



A Eulogy for Lloyd Turner

by Tom Donnelly--January 2009

(writer's note: John Huddle and I were asked to deliver a eulogy in honor of our friend Lloyd Turner, who passed away a few weeks ago. We split up our stories and each then spoke to those in attendance at the funeral home on the morning of his services. Since that time, I have received several inquiries as to why I have written nothing in the newspaper about Lloyd, who had long been among my very best of friends. Writing a separate article so soon after

such an emotional event would be difficult, so I am attaching the original eulogy, with a few minor modifications, in its place. Of course, you could ask Huddle to write his up for publication too, but good luck with that.)

I first met Lloyd Turner in 1970 when we were rookie teachers here in Versailles. We were both jr. high teachers but taught in separate buildings because the 7th grade was in the middle school at that time. It was actually during basketball season that we first became friends. Lloyd coached the 8th grade and I had the 7th. Lloyd knew what he was doing, but unfortunately he had a voice that gave out after about the second yell from the bench. I, on the other hand, was totally clueless, but I had the lungs of a lion. Lloyd would lean over toward me (in the days before I needed hearing aids) and tell me what to say. I was quite proud of the fact that my voice could be heard above the din of the elementary school's gymnasium as I hollered such gems as, "Get in the game, ref!" If it had not been for Lloyd's guidance, I would have been totally lost.

After that first sports season together, we became friends for life. We taught together, we coached together, we played softball together, we played basketball together, we painted houses together in the summer, we both served terms as athletic director, we raised our kids in the same neighborhood, and we both ended up doing those things that old retired guys do together. Not quite inseparable, but close enough.

Most of the kids at school saw Lloyd Turner as being pretty much a serious gentleman. My own kids, however, got to see Lloyd away from school and realized he could be a different person. They fondly recall zooming across Grand Lake St. Mary's in John Huddle's boat

with Mr. Turner at the helm. With his hat on backwards, he became a crazy man whenever he took the wheel of a boat. There was only one speed--FULL speed, and he was quite adept at finding just the right waves to smack into so as to soak everyone in the boat except himself.

Some of the best times the two of us ever had involved going to the state basketball tournament with the other coaches. I have such fond memories of piling into Lloyd's old LeMans with Ron Mescher for our yearly getaway weekend to Columbus with Dan Norris! Of course, what happens in Columbus stays in Columbus (or something to that effect) but I can still picture poor Lloyd hanging out the side window trying to get a clear view ahead while driving along I-70 in the middle of a blinding snow storm.

It was back in those days that Lloyd first began joking to his friends that there was a small dark cloud over his head that seemed to follow him wherever he went. He certainly had plenty of examples to back up that theory. He tore his Achilles tendon while playing in a teachers' basketball game at Covington; he received a gunshot wound while playing centerfield in a softball game at the K of C Hall; he survived two separate heart attacks; he even beat the odds by wearing out one defibrillator and having another one installed. His eventual battle with cancer would prove to be the final storm that came from that little dark cloud over his head.

His friends often kidded him by saying they did not want to walk too close to him so as to avoid that cloud, but seriously, we often wondered just why Lloyd seemed so prone to misfortune in his life. Unlike the rest of us, he had no vices. He did not drink. He did not smoke. He was not a gambler. As far as I know, the only woman he ever chased was the one he married.

If he DID have a vice of some sort, and "vice" would not be the best word here, it would be his BOYS. I have been involved with high school sports all my adult life and have seen my share of dedicated parents where their kids' games are concerned. Without a doubt, Lloyd Turner would be the poster child for involvement in his kids' activities. If any of the BOYS had a game, he was there. He traveled all over the country seeking out obscure ball diamonds, gymnasiums, and football fields where Jason, Jeremy, and Jared were scheduled to play. He got to know their coaches, the umpires, the sports writers, the groundskeepers, and the parents of the other players. But he did not just cheer for his own kids as some of the other

parents did; he knew all the players' names and their abilities and would shout out encouragement to them as well as to his own kids. After his retirement from teaching, with his wife still working and unable to go with him to EVERY game, Lloyd Turner became a one-man support group for the teams his kids played on.

We all have our quirks, but it seems to me that we teachers have more than others. Or maybe it is just that I spend more time with teachers than I do with normal people. Lloyd certainly had his share of idiosyncrasies, and his best friends often took advantage of any opportunities to point them out.

Lloyd was an avid lover of the outdoors and absolutely despised seeing any tree cut down without a good reason. He went so far as to begin counting how many copies of advertising catalogues selling books, workbooks, fundraisers, and school supplies would turn up in his mail box at school. Of course, he made the mistake of keeping his buddies informed of the current number received, so we just started piling all our own catalogues into his mail box. A daily announcement from Lloyd during lunchtime in the lounge would be met with mock incredulity from his listeners until he finally figured out what we were up to.

A necktie, which was pretty much required of all male teachers when Lloyd and I began our teaching careers, eventually became another of Lloyd's causes. He was among the first of our male teachers to stop wearing them to school. "If they want me to dress like a doctor, they should pay me like a doctor," was one of his favorite sayings. Actually, Lloyd was a leader in this regard. Soon, Gary Cooper stopped wearing (and rolling) his ties. Before long, virtually all of us went tie-less, at least most of the time, anyway. Conrad Minnich and Gary Huelskamp were pretty much the only holdouts.

Lloyd's crusade against the necktie went beyond the school building. He stopped wearing them to church. He went without one to wedding receptions. About the only times he would don the cravat were for funerals or formal dinners aboard cruise ships, although he could not refrain from complaining the entire time.

Several years ago when Lloyd was being loaded into the ambulance after one of his two heart attacks, he had only one set of instructions for his wife and family. "Just don't let them bury me in a tie. I'll come back and haunt you if you do." (There was that cloud again.) It was gratifying to see that his loved ones followed his

wishes. He might have been the only man at his funeral, with the exception of the priests, who was not wearing a necktie. I debated whether or not to wear one myself but soon realized that he would have worn one to mine--out of respect.

We certainly cannot all know just when we must leave this earth. However, the Turner family had a pretty good idea that Lloyd's time had come. The cancer was simply too much. The night before he died, Lloyd Turner was at home surrounded by family and loved ones. Due to his strong pain medications, he was somewhat incoherent most of the time, but he was still aware that his wife, his boys, and his brand new grandchild were there. "I know," was one of the last things he said before the gathering broke up and almost everyone went to bed. If one has to go, it is best if it is in circumstances such as those.

Well, Lloyd, I can tell you that the dark cloud is gone now. I can tell by looking out at what you have left behind. Your mom and dad and brother, your wife Jan and her extended family, your beloved BOYS and their respective significant others, and finally there is perhaps the surest sign that the cloud is gone--a beautiful little girl named Emerson Turner.

Heredity can be an amazing thing, but it's not the only factor in determining how a person turns out. You and Jan have raised three of the finest young men I have had the pleasure to know. That did not happen by accident. You did a great job! Still, I wish you could have stayed around long enough to experience the joys that come along with watching a little GIRL grow up. I'm sure you would have loved it. Rest assured that your family will do for Emerson all that you would have wanted to do yourself--likewise for any future Turners that might come along.

Goodbye, my friend. We miss you already.