



Dick Thompson

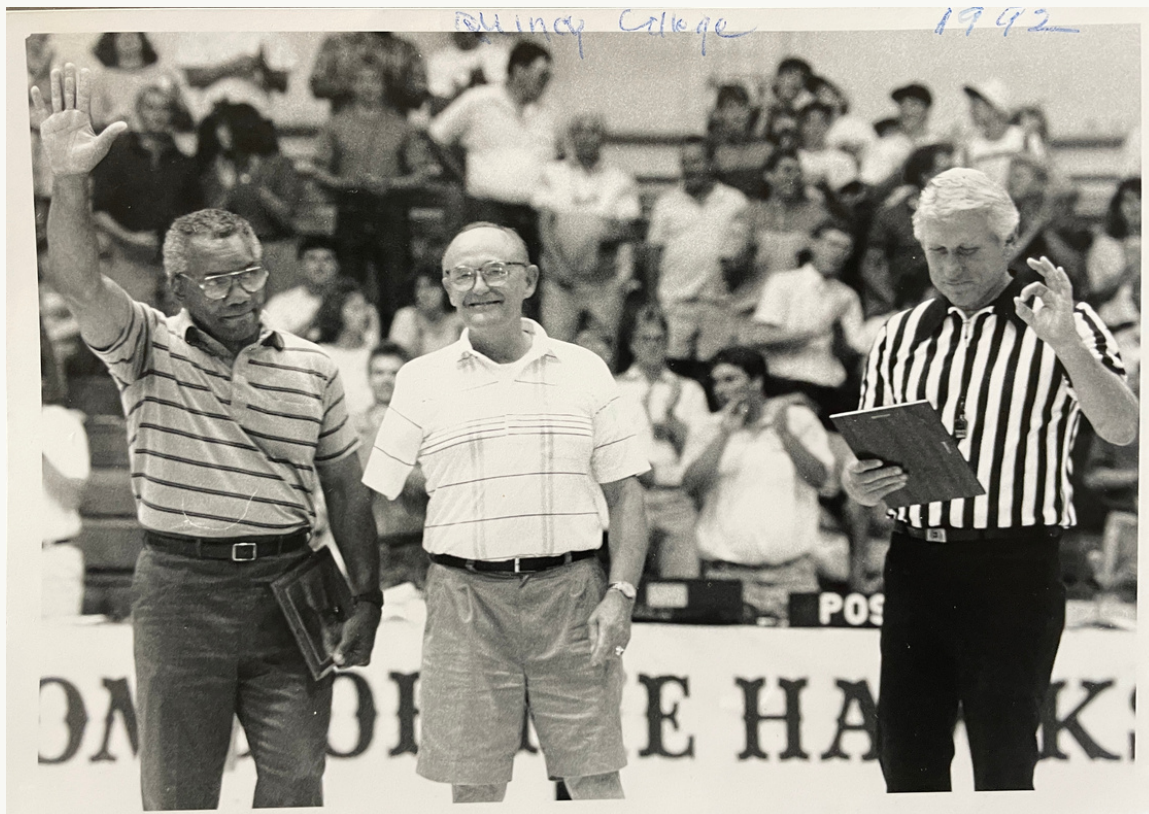
A LIFE LED BY FAITH



This project, and story series, was made possible by Bella Ease and their vision to capture the life stories and legacies of key community leaders. This is just one of many stories of lasting community impact, overcoming adversity, and creating positive change in the Quincy surrounding area, with stories and memories spanning the last 80 years.

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*Cover photo provided by The Crossing Church.



Dick (left), pictured at a Quincy College basketball game, in 1992, with Dick Shirling (middle), and Ed Heller (right).

THE LIFE OF DICK THOMPSON

This book tells the life story of Dick Thompson, in his own words. Dick has had insurmountable impact in students' lives in Quincy Public Schools for over 50 years in his role as a teacher and administrator.

Dick is also known for his athletic success throughout his high school and college education and into adulthood as a celebrated fastpitch softball player and referee. His impact in the education field and athletics are only surpassed by his love for his family and his relationship with God.

Beginnings

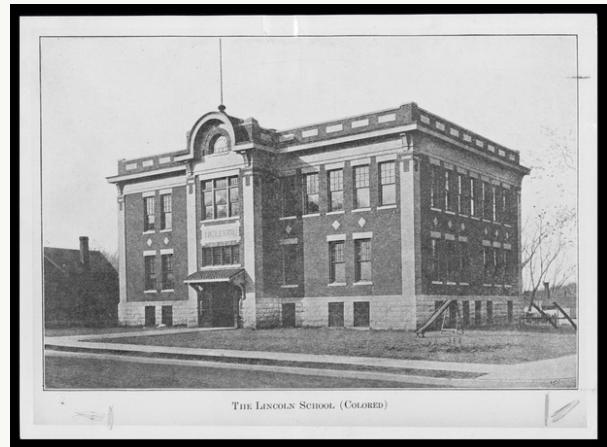
As told by Dick

I was born January 7, 1935, in Quincy, Illinois. I was born at home, not in a hospital. My mom was from the St. Louis area. She probably matriculated to St. Louis from a southern area. My dad was from Shelbina, Missouri. I knew who my dad was, but he passed away when I was about seven years old. I was raised by a single parent, my mom, Eva Thompson. I had eight brothers and sisters, five brothers and three sisters.

A BETTER LIFE

My mom moved to Quincy for a better life than growing up in the metropolitan area of St. Louis. She never talked about that much. As a result, I tried to choose to be better than what my environment was showing me at the time.

She was a domestic engineer. She took in laundry, that kind of stuff. Opportunities for African American people in Quincy were nil. Everybody was poor so you didn't know there was anything different. We were very poor, yet we managed to survive and were able to have our needs met. I felt kind of neglected when I went to school because kids had way more than I did.



Pictured above, Lincoln School, the elementary school that Dick attended. This picture is shared with permission from the Quincy Public Library: Quincy Area Historic Photo Collection.

I grew up in Quincy, and went to Lincoln Elementary School, which was an all-black elementary school. I got a good education there.

I always thought I could do anything I wanted or chose to do, because my principal, J.O. Redmon, told me I could do anything I wanted or chose to do.



FULL LIFE — James Redmon, retired Quincy school teacher and administrator, in relaxed pose in his home as he nears his 79th birthday. (H-W photo).

This feature story was printed in the Quincy Herald-Whig on September 1, 1968,

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HE INSTILLED IN ME THAT EDUCATION WAS THE KEY TO SUCCESS. SO I WAS THE BEST STUDENT THAT I COULD BE, THROUGH HIS ENCOURAGEMENT. HE WAS MY ROLE MODEL.

- DICK THOMPSON

James Redmon: 79 full years

James O. Redmon, retired school principal, has done a lot of living in the last 79 years.

He has been a bootblack, a butcher boy, a chef, a waiter, a bellhop, a porter, a rural mail carrier, an army officer, a teacher and a school administrator.

And, as he nears his 79th birthday — which he will observe Monday — he can sit back in his easy chair at his home, 1736 State, and view the panorama of his past philosophically, with pride in accomplishment, tempered by a sly sense of humor — a rare combination that makes Professor Redmon a warm, friendly and interesting person.

Mr. Redmon becomes intensely serious, however, when he views the problems of today. He believes that most of the ailments that beset the nation today are basically due to individual selfishness. "Everyone," he says, "seems to want his own way, and because of this selfishness nothing is accomplished."

After World War I, during which he served overseas as a second lieutenant, Mr. Redmon said he noticed tendencies toward an effort "to break up the spirit of nationalism."

"In the classroom," he said, "we used to sing such patriotic songs as 'America,' 'The Star Spangled Banner,' 'The Red, White and Blue,' 'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean' and many others. But you don't hear those any more. Those songs helped a spirit of patriotism that in recent years we seem to be losing."

Concerning today's young people, Mr. Redmon says he blames parents, over-zealous in their efforts not to repress a child's freedom of expression, for the present day lack of discipline, the apparent contempt on the part of some for law and order and no respect for the elderly.

"I had one woman tell me, not so long ago, that I was still living in the horse-and-buggy age," he said with a chuckle, "but I still think I'm

right in my contention that too much leisure time — so much that youngsters, and some adults, don't know what to do with themselves — is responsible for some of our troubles."

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Mr. Redmon had no difficulty in finding something to do when he was a youngster. He was born Sept. 2, 1889, in Boonville, Mo., a son of Samuel and Elizabeth Adams Redmon. He was christened James Owens Redmon because "James Owens" was the name of a minister who had converted his mother at a revival.

James Redmon was one of a family of four — one girl and three boys. His father died when Redmon was 9. His mother worked long hours to try to earn enough to keep her family together but became ill. So he quit school to find work to try to help support the family. He took care of children for 50 cents a week, and found other odd jobs at meager pay, drove a horse and buggy for the family of Judge J. L. Rutherford,

one of the earliest of the Jehovah Witnesses, and later, when he delivered meat for \$1.50 a week, he thought he was getting wealthy.

When his mother had recovered sufficiently, the family moved to Des Moines where Redmon re-entered school — this time in the Sixth grade. "I began praying every night," Mr. Redmon recalls, "asking God to help me get an education for the benefit of my people and the advancement of God's Kingdom."

When he was graduated from high school, May 26, 1900, the commencement speaker was Dr. Edward A. Steiner, professor of applied Christianity at Grinnell College. Dr. Steiner complimented young Redmon who was the only colored boy in the graduating class. Redmon was so touched that he went to the railroad station to thank Dr. Steiner before he Grinnell.

Dr. Steiner asked him if he intended to go to college. The boy said he'd like to if he could find work and Dr. Steiner promised to see what he could do

training he was placed in command of a trench mortar platoon of the Headquarters company, commanding 48 men with six trench mortars. His outfit landed in France June 22, 1918, and saw action in Alsace-Lorraine. He had two men killed, lost two guns and had a number of men wounded during a series of engagements.

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Lieutenant Redmon was discharged April 4, 1919, and returned to Des Moines. Because the pay offered for the position of chef at Y. M. C. A. Camp Boone was the equivalent of that he received as a second lieutenant, he accepted that for the summer. He went to Colfax, Iowa, in the fall, took a railway mail clerk's examination and was assigned to a run on the Rock Island between Des Moines and Omaha during the Christmas holidays. Later he was transferred to Union Station in Chicago and worked there until June, 1920. He didn't like Chicago and decided to return to the Y. M. C. A. camp post for the summer.

Making Good Choices

I was always able to make due with what was available. When I went to junior high, I paid attention to what the guidelines were and what I had to do. I tried to stay out of difficulty. If I saw problems that were about to get me into difficulty, I found a way to get out of it. I would say, "Hey guys, I am not going to do that." Or I would go over to another area to get away from it.

It was easy to get into difficulty if you want to belong to the group and decide to follow the group. That is a choice that could be a bad decision. I didn't need that kind of reputation of being a problem.

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MY MOM TOLD ME IF I GOT INTO DIFFICULTY I HAD TO GET MYSELF OUT.

She was not going to be bailing me out of the police department. If I got into trouble at school, they would mete out the consequences they have and when I got home, I would have her consequences. I had to really choose what I wanted to get in trouble for. I was mainly a loner coming up through high

school. I was in a group but yet not OF the group.

I was not a happy camper when I was growing up just because of the adversities that surrounded my life and my family's life. I just thought there was a better way than what I was involved with at that point.

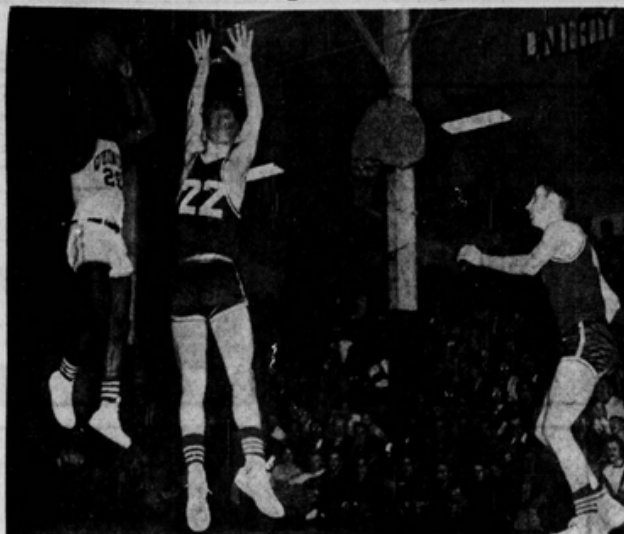
Mary, my wife, and I talk about growing up in Fred Ball, which we call the projects. My memories there, as a young person growing up, I wanted to get as far away from there as I could because there was such a stigma that surrounded you because of the behaviors. I wasn't any better than those folks, but I just knew there was a better way to behave.

I graduated from high school in 1953. While in high school I became an outstanding athlete just because I always thought I could excel according to the abilities that God gave me. As a result of high school athletics, I went on to get a basketball scholarship at the University of Illinois.



The two articles to the right, of many, highlight Dick's high school sports accomplishments, the first article was printed on Sunday, March 8, 1953 and the second was printed September 15, 1950, in the Quincy Herald-Whig. Above, a photo capturing Dick in action at a QHS basketball game.

Action in Near Upset in Regional Final



Here's Quincy High's **Dick Thompson** firing one of his third-quarter jump shots which enabled the Blue Devils to overtake the Notre Dame Raiders and eke out a 44-42 decision in the final game of the Barry regional Friday night. Making an attempt to cut off the shot is Notre Dame's Earl Clow (No. 22), as Jim Damhorst of the Raiders looks on apprehensively from across the court.



Bill Becktell, left, a senior, and **Dick Thompson** a sophomore, will handle most of the kicking for the Blue Devils this season. Becktell, a letterman, is slated to open at quarterback and will do his share of passing.



Dick holding the championship winning plaque, with a fellow athlete, for the Quincy Senior High School Basketball Team

Dreams to be an Educator

I always thought I wanted to be an educator, so I had to take courses that were going to be good for college. I did not want to be a factory worker. I didn't want to fall into the cracks like a lot of friends that I saw.

I wanted to be in a teaching profession and then become an administrator or principal. I took courses in high school and then focused on elementary education at the University of Illinois.

It didn't work out for me to become a graduate of the University of Illinois, so I came back to Quincy to work and ended up going to Quincy College. They pursued me because of my talents as a basketball player and that's how I ended up finishing school there. Then I went to Western Illinois University and got a master's degree and my certification to be a secondary administrator.

GIVING BACK

A lot of people say, "Why did you stay in Quincy?" Everybody that got a college education moved off to bigger metropolitan areas for opportunities that existed there.

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I CAME BACK TO QUINCY AND I THOUGHT, "SOMEBODY HAS TO STAY HERE AND GIVE BACK SOME OF WHAT THEY RECEIVED."

I had many opportunities to move away but I couldn't see putting my family into metropolitan strife. Quincy was a good environment to raise a family.

MEETING MARY

I was fortunate to meet Mary in high school and we dated throughout high school. We knew of each other as we grew up as kids but we started dating when I was a junior and she was a freshman.

We had friends who said, "Hey Rich, Mary likes you" and, "Hey, Mary, Rich likes you." Otherwise, it may not have happened.



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WE GOT MARRIED WHEN MARY GOT OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL. WE HAD KIDS EARLY IN OUR MARRIAGE. WE WILL BE CELEBRATING OUR 68TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY ON JUNE 10TH OF 2023.



Dick, when he taught math at Quincy Junior High School

MATH TO DISCIPLINE

My first job out of college, in 1957, was teaching math at Quincy Junior High. I was a math teacher for 16 years. Then I was the administrative assistant, which means I was a disciplinarian at the junior high. I felt like, when you come to my house, you are going to follow the rules if you like them or not or Mom and Dad and I are going to sit down and have a conversation to see what is wrong.

I let kids know, “Mom and Dad can’t save you once you are here. When you have a difficulty and you come to see me, you are going to be on the phone talking to Mom and Dad and I don’t care if they are at work or not. If you don’t call them at work, I will call them.”

I did that for five years and for the next 15 years I was the assistant principal. I retired in 1992. I agreed to work for one year, for no salary, wherever they saw the need.

They put me in the transportation department. My role there was to work with drivers and student behavior on buses. I couldn’t believe that our school district was lagging so far behind. As time moved forward most districts had video cameras on their buses. In Quincy, they had five cameras they rotated on all the buses.

They wanted me to build a discipline format. At the end of that first year, I was happy that I had done that service. Merle Shirleman and George Meyer came over and they said, “The principals thought you did a great job and took away a lot of that bus behavior so they could get their job done and they wanted to know if you would continue.”

I did. The key to get me to do that was letting me decide what the salary was worth. I stayed there for twenty years. I really only had one job, with Quincy Public Schools, from 1957 to 2013.

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THERE IS GOOD IN SCHOOLS, BUT YOU HAVE TO HAVE DISCIPLINE FOR KIDS TO MAKE IT.



RACE RELATIONS AND THE EDUCATOR—Five Quincy leaders gave their opinions on race relations in Quincy at an education workshop for teachers Wednesday night at Senior High. Four of panelist were, from left, Dr. Donald Busbey, Jr., Sid Landfield, David Montgomery and **Dick Thompson**. At right are two group consultants of the Illinois Commission on Human Relations. (H-W photo).

5 Quincy leaders give race relations views

Excerpt of article printed in the Quincy Herald-Whig on Thursday, September 18, 1969

I liked teaching more than the administrative side of things. You have your structure, and I never had a rule the kids didn't agree with. If you have a handful of rules, if they are the right guidelines, they work.

As an administrator you have direct influence. A characteristic for me is that kids need to know who you are. If you are out in the complex, rather than your office, you are going to have better relationships with kids. The paperwork can wait until after the kids are gone. You might have to stay an extra couple of hours. If kids need help with academics, to me, that is another reason why you stay after school.

DAD, REFEREE & SOFTBALL PITCHER

Our kids knew where the limits were. The rules here were: you love your brother and sister. Fighting wasn't okay, be it verbal or physical, that wasn't going to happen. We were busy as our kids were always involved with activities at school.

Mary sang in the Ben Bumbry Band. That was tough for me as she was in a totally different environment. I had to trust her. You have to give a little and take a little. I watched the kids while she was doing that. I did a lot of activities outside of the house. I was a basketball and football official.

Mary will say I was gone more than I was here. I was out refereeing sports and then I became a professional softball pitcher. We traveled as a



Dick in his role as Administrative Assistant at Quincy Junior High School, pictured with Rex Barber, Assistant Principal (left), and Bill Cooper, Principal (middle).

family to wherever I was pitching softball. We would travel to the Quad Cities, Jefferson City, Missouri, Waterloo, Iowa, etc. I got a stipend for doing that.

I left Quincy as a younger softball player. When I was getting my master's degree in Macomb those guys found out I was a fast pitch softball pitcher and asked me to pitch for the Macomb group.

I went to the Quad Cities to pitch for the Macomb team and we won that state tournament and that is how I got to be a known pitcher in that area.

I pitched out of Rock Falls and the Sterling area for seven years. The family would move there for the summer. We traveled a lot. The kids learned to function in an environment other than our own. They talk about some of the shenanigans they had with the kids that lived there. We lived on a farm for one summer. It was a good experience.



Dick Thompson stars

Dick Thompson of Quincy, one of the area's standout softball pitchers for many years, starred on the mound last weekend at Moberly, Mo., as Midstate Oil won four games and the title in a strong fast-pitch tournament. The Quincyan was honored as most valuable pitcher.

Thompson pitched all four games as Midstate was the only undefeated team.

The championship game was scoreless until the 10th inning,

when Thompson tripled. His teammates came up with two more hits and went on to win, 3-0 over Rippetos of Jefferson City. Rippetos have won the Missouri fastpitch state title the past two years.

The previous weekend, Midstate won a tournament in Jefferson City, hosted by Rippetos, beating out a strong Decatur, Ill. team.

Thompson will pitch for Midstate in tournaments later this season in Kansas City, Mo., and Topeka, Kan.

Upper left and right photo featuring Dick's softball career, and to the left, an article published in the Quincy Herald-Whig on June 30, 1975

Children

Tony, my first born, lives here in Quincy. He is retired. He works part-time at Little Jess Jeep detailing cars. I have a daughter, Lynn, who lives in Bloomington. She was quite an athlete. She went to Illinois State University. She was on the All American Fastpitch Softball Team.

She came up to me one day when she was a kid and said, "I want you to teach me how to pitch." I said, "You don't know what that is. You have to be completely committed. You have to play within yourself and not let a lot of outside things influence you." She did well.

Timmy, my second born, is in Bloomington and has worked all of his life up there. He is in charge of a huge complex of apartments. He is the head maintenance guy. He is about ready to retire too.

Terry is my son that lives in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He is 63 and retired now. My youngest son, Todd, lives in Akens, South Carolina. He still works.

We have grandkids and great grandkids. Two grandkids live here. All the other grandkids, who are adults, live in other places. We hope that they get back for our anniversary party.



STARTING FORWARDS — Brothers Tim and Tony Thompson are carrying on their family prominence in basketball this year for Quincy's Blue Devils, as the two are starting forwards for Sherrill Hanks' quintet. (H.W. Photo).

Thompson cage tradition carried on by Tony, Tim

Dick's sons, Tony and Tim, carrying on his tradition of athletic excellence on the Quincy Senior High basketball team. This was printed in the Quincy Herald-Whig on Sunday, December 16, 1973.



The Thompson family, left to right: Lynn, Mary, Dick, Todd, Terry, Tim, and Tony, June 11, 1984



Mary and Dick with their daughter, Lynn

MOST IMPORTANT

It was important to us to make sure that we instilled enough in our kids that they could have a pretty solid life. You always want your kids to have a better life than you had. We had a pretty good life really, compared to other folks. We always wanted to make sure that our kids related to people in a positive way, a respectful way.

FULLFILLING TIMES

In my professional life, teaching was really a highlight for me. You can really make an impression on the

students you come in contact with. They remember the quality things that you related to them. That you showed them respect. They never forgot that. It was how they were treated that they remember, not necessarily how much you knew, but how much you cared!

Of course, most of the parents thought that I was the principal at junior high, but I was just the assistant. But I handled problems and they felt that I did a good job of that.

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

We were always big on our relationship with God. We spent a lot of time at our church. Mary and I have been at The Crossing Church for 20 plus years. We have spent most of our adult lives in church. It was my relationship with the Lord that allowed me to be relational to other people.

I decided it wasn't about me. That made a difference. Mary has always been outgoing, to look to see who she could help. I was more selective. If we were driving along the street and Mary saw someone that looked disadvantaged, she wouldn't say anything for a while, but a block or two later she would say, "Why don't you go back."

I would go back, and she would roll down her window and offer them a monetary gift. They were resistant, but they would end up taking it. I don't know how many times that happened, it happened a ton of times.

The story I remember well was, we were out looking at garage sales and we were coming past a house that had a couple of used bikes we were going to buy. I looked to my right and saw two guys walking. Mary said, “We should offer them a ride.”

We didn’t know these two guys from Adam. They got into the car, and they thanked us for picking them up because it was hot. They stunk up our vehicle real bad. They were from Texas and trying to get home. They were telling me this story and I was taking them to First Baptist, because that is where I was attending at the time, and they have a benevolence fund.

I asked them how much it would cost to get them bus tickets back to Texas. I am driving along, and I really don’t want to do this, but my spirit said, “Help them out.” My checking account was almost down to nothing, but I had enough to buy the tickets with that and the cash we had.

After that God said he would take care of our needs. Sure enough, later I got back that money I spent and then more. Money was coming that I didn’t know I was going to receive at that time. There are tons of stories like that in our life.

I have found that scripture tells you, “Trust in me.” It is up to God to touch people’s hearts to be more generous. It is hard to talk about those things that were in your rearview mirror, but it is where God brings you from to where you are now that makes all the difference.



Dick in the lobby of his church prior to service talking to Blaine Emerick, March 2023, photo provided by The Crossing Church.

MOST DIFFICULT TIMES

Our difficult times didn’t just end in our childhood. They also traversed through our early life and marriage. We had four youngsters. It was tough to manage how to take care of all the needs. We were always givers going to church, but not tithers. I couldn’t figure out how my monthly stipend as a teacher could take care of all the needs. I told Mary, “I think I am going to try this tithing.” It was most difficult. The bag I put my money in always had holes in it. Then, over time, the money that I had from teaching seemed to go farther.

Our oldest son was sick a lot as a youngster. He had to be hospitalized and when we got those bills, \$300 seemed enormous. With our tithing, and believing, God took care of that. We grew accordingly as we went through life.



Making it official

Thompson, Heller retirements marked Saturday

By Don Crim
Herald-Whig Sports Editor

While players and coaches and the jump ball have come and gone the past 30 years, Dick Thompson and Ed Heller have remained fixtures on the basketball court.

Together they have officiated more than 8,000 games, worked nine state tournaments in Illinois and Missouri, and traveled more miles than they care to count.

They've watched from ringside seats the dramatic changes that have shaped the game as we know it today.

They've seen sparkling, roomy arenas sprout up in the place of quaint, cozy gymnasiums that, as so aptly depicted in the movie "Hoosiers," seemingly housed entire communities on game nights.

They've seen the pace of the game quicken to track meet proportions as players have gotten bigger, stronger, faster and more talented.

And, sadly, they've seen the pressure to win intensify to ulcer-producing proportions.

"Herman Pinkleman once told me that if I stayed in the game long enough, a lot of funny things would happen — some good, some bad," Thompson said. "He was correct."

A leg injury sidelined Thompson midway through last season, and he decided to make it permanent.



Heller's "old bones and muscles" told him they couldn't take the rigors of another season.

"You'll understand when you get to be 50," Heller said, "but you really hurt the next morning. That gets old after a while."

The two planned to call the boys game between Missouri and Illinois Saturday night in the 10th annual McDonald's/Herald-Whig Classic, one last trip down memory lane before putting their whistles in mothballs.

It was to be a fitting finale, for they worked the very first Classic in 1983 — for free.

Thompson's ailing leg did not respond to rest, however, and he asked to be replaced. But he will be on hand to watch Heller work with his longtime partner, Ronnie Richardson, and to take part in a pregame ceremony in their honor.

He got his start in 1962 when he moved to LaGrange, Mo., to go to work for the Lewis County Soil Conservation Service as a district conservationist.

"There were two officials in this town — Delbert Murphy and Glen Maples — who took me under their wing," Heller said. "They were a little older than I was and they kept me out of trouble. Young officials today should find somebody with some gray hair and work with them a little bit."

Heller never had trouble finding work.

"I took all the games," he said. "The only way I turned a game down was if I already had one scheduled. I can remember doing a game for St. Louis University one night and for Canton Junior High the next."

"I called all levels — from

As mentioned in the story on the following page, Dick had a long career as an officiant. Dick retired after officiating over 8,000 games. This article was published on June 12, 1992, in the Quincy Herald-Whig.

THE STRUGGLE

The only story I have is my life story. As I grew in Christ, and Him in me, he has allowed me wisdom and discernment to see things that I should do and things that I should not do. I always think of Paul's story of being that old wretched man that I am, the things that I shouldn't do, I do, and things that I don't do, I should.

It has always been a struggle. Your flesh is always fighting against what the spirit is telling you to do. I would always encourage individuals to make the right choice and choose Jesus as the Lord of your life. It is not going to be easy once they make that choice. In fact, it is going to be a lot more difficult because the enemy (Satan) who is alive and well, is going to be dancing all around you and every little chance he gets he is going to wedge in there.

I was going to a town to referee one night. The roads were icy, I had a late start, and I knew I couldn't drive too fast. I was about 15 miles from the town and I got behind a big transport truck. I knew I had to get by this guy as I was going to be late. I tried to get around the truck and my vehicle started going sideways.

Another big semi was coming from the other direction. I had a CB radio, and I could hear the semi's talking to each other. One said, "There is a four-wheeler coming down sideways on the highway." The other guy said, "Yeah, I see him. There is no way I can miss him, so I am going to have to take him broadside."

I just said, "Lord, I need your help. I need to get back in the lane somehow." Just as I got back in the lane, that truck went right by. I knew that had to be from God. That was on a Saturday. On Sunday I couldn't wait to go to church and tell that story.

PURPOSE IN LIFE

For me, my purpose was to be a servant of the Lord and to minister to men. It took me a long time to figure that out.



Dick pictured with friends from his church, left to right, Bruce Harvey, Chris Lefever, Dick, Craig Hilbing, and Jim Dennis.

MOST GRATEFUL

I'm grateful that God gave me a good wife, my family, and through all the ups and down and challenges that we were truly blessed as a family. When I look at life and how God has moved in it, to put me in this position that I am in now, to serve him and to serve others, and do all I can to help those who are disadvantaged.

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EVERYTHING THAT I HAVE COMES FROM HIM.

That's the part of life that makes me a little bit emotional. I know I couldn't have done it without Him. Financially, He has put me in a position to say I could do more. I could give it all away because I know it is all His anyway. He has given both of us a generous heart. If you are not sacrificing, you are not doing all you can do.



Dick and Mary, June 15, 1990

DO ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY

When I look at my life I would probably have been more all in with Jesus before I did. I would have spent more time with my own kids than other people's kids. There was more quality time I could have had.

I went to as many of their team games as I could. Mary went to a lot of activities that I couldn't go to. I did the best that I could do, and Mary did the best that she could do. Things worked out according to God's plan rather than our plan. Otherwise, I would say I am satisfied with every aspect of my life.

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MARY SAID, “AND HERE WE ARE STILL TOGETHER.”

BEING A GOOD LISTENER

You have to be more of a listener, than a problem solver. Mary didn't want me to fix it, she wanted me to listen. Most of our conversations turned out that we were both mutually okay with the decision. We didn't second guess our decisions. That is how we managed our marriage.

Were there times that walking away looked pretty good? Yeah, but you just don't do that.

You make a commitment to each other. We resolved a lot of problems that most couples today cut and run. We had some heated discussions, and we didn't have a referee, so we had to work it out!

You made the commitment that you were going to be in it through thick or thin, good or bad, through sickness and health.

EDUCATION MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

In high school I was taking all the math I could. I was in an advanced trigonometry class. Houston Kirk was the teacher. I was having some difficulties and asked him for some help.

He said, "Maybe math isn't your strong suit." I was offended by that. I just came to him for help and now he was assessing me that I wasn't cut out to be a mathematician. When I got the interview at junior high to be the math instructor, I couldn't wait to see him because of what he said. I got the opportunity.

I said, "You told me I couldn't, but your statement motivated me to take enough math to be certified to teach it." He started laughing.

Later in my career, I was taking a probability of statistics class in Kirksville, where the government

would pay you to go. George Meyer (previous Superintendent of Quincy Public Schools) was in that class, and George is pretty bright. He was having difficulties too. I went to Houston and said I needed a little help. I got a B in that class! He was a good instructor. He was just telling you the truth as he saw it.

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I ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT IT IS THEIR DECISIONS THAT MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. YOU CAN COME OUT OF WHATEVER SITUATION YOU ARE IN, BUT IT HAS GOT TO BE THROUGH YOUR EDUCATION.

J.O. Redmond, the principal who was my mentor, told the whole class, "The teacher standing up there in front of you has all of the knowledge that you need to be successful, so get it. Don't refuse it. You refuse it when you fail to do the requirements of whatever that teacher is asking you to do. They are not going to do anything that is going to cause you great harm. It is going to be for your great benefit."

It was for my benefit because I wasn't as smart as the person teaching that class. That is in any endeavor, there is always someone that is going to have knowledge and information that you can use for your good.



Dick attending the Promise Keepers Conference, with men from The Crossing Church (as mentioned on the next page), in 2001.

DEFINING A GOOD LIFE

We have had a good life, but we have had a better life because we chose Jesus. We have a Christian foundation. A lot of people are having good lives, but it is not a better life because they haven't made that commitment. God has to be in the mixture for the recipe to come out like it is supposed to.

When I look at my brother's picture, he had a good life up to a point. He hadn't made the choice to ask Jesus to be Lord of his life. I was headed to Minneapolis for a Promise Keeper's conference and I told the guys I was driving with that I have a brother that lived up there and I would give anything for him to make that commitment. I called him and invited him to come by and he did.

He came to the conference and sat through that first session and during the altar call he got up out of his seat and he gave his life to the Lord. He didn't know, but three years later God was going to call him, and his life would be over. I was elated that he made that choice because he went to bed one night and didn't wake up.

LIFE LESSONS

There are always going to be challenges, whether you are single or married, because that is the way we were structured. You are going to have that war between what the flesh wants to do and what God really wants you to do. You have to choose the path



Dick with his brother, Albert Thompson

that was chosen for you, rather than by you. God said, "You are either for me or against me." There is only one path to take, and that is the Godly path. God gave us the opportunity to figure it out. He is always standing there with his arms open. I am glad He did because he waited for me. He waited for you.

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LIFE IS NOT EASY. NOBODY SAID IT WAS GOING TO BE. IT'S A CHOICE.



Dick and Mary celebrating their anniversary



Memoirs
by
Maureen

Life Storyteller, Maureen Klues