

3-10-1991

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Recommended Citation

Stansbury, Edgar, "UA94/6/2/2 Edgar Stansbury - Stansbury Pays Tribute to Terry" (1991). *Student/Alumni Personal Papers*. Paper 35.
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Stansbury Pays Tribute to Terry

He went by Dr. William Lester Terry, but we usually called him "Gander." I don't know about the origin of the nickname, but it stuck with him. Sometimes we addressed him as Bill Terry because it brought to mind a great baseball player.

Gander, who played and coached football at Western Kentucky University, passed away Feb. 23 of cancer at Ridge Park in Rapid City, S.D. He was buried in National Cemetery in Rapid City. His wife, Barbara, is not in the best of health. She's in a nursing home in Rapid City.



Both of these fine folks grew up in Kentucky, and both received their college education at Western. Gander entered Western in 1925. They were married in 1929 and have one daughter, also named Barbara. She's married and lives in Rapid City.

She advised some of Gander's old friends about two weeks ago he was not going to survive his illness and requested we write him in care of her, and she would read the letters to him. Many letters were written, and she reported he really appreciated the response.

Gander was an outstanding football player during the period from 1925-29. As far as I know, he was not recruited. He came to Western to get an education. He got that and more.

Everybody Gander came in contact with became his friend and respected him for what he was – a great guy and a fair and complete competitor. He played guard and center on Swede Anderson's and Ed Diddle's football teams 1925-29. He would like to have been cited as an outstanding guard in his senior year, but he volunteered to play center. This was not an easy transition, but he made it, and what a job he did. That was in 1928, the year of the championship.

In those years, recognition didn't go much beyond the state. The players who made up this team and those before Gander, now considered to be old-timers, thought him to be the best at his position. Like many of the others, he will be forgotten if something is not done soon to honor these outstanding athletes.

Gander majored in economics. We were advised against taking classes under Dr. Taft, the head of the department, because he was not too impressed with our academic efforts. Gander became one of Dr. Taft's prize students. Gander was an excellent student, and in this regard he had considerable influence on the rest of us.

Gander was among several of us who were fortunate enough to get quarters in the basement of Ivan Wilson's home. Mr. Wilson was head of the art department. Gander, like some of the rest of us, worked in the book store under Jimmy Hall to help meet expenses.

There was something about Gander that made him stand out from the crowd. Things seemed to be OK if he was involved. His standards of conduct, his character, his personality and sense of justice and fair play and what he stood for set him apart, while at the same time he always seemed to be one of us.

He continued his education at the University of Indiana, where he earned his masters and PH.D. degrees.

He stayed on at Western after graduation as an assistant in the athletics program. He became head of the department of health and physical education and head football coach in the late 1930s, and he was successful.

When World War II broke out, Gander signed on with the U.S. Air Force as physical training instructor. In 1942, I ran into him at Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, where he was assisting in physical conditioning the cadets who aspired to be pilots.

After the war, I visited with him and Barbara in California, where he was head of physical education and health department at San Jose State. Our family relations began at Western, where he and Barbara lived in the same apartment building with my wife Edith and me back in the 30s.

One of the best has left the living, but all who had the opportunity to work with him or be around him for any period of time were better off as a result of having had the experience. Editor's note – Ed Stansbury, 82 and a retired Air Force colonel living in Largo, Fla., played football, basketball and baseball at Western Kentucky University. He was a teammate and close friend of William Lester Terry's.

Additional information regarding William Terry:

"Back Visiting Campus," photo, *Western Alumnus*, Winter 1974-75, p. 29.

College Heights Herald

"Assistant Coach Terry," October 1929.

Clark, Ashlee. "Colonnade Given Formal Name," August 28, 2003.

"Grid Mentor Resigns Job," February 1, 1946.

"SIAA Tournament to Open Here Thursday," February 28, 1941, p. 10.

"Terry Made Head Coach," October 7, 1938.

Louisville Courier-Journal

"Gander Terry Named Coach at San Diego," January 11, 1946.

Ruby, Earl. "Gander Going Up," August 12, 1944. Terry working at Navy Pre-Flight School in California.

"Stimulate Interest Phys. Education - W.L. Terry of Western Makes Announcement of Plans," *Bowling Green Times*, May 10, 1937.

"Terry in Line for Head Grid Coach Job at Western," *Students Weekly*, March 31, 1938, p. 1.

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"Will 'Gander' Terry," photo *Students Weekly*, October 17, 1935, p. 4.
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