of Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial. S.P.A.M. annually awards a four year scholarship worth \$2000.00. He is also very supportive of all athletic programs. You can still find him in the stands on Friday nights supporting the Pioneers.

Writer
Walter Adams
Stillwater High School, Class of 1962

Presenter
Keith Thomas
Stillwater High School, Class of 1957