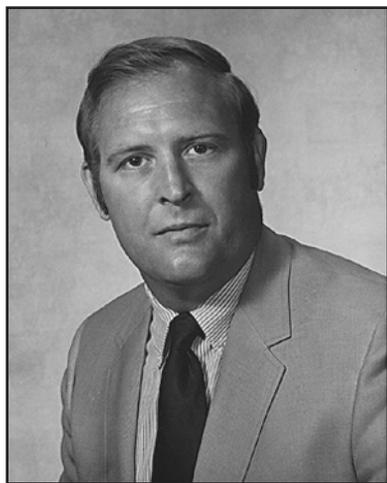


Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial



HOWARD NEWTON "SONNY" KEYS

January 24, 1935 - October 21, 1971

Stillwater High School Class of 1953

2nd Annual Memorial Induction Ceremony

October 11, 1997

Howard Newton "Sonny" Keys was born January 24, 1935, in Orlando, Okla., the son of the

late Randolph Keys and of Reta Keys, who still resides in Stillwater. He graduated from Stillwater High School in 1953 where he played not only football, but also basketball and baseball. However, football was his first love. This was surprising because when Sonny began the 7th grade, he could have posed for Charles Atlas' "90" pound weakling. In fact, he didn't even weigh

90 pounds. However, this love of the game and his tremendous desire to play launched him on a program of self-improvement. By his junior year, he was well on his way to becoming the 6', 250 pound young man that we all remember.

His mother was one of his biggest fans and she and his father rarely missed a game, whether it was football or basketball, home or away. While in high school, he served as vice-president of the "S" club, captain of the football team, an all-stater in football, and was chosen all-around boy of his senior class and Boy Rotarian. Upon graduation from high school, Sonny began O.S.U. on an athletic scholarship. He married Jacque Holland in 1955. His education at O.S.U. was interrupted by a tour of duty in the army. After his basic training, he was sent to France. While in France, football was still very important. He was assigned to a special services group as a member of, you guessed it, the football team. He had the opportunity to play football at military bases throughout Europe. He and Jacque lived there until they returned to Stillwater in 1956. He took up his studies at O.S.U. and played football at O.S.U. in the 1956-57-58 seasons and was a member of the Blue Grass Bowl team that defeated Florida State. He graduated from O.S.U. in 1959 with a degree in education. He also received a draft call from the Philadelphia Eagles, but declined and accepted a teaching position in political science in Arizona.

However, after having a successful year of teaching, the lure of football was still strong and he decided to accept the draft call from the Philadelphia Eagles. He and Jacque and his family, which by now consisted of 2 sons, David and Michael and 2 daughters, Elizabeth and Cathy, moved to Philadelphia. He was a starting lineman when the Eagles won the N.F.L. championship. He had 5 very successful playing years, but as a result of an injury sustained in a game against the Dallas Cowboys, he retired from playing and took a position as assistant coach with the Calgary Stampeders in Canada. After several years in Calgary, he along with his family, returned to Cleveland, Ohio to become assistant coach with the Cleveland Browns. He held this position at the time of his death in 1971.

Just as football had played a very important part in his life, Sonny also believed that giving back to the community was very important and he wanted to repay, in some measure, all the people who had influenced his life, encouraged him in his endeavors and believed in him. He did this by being involved in the midget football programs wherever he was and through his teaching. While he was playing for the Eagles, during off-season, he would return to the classroom to teach science. He even taught English one term, much to the amazement of his high school English teacher, Mrs. Mildred Labor. Sonny was called upon as a speaker for many groups, especially midget football, and he always tried to impress upon them the importance of not only having a goal in life, but being willing to pay the price, through hard work, to achieve it. Our "90" pound weakling accomplished his goal and was proud to be a Pioneer.

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