

TALLAHASSEE KIWANIS SPEECH

I. ARMY BOOT CAMP JOKE {HURLEY}

II. DR. WALKER ASKED ME TO SHARE WITH YOU TODAY A FEW MINUTES ABOUT THE HISTORY OF LEON H.S. FOOTBALL. HE GAVE ME A KIWANIS CLUB MEMBERSHIP ROSTER. I LOOKED THE LIST OVER AND IT IS A WHO'S WHO OF TALLAHASSEE. NOT ONLY OF TALLAHASSEE BUT ALSO A WHO'S WHO OF LEON HIGH SCHOOL. I DISCOVERED THAT 10 OF YOUR MEMBERS ARE IN THE LEON HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME: 4 MEMBERS ARE DECEASED--RAINEY CAWTHON, GEORGE TAFF, ROY RHODES, AND BOB STEVENS. 6 ARE LIVING: J.D. WILLIAMSON, HURLEY RUDD, LYNN WOLLSCHLAGER, JIMMY PARAMORE, MIKE CONLEY, AND MYSELF.

9 OF YOUR PAST PRESIDENTS WERE LEON GRADUATES: MODE STONE, WAYNE ASHMORE, TOM BROWN, J.D. WILLIAMSON, ROY RHODES, HURLEY RUDD, JUDGE CHARLES MCCLURE, AND RICK CARROLL.

I WOULD SAY THAT IS A TALLAHASSEE RECORD. LETS GIVE THEM A HAND IN APPRECIATION.

III. WHY WRITE A BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF LEON FOOTBALL?

FIRST, LEON IS THE WINNINGEST H.S. FOOTBALL TEAM IN THE HISTORY OF THE 20TH CENTURY IN THE GREAT STATE OF FLORIDA WITH A RECORD OF 530 WINS. NO OTHER H.S. IN THE STATE HAS WON OVER 500 GAMES IN THE 20TH CENTURY. MIAMI SENIOR AND LAKE CITY COLUMBIA CAME CLOSE, BUT THEY DID NOT DO IT.

IN 85 YEARS OF FOOTBALL LEON HAS USED 17 COACHES, 13 COACHES WITH A WINNING RECORD, ONLY 3 COACHES WITH A LOSING RECORD, 1 COACH BROKE EVEN, AND 1 COACH HOLDS THE STATE RECORD FOR MOST WINS WITH 313.

LEON HAS HAD 61 WINNING SEASONS (A STATE RECORD)

LEON HAS WON 55 CHAMPIONSHIPS (A STATE RECORD)

1 MYTHICAL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP (1937)

THE STATE PLAY-OFF SYSTEM STARTED IN 1963 AND SINCE THAT TIME LEON HAS WON 2 STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS (1969 & 1974)

3 STATE RUNNER-UP CHAMPIONSHIPS (1972, 1975, AND 1993).

8 REGION CHAMPIONSHIPS

16 DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIPS

8 UNDEFEATED & UNTIED REGULAR SEASONS (A STATE RECORD)

IN THE 1970'S LEON WAS FIRST WITH THE MOST WINS IN A DECADE WITH (108-20-1)

OVER 250 PLAYERS HAVE SIGNED MAJOR COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS (WITH 90% GRADUATION AND TODAY ARE CONTRIBUTING TO OUR SOCIETY.

LEON HOLDS 12 NATIONAL H.S. FOOTBALL RECORDS

LEON HOLDS 22 FLORIDA H.S. STATE RECORDS

12 H.S. ALL-AMERICANS (A STATE RECORD)

LEON HAS PRODUCED 5 FLORIDA PREP PLAYERS OF THE YEAR (A STATE RECORD)

14 PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS

STARTING WITH CHUCK EASON IN 1963 LEON HAS HAD 15 CONSECUTIVE QB'S TO SIGN MAJOR COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS (THAT MIGHT BE A NATIONAL RECORD).

NO OTHER H.S. IN THE GREAT STATE OF FLORIDA CAN MATCH THESE RECORDS.

MY GOAL WAS TO HAVE A TEAM PICTURE & INDIVIDUAL SENIOR PICTURE OF EVERY YEAR IF YOU PLAYED VARSITY FB OR WERE A VARSITY CHEERLEADER IN THE 20TH CENTURY YOU ARE IN THE BOOK, AND YOU ARE PART OF THE GREAT TRADITION AND HISTORY, AND NOBODY CAN EVER TAKE THAT AWAY FROM YOU.

I RESEARCHED THE MATERIAL FOR 4 YEARS AND I MUST TELL YOU THAT I HAD HELP FROM MANY PEOPLE (TOO MANY TO MENTION).

MY NUMBER ONE SOURCE WERE THE YEAR BOOKS FROM THE LEON LIBRARY. HOWEVER, I DISCOVERED THAT LEON DID NOT PUBLISH YEAR BOOKS FROM 1930 UNTIL 1944, BECAUSE OF THE DEPRESSION AND THE WAR. THIS IS THE PERIOD THAT MANY INDIVIDUALS SUPPLIED

ME WITH PICTURES, STORIES, AND VITAL INFORMATION.

I SPENT THOUSANDS OF HOURS AT THE LEROY COLLINS LIBRARY RESEARCHING THE MICRO-FILM OF THE TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT AND THE LEON HIGH LIFE.

I MUST TELL YOU THAT 4 OF THE INTERVIEWS I HAD WERE WITH 98 YEAR OLD SUPREME COURT JUSTICE RICHARD ERVIN, SR., WHO PLAYED ON THE 1922 FOOTBALL TEAM AND REMEMBERS PLAYING WITH CLIFFORD BLITCH, BURTON AND THEO WILLIAMS AND OTHERS.

AND 93 YEAR OLD ED SAULS, WHO IDENTIFIED ALL OF THE PLAYERS DURING THE 1920'S.

TO MY SURPRISE, I DISCOVERED THAT MOST OF THE TEAM PICTURES DURING THE EARLY YEARS HAD NO NAMES IDENTIFYING THE PLAYERS. ED IDENTIFIED EVERY PLAYER.

WHAT A TREMENDOUS MEMORY.

AND MARTHA BRADFORD ROBERTS WHO TOLD ME THE STORY ABOUT JOHNNIE JONES BEING ELECTED THE FIRST STUDENT SPONSOR TO MAKE THE 1500 MILE TRIP TO SALEM, MASS. IN 1926 ON A TRAIN. AND 88 YEAR OLD COACH JOHNNY WESTBERG, WHO COACHED WITH AMOS GODBY AND THEN AFTER WWII CAME BACK TO LEON AS HEAD COACH.

IN MY RESEARCH I COULD FIND NO OTHER BOOK WRITTEN ABOUT THE RECORDS OF A FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE 20TH CENTURY. EVEN VALDOSTA H.S. IN GEORGIA DOES NOT HAVE ONE. THESE ARE THE REASONS AND THE MOTIVATION FOR WRITING THE BOOK.

THE 85 YEARS WERE DIVIDED INTO 5 CHAPTERS CALLED THE EARLY YEARS 1916-1934.

THE GODBY GOLDEN ERA 1935-1943, THE MIDDLE YEARS 1944- 1962, THE COX REGIME 1963-1990, AND THE SAULS TENURE 1991-2000.

OTHER CHAPTERS INCLUDE LEON FOOTBALL RECORDS, THE SCORES OF EVERY GAME LEON HAS PLAYED, A CHAPTER ON FAMILY TRADITIONS. I USED THE FAMILIES THAT HAD AT LEAST 3 GENERATION THAT PLAYED FOOTBALL FOR LEON WHICH INCLUDED THE ALFORD FAMILY, THE RUDD FAMILY, THE WILLIAMSON FAMILY, THE RHODES FAMILY ALL OF THEM ARE IN YOU CLUB, AND 20 OTHER FAMILIES. ALL BROTHERS THAT PLAYED FOOTBALL FOR LEON ARE LISTED IN THE BOOK WITH THE FIVE CLEMONS BROTHERS BEING THE MOST (BILL-1932, GEORGE AND TOM-1938, JACK-1941, AND CLIFFORD-1944.

A CHAPTER ON LEON COACHES INCLUDING ALL ASSISTANT COACHES WITH 32 OF THEM BECOMING HEAD COACHES AND 14 OF THEM BECOMING ADMINISTRATORS.

I KID BILL MONTFORD ABOUT THIS ALL THE TIME, THAT CURRENTLY 5 OF THE 6 ATHLETIC DIRECTORS IN LEON COUNTY GOT THEIR START AS ASSISTANT FOOTBALL COACHES AT LEON HS

A CHAPTER ON LEON H.S. SUCCESSES WHICH INCLUDES THE TD CLUB, THE HALL OF FAME, THE ALL-TIME LEON TEAMS AND I EVEN LET MANNY JOANOS PICK AN ALL-TIME LEON COACHING STAFF.

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO READ SOME SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK AND THEN ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE.

SOME SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK GO BIG RED!, A HISTORY OF LEON FOOTBALL. BY COACH GENE COX.

EXCERPTS FROM THE EARLY YEARS (1916 - 1934)

THE FIRST FOOTBALL TEAM FROM LEON HIGH SCHOOL PLAYED AT LEAST ONE GAME IN THE SEASON OF 1916 UNDER HEAD COACH W.S. MCLIN, SR. WHO COACHED WITH OUT PAY

LEON HIGH SCHOOL WAS LOCATED ON THE SITE OF THE PRESENT LEROY COLLINS LIBRARY IN DOWNTOWN TALLAHASSEE UNTIL 1937, AND FOOTBALL GAMES WERE PLAYED WHEREVER A LEVEL, CLEARED FIELD COULD BE FOUND.

BEGINNING IN 1920, SOME HOME GAMES WERE PLAYED ON THE SOCCER FIELD AT FL. STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN. IN 1924 THE YEAR THAT TALLAHASSEE CELEBRATED THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING, CENTENNIAL FIELD WAS BUILT AND SERVED AS THE FIELD FOR LEON'S HOME GAMES.

LHS WAS ONE OF TWENTY-NINE CHARTER MEMBER SCHOOLS OF THE FLA. H.S. ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, FORERUNNER OF THE FHSAA, WHICH WAS FOUNDED ON APRIL 19, 1920.

THE FIRST LEON BAND WAS ORGANIZED IN 1925 BY FRANK A. FITCH AND WAS KNOWN AS THE CAPITAL CITY BAND.

MANY LEON STUDENTS IN THESE EARLY YEARS BECAME PROMINENT FLORIDIANS. LEROY COLLINS, THE ONLY LEON GRADUATE TO BE ELECTED AS FLORIDA GOVERNOR, TRIED FOOTBALL BUT CHANGED OVER TO THE CAPITAL CITY BAND. RICHARD ERVIN, SR. , WHO SERVED AS A FLORIDA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, PLAYED ON THE 1922 TEAM. THREE MEMBERS OF THE PROCTOR FAMILY, LATER TO BECOME PROMINENT TALLAHASSEE BUSINESSMEN, WERE RALPH WHO PLAYED IN 1923, EARL NICKNAMED STOMPY BECAUSE OH HIS OVERSIZED LEGS WHICH SOMEWHAT RESEMBLED PILE DRIVERS, WHO PLAYED IN 1931, AND JULIAN, WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE 1932 TEAM. EACH WAS ELECTED AS CAPTAIN OF HIS RESPECTIVE TEAM. TO BE ELECTED THE FOOTBALL CAPTAIN WAS CONSIDERED A HIGH HONOR IN THOSE DAYS

BEN CLEMONS WAS THE FIRST LEON PLAYER TO RETURN TO LEON AS HEAD FOOTBALL COACH. JOE HALL WAS HEAD COACH AT LEON IN 1932 AND 1934 AND PRINCIPAL IN BETWEEN. HE BECAME SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN DADE COUNTY

EXCERPTS FROM THE GODBY GOLDEN ERA (1935 - 1943)

THE YEAR 1935 STANDS AS A MILESTONE IN LEON'S FOOTBALL HISTORY. AMOS GODBY WAS HIRED AS FOOTBALL COACH BY PRINCIPAL MODE STONE, LEON JOINED THE NEC, AND LEON BEGAN TO PLAY NIGHT FOOTBALL UNDER THE LIGHTS AT CENTENNIAL FIELD

AMOS GODBY'S ACHIEVEMENTS AS HEAD COACH AND THE OUT STANDING RECORDS COMPILED BY HIS NINE TEAMS FORM THE "GOLDEN ERA" OF LEON'S FOOTBALL HISTORY..GODBY'S COACHED TEAMS NEVER PLAYED A LOSING SEASON. FROM 1935 TO 1943, GODBY'S 9 YEARS AS HEAD COACH, LEON WON 70 GAMES, LOST 17 AND TIED 7 FOR AN 80% WINNING RECORD.

THE 1940 LEON TEAM WAS NOT ONLY THE FIRST UNDEFEATED TEAM, BUT ALL SENIORS ON THE FIRST TEAM WERE OFFERED FOOTBALL SCHOLARSHIPS TO ROLLINS COLLEGE. SIX PLAYERS ACCEPTED THE SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS AND IRONICALLY, THE FOLLOWING YEAR LEON PLAYED THE ROLLINS FRESHMEN TEAM AT CENTENNIAL FIELD. BLOCK SMITH WAS ONE OF THE ROLLINS PLAYERS TO PLAY IN THAT GAME. BLOCK CALLED ME ABOUT 2 WEEKS BEFORE HIS DEATH TO ORDER A BOOK FOR ONE OF HIS LEON TEAMMATES, JAMES WILLIAMS, WHO LIVES IN CALIFORNIA, SO I ASKED HIM THE MAGIC QUESTION, WHO WON THE ROLLINS FRESHMEN VS. LEON VARSITY GAME IN 1941 PLAYED AT CENTENNIAL FIELD? ROLLINS OF COURSE.

ROMULUS THOMPSON BECAME THE FIRST BAND DIRECTOR ON THE FACULTY OF LEON HIGH SCHOOL IN 1940, AND HE SOON HAD THE MARCHING RED COATS PERFORMING AT HALF TIME.

THE FIRST LEON HOMECOMING WAS IN 1941.

THE "L" CLUB, AN ORGANIZATION FOR LEON'S VARSITY LETTERMEN WAS FORMED IN DEC. OF 1940 FOLLOWING LEON'S UNDEFEATED FOOTBALL SEASON.

COACH GODBY ESTABLISHED A TRADITION OF HAVING PRAYER BEFORE EVERY GAME, AND HIS 1937 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM ACQUIRED THE NICKNAME "PRAYING LIONS".

THESE LEON LIONS, WHO WORE LEATHER HELMETS WITH NO FACE MASKS AND WERE NOT ALLOWED TO DRINK WATER ON THE PRACTICE FIELD, WERE A SUPERSTITIOUS GROUP. NONE OF THE PLAYERS WOULD GET A HAIRCUT ON GAME DAY, AND IF A BLACK CAT SHOULD CROSS THE PATH OF THE TEAM SCHOOL BUS ON THE WAY TO A GAME, THE DRIVER WOULD IMMEDIATELY BACK UP AND GO AROUND THE BLOCK . ALSO THE PLAYERS SAT IN THE SAME SEATS ON THE BUS AND WOULD ALWAYS RUN THROUGH THE GOAL POSTS WHEN ENTERING THE FIELD. COACH GODBY MUST HAVE FOSTERED THESE SUPERSTITIONS, BECAUSE HE WORE A CERTAIN YELLOW SWEATER TO EACH GAME FOR GOOD LUCK.

MANY LEON PLAYERS LEFT SCHOOL EARLY TO HELP WIN THE WAR, AND OTHERS ENLISTED FOLLOWING GRADUATION. IN FACT ALL SENIOR FOOTBALL PLAYERS OF THE 1941 TEAM JOINED SOME BRANCH OF THE ARMED FORCES AND FOUGHT IN WWII. SOME PLAYERS LOST THEIR LIVES AND OTHERS ---PLAYERS LIKE HARRY MITCHELL, GEORGE TAFF, BILLY GREEN, BILL SMITH AND MANY MORE RETURNED HOME AS WAR HEROES

MANY LEON GRADUATES FROM THE GODBY ERA BECAME SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR PROFESSIONS. MALLORY HORNE IS THE ONLY PERSON TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. JOHN AND HURLEY RUDD ARE THE ONLY 2 BROTHERS TO SERVE AS MAYOR OF TALLAHASSEE. AMONG SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN WERE E.C. ALLEN AND BLOCK SMITH. THERE WERE DOCTORS ,LAWYERS, TEACHERS, POLICEMEN, FIREMEN, MINISTERS, POLITICIANS, AND PLAYERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE WHO GAVE CREDIT TO

THEIR SUCCESS IN LIFE TO THE LESSONS THEY LEARNED BY PARTICIPATING IN H.S. FOOTBALL.
EXCERPTS FROM THE MIDDLE YEARS (1944 - 1962)

THROUGH OUT THE WAR YEARS, MANY OF LEON'S SENIORS ENLISTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER GRADUATION TO HELP IN THE WAR EFFORT. FOLLOWING THE WAR, THESE VETERANS WERE ABLE TO RETURN HOME AND GO TO COLLEGE ON THE G.I BILL OF RIGHTS, AND MANY DID SO. IN 1947, FSU BEGAN A FOOTBALL PROGRAM, OFFERING PART TIME FOOTBALL SCHOLARSHIPS. LHS CONTRIBUTED A BIG PART TO FSU'S BEGINNING PROGRAM BY HAVING THE FOLLOWING TEN PLAYERS ON THAT FIRST TEAM. MAYBE YOU KNOW SOME OF THEM?

CHRIS KALFAS, LEONARD MELTON, WES CARTER, BILL KRATZERT, AL THORPE, CLICE YANCEY, JACK TULLY, RONNIE MELTON, LEONARD GILBERG, AND EARL PAYNE. AND EVEN THOUGH HE WENT TO FLA. HIGH, I TOLD DR. J.P. LOVE I WOULD ADD HIS NAME TO THE LIST.

ALSO, I DID NOT KNOW UNTIL I DID THE RESEARCH THAT TULLY GYM WAS NAMED FOR BOBBY TULLY, A 1946 LEON STAR. ED WILLIAMSON, A LEON STAR WHEN HE PLAYED HIGH SCHOOL FB IN THE EARLY YEARS, WAS FSU'S FIRST COACH.

SYDE P. DEEB, ONE OF LEON'S MOST FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS, BEGAN SENDING THE LEON VARSITY AND COACHES TO THE GATOR BOWL IN 1947, AND HE CONTINUED THIS PRACTICE FOR 25 YEARS.

LEON'S HOME GAMES, WHICH WERE PLAYED AT CENTENNIAL FIELD OR CAMPBELL STADIUM WERE DRESS UP AFFAIRS. DURING THE MIDDLE YEARS COACHES COACHED IN TIES AND SUITS. LADIES CAME TO THE GAMES IN THEIR BEST OUTFITS, COMPLETE WITH STOCKINGS AND HEELS AND SPORTING NEW HAIRDOS AND MUMS. THE MEN WORE COATS AND TIES. OFF THE FIELD, PLAYERS WORE LETTER SWEATERS WITH STRIPES AROUND THE UPPER ARM TO INDICATE THE NUMBER OF YEARS THE PLAYER HAD LETTERED. MINIATURE GOLD FOOTBALLS THAT WERE PRESENTED AS AWARDS TO PLAYERS, USUALLY WERE GIVEN TO GIRL FRIENDS TO WEAR ON CHAINS AROUND THEIR NECKS.

ONE LEON CHEERLEADER WHO GRADUATED FROM LEON BECAME A MOVIE ACTRESS AND ACADEMY AWARD WINNER WAS FAYE DUNAWAY. MANY OTHER CHEERLEADERS BECAME COLLEGE CHEERLEADERS, MAY QUEENS, AND COLLEGE HOMECOMING QUEENS.

AS A CONTESTANT IN A FLAG-DESIGNING CONTEST SPONSORED BY THE STUDENT COUNCIL IN 1954 , CYNTHIA LAWRENCE DESIGNED THE WINNING FLAG. AFTER SHE WON THE CONTEST THE KEY CLUB, WHO YOU SPONSOR, BOUGHT HER FLAG AND PRESENTED IT TO THE SCHOOL.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON SMALL COMMUNITIES DURING THE MIDDLE YEARS. THIS IS INDICATED BY THE TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT'S SPORTS EDITOR FRED PETTIJOHN WHO WROTE IN AN ARTICLE FOLLOWING A GAME IN WHICH LAKE CITY HAD BEATEN LEON FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 15 YEARS AND I QUOTE "THERE IS A PALL OF GLOOM OVER THE CITY THAT HAS NOT BEEN EQUALED SINCE THE OLD LEON HOTEL BURNED DOWN UNDER A BILLOWING SCREEN OF SMOKE ON OCTOBER 14, 1925" I KNOW THIS IS TRUE BECAUSE I SCORED THE ONLY TD OF THE GAME FOR LAKE CITY.

LEON'S 1954 TEAM WAS FORCED TO PLAY 4 GAMES IN 10 DAYS TO CLOSE OUT A SCHEDULE THAT HAD 5 CANCELLATIONS BECAUSE OF A POLIO-LIKE SICKNESS THAT SPREAD THROUGH TALLAHASSEE.

WALTER REVELL, A 1953 LEON GRADUATE, INITIATED THE SELECTION OF AN ALL-BIG BEND TEAM IN 1955. ALSO, AN OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR WERE CHOSEN.

A NOTICEABLE NUMBER OF LEON FOOTBALL PLAYERS DURING THE MIDDLE YEARS BECAME SUCCESSFUL LAWYERS. AMONG THOSE WERE DEENO KITCHEN, JOHNNY OVERCHUCK, BRUCE CULPEPPER, MURRAY WADSWORTH, ELLIOT MESSER, BOB MCCLURE, DUBY AUSLEY, AND BUDDY MCLIN. THOSE WHO ATTAINED THE LEVEL OF JUDGE ARE JAY HALL, JIMMY JOANOS, TED STEINMEYER, CHARLES MCCLURE, JOHNNY CRUSOE, AND DICK ERVIN, III.

EXCERPTS FROM THE COX REGIME (1963 - 1990)

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITIES WERE A STRONG COMPONENT OF THE TOTAL FOOTBALL PROGRAM AT LEON. PICTURES OF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS AND PLAQUES DESIGNATING AWARDS WERE HUNG SO THAT ATHLETES COULD SEE THEM DAILY. INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS FROM THE COMMUNITY WERE INVITED ON A REGULAR BASIS TO TALK TO THE PLAYERS AND A HOLD ON TO THE ROPE CEREMONY REMINDED TEAM MEMBERS TO PULL TOGETHER.

ONE OF OUR BEST INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS WAS DEENO KITCHEN. I DON'T THINK WE LOST A GAME WHEN HE SPOKE TO THE TEAM.

DAILEY PRAYER WAS IMPORTANT TO THE TEAM AND TRADITIONS SUCH AS BURYING A DIME AT THE FIFTY YARD LINE BEFORE EACH GAME REMINDED PLAYERS TO GIVE 110 PERCENT EFFORT.

DURING THE COX REGIME, LEON BECAME THE WINNINGEST TEAM IN THE HISTORY OF FLORIDA PREP FOOTBALL. COACH COX, HIS STAFF AND HIS LEON LIONS COMPILED A RECORD 238 WINS, 67 LOSSES, AND 3 TIES, AN AVERAGE OF JUST UNDER NINE WINS A YEAR FOR TWENTY EIGHT YEARS. THE HONORS INCLUDE WINNING TWO STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS, TWO RUNNERS-UP TITLES, SEVEN REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS, EIGHT CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS, FOURTEEN DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIPS, AND FIVE BOWL TITLES. DURING THE COX REGIME LEON HIGH SCHOOL SET AN UNPRECEDENTED RECORD FOR NUMBER OF WINS IN AN ELEVEN YEAR PERIOD. FOR THE YEARS 1969 THROUGH 1979 LEON'S RECORD WAS 108 WINS, TWENTY LOSSES, AND ONE TIE, WHICH WAS AN EIGHTY FOUR PERCENT WINNING PERCENTAGE.

EXCERPTS FROM THE SAULS TENURE (1991 -2001)

TRADITION

FROM ALL THE THINGS THAT COULD BE SAID ABOUT THE LEON LIONS FOOTBALL TEAM, YOU COULD NEVER RUN OUT OF THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THE LIONS' TRADITION.

JOEY ROSE WROTE IN THE LEON HIGH LIFE, THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER, "ONE OF THE MOST MOVING TRADITIONS THAT AROSE FROM LOCAL FB COACH GENE COX'S CAREER WAS THE ROPE. TWELVE YEARS AGO COX AND ASSISTANT COACH JIM SAULS WATCHED A FOOTBALL HIGHLIGHT FILM CALLED "DON'T LET GO OF THE ROPE." THEY DECIDED TO BEGIN EACH SEASON BY CUTTING A ROPE INTO ONE-FOOT LINKS FOR EACH PLAYER. THE PLAYERS ARE TOLD TO PUT THEIR PIECE OF THE ROPE IN THEIR LOCKER, UNDER THEIR PILLOW, ANYWHERE IT WILL REMIND THEM TO KEEP PULLING TOGETHER FOR THE TEAM. ALSO, THE ROPE REMINDS THEM THAT WHEN THEY NEED SOME HELP TO CALL ON THEIR FAITH. OVER THE YEARS THE ROPE HAS GONE BEYOND FIGHTS ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD AND HANGS OVER THE DOORWAY FOR PLAYERS TO HIT OR SQUEEZE ON THEIR WAY OUT TO PLAY FOR LEON HIGH SCHOOL."

AS THE COUNTY'S OLDEST HIGH SCHOOL, LEON HAS HAD A "LION'S SHARE" OF SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS. FOR FOOTBALL, THE FIRST VICTORY CAME IN 1917 WITH A WIN OVER BAINBRIDGE, GA., AND THE LIONS HAVE BEEN A TEAM TO FEAR EVER SINCE. WITH A WIN OVER TAYLOR COUNTY, THE 1993 SEASON ENDED WITH A SWEET VICTORY. THOUGH IT MAY SEEM LIKE JUST ANOTHER WIN FOR LEON, IT WAS ACTUALLY A MILESTONE. THE LAST

VICTORY OF THE SEASON MADE LEON THE FIRST FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL TO RECORD
500 WINS.

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