

BUTLER FROM BONA'S:

THE ATHLETE AND THE MAN

by GERARD FEDELL '68

It was a windy, overcast morning when I crossed the St. Bonaventure campus to meet Bill Butler in the University Center. In his brilliant final season at Bona's, William Butler rose to become one of America's most successful collegiate basketball players. He led his team through an unbeaten season, a feat which has been accomplished only once before by a Bona University hoop squad. He received the "Most Valuable Player" award and a *Look* magazine "All-American" citation.

I had heard all about Bill Butler's athletic achievements, and had seen examples of his prowess in Bonaventure basketball games. I, therefore, knew that he was an excellent athlete, but I also knew that he was a great all-around person. His coach, Larry Weise, refers to him as not only the best team captain he ever had but also a great leader. I remember, too, what the vice-president of St. Bonaventure, Father Gordon Murphy, said in tribute to Bill Butler: "In my experience at the University, as both a student and a teacher, it seems that no other man has so captured the admiration of the campus and the essence of what it means to be a Bonaventure man as much as Bill Butler has."

As I hurried into the cafeteria, I realized that I now would have the opportunity to discover for myself why the name Bill Butler has become a legend to so many people in the Bonaventure family; what the real Bill Butler is really like. The room was crowded but I quickly spotted Butler and made my way to the table where he sat with three fellow students. He smiled easily as he shook my hand and put me at ease. He's the type of person that at your first meeting you get the unusual and pleasant feeling that you've somehow met him before, that there's a common bond between you.

I suddenly knew why this man has earned the respect of students, sports personalities and fans alike; why he was named the year's "Ideal Bonaventure Student" and why for four years he was elected to serve as his class treasurer. The tall, well-built senior economics major from Washington, D. C., has an outgoing personality and a striking sincerity in his approach to others. When I asked if he had any special formula for becoming popular with his acquaintances, he grinned and said honestly, "No, I just try to present myself as I am, and accept other people as they are." A simple formula but one carried out in a masterful way by Mr. Butler.

"Butts," as he is affectionately called by his classmates, was born ~~in~~ in Washington, D. C. and is the oldest of six children. He was brought up in the middle-class Brookland section of North East Washington.

Was it true that the senior captain had never touched a basketball until the summer before his high school freshman year? I had to pose the inevitable question, "Where did it all begin?" Bill confessed that as a youngster football and baseball were his primary interests. When he entered public junior high school, however, the young Butler went out for the basketball team and became so enthused with the sport that he practiced it during much of his spare time.

All this practicing paid off when Billy's fantastic ability on the court was brought to the attention of Mr. Paul Furlong, head basketball coach at Mackin Academy in Washington. Mr. Furlong eventually arranged for Bill to attend the private Catholic school on a scholarship. While at Mackin, he played four successful

You should not have left him as you did, with false tears and
Mocking laughter in the harsh glare of the noon day sun.

No.

Rather should you have stolen away, swiftly and without
Reproach into the black consoling night.

Perhaps, now you could find it in your heart, if you still
Have a heart, to tell him what to do;

For he no longer knows how to live.

Before, his work, his life had been for you; so now

That you are not, his work and life have ceased to be.

And he is as The Dead, for whom time and space have no relevance.

— Obliterate from memory all that came before,
You advise.

— With forgetfulness comes ignorance and
With ignorance, bliss . . .

— And with ignorance comes bondage.

— That is what he should do, forget.

— No, I say, he must remember the past and so
Remain wise and free. If wisdom brings suffering;
It brings liberty also.

It's too bad, really, that the corrupt
In their golden chains of servitude are
Always happy; while
The innocent who, ragged, walk the earth
As free men,
Never are.

EILEEN BORDONARO '69

years of varsity basketball; he also distinguished himself as a class leader and in his work on the school newspaper.

Upon high school graduation, Bill had various colleges interested in his athletic ability — New York University, Michigan State, Seattle, Maryland University, San Francisco, etc. A Bona-venture alumnus, though, William Duffy, arranged an interview with the Bona basketball coach, Larry Weise, and young Billy Butler. His parents had hoped that he would continue his Catholic schooling, so they were pleased when Bill decided to accept the University's offer of an athletic scholarship.

"When I first saw the Olean Armory (former site of Bona home basketball games before construction of the University Fieldhouse), I was ready to pack up and leave for home."

Butler squashed those first feelings of disappointment. He soon found that in games at the Armory, spectators would crowd into all the available space in the relatively small building. "Yet, although the home court was not ideal, you could sense a fantastic amount of Bona spirit expressed by local fans at those armory games."

The Bona spirit, Bill found out, is contagious and the whole Olean and even Buffalo area is really infected with it. Three seasons later the Bonnies, led by team captain Bill Butler and coach Larry Weise, stormed through an unbelievable 23-0 season. Home games during the season were played in the new University Fieldhouse, which had opened late in 1966. Record crowds, often numbering more than 5000, packed the huge gymnasium to watch the successful Brown Indians pile up win after win.

Reflecting on the rigors of the past basketball season, Bill Butler noted, "I was mentally prepared for the stress when I started, realizing that you can expect only so much from yourself physically." In order to get himself and the others in shape for what promised to be a rigorous season, Butler promoted, last October, voluntary participation in a daily program of calisthenics and cross country running. Because of lack of depth on its bench, Bona's often had to rely almost solely on the starting "Ironmen Five", playing them until they would run into foul trouble. The



stamina that Butler sought to develop in the fall undoubtedly paid off in many close Bonaventure games.

Bill spoke freely and enthusiastically about his teammates and coach. "By the end of the season we were definitely a lot closer than we ever had been before, but from the beginning there were good team personal relationships both on and off the court . . . Coach Weise is a great individual and an inspiration as a man; he's like a father and counselor to his ballplayers, one who could bring out only the best in them. Mr. Weise knows the game very well, and expresses his coaching concepts clearly. He has the rounded basketball knowledge necessary to outthink the opponent."

"Butts" went on to talk about Bona's performance in the NCAA. "Everybody sets a goal for himself and my goal in collegiate basketball was to play in a big tournament. Compiling our 22-0 record, and then beating Boston College in the opening round of NCAA action were of special satisfaction.

Of course, the bubble had to burst somewhere and the Eastern regional semi-final game with North Carolina saw the end of the Bonnie's charmed season. The Associated Press' poll had ranked Bonaventure as the number three basketball team in the nation, but the Brown Indians failed to prove their estimated worth when they lost to the North Carolina basketball power by the score of 91 to 72. "We had a bad night with our shooting percentage down and North Carolina a lot taller than we were. They had a full complement of reserves — twelve men who could easily start. The physical stress on our starting five was definitely a factor in the game. Also, we were offense-minded, and didn't pay enough attention to our defensive game. To sum it up, we lost because we played their game and not our own."

As Bona's captain, Bill Butler was the object of much adulation from thousands of fans and sports writers. Yet, "Butts" seems to have remained free from any affectations as a result of his popularity, exhibiting a manful humility about himself and his ability. Exactly how does one prevent himself from being dazzled by the glare of publicity?

"You have to take things in stride," Bill Butler says with characteristic simplicity. "You're out to do your best in anything. You've worked hard, so you just accept the publicity without letting it really affect you that much."

After trying to analyze something of William Butler the athlete, I was interested in his thoughts and opinions on the strife and problems affecting American youth and the world today. As I continued to question the poised athlete, I remembered that today had been declared "Black Tuesday," the day of the funeral of the assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The shock of the killing and all its implications were still fresh in my mind, as I was sure they were in Bill Butler's. I was slightly hesitant, but I asked Bill what he personally felt about the death of the Negro leader.

"They killed a good man who represented the Negro cause," he answered quietly. "From that standpoint, I feel very bitter. Martin Luther King upgraded society over the past ten years. Because of him, whites began to view Negroes with a totally different outlook. I agreed basically with Martin Luther King, but there were times when the situations called for more than what Dr. King advocated. There are times when you must assume an aggressive role to help solve a problem. No one wants to see violence, but I don't think what the Negro community is seeking can be achieved through complete non-violence."

Although Butler seems to favor selective aggressive action on behalf of civil rights ("non-violence is not the only way . . ."), he also says, "A movement such as Black Power really isn't the answer; violent radicals can't continue the way they're going. If you want to look at our racial problems from a human aspect, you can see that a lack of education is at the root of the difficulties. Economic solutions, such as better distribution of resources to meet demands, can help the situation, but even with improved economic situations you'll never crush out people's prejudices.

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His trade prospered and all people flocked to the market, everyone, that is, but Contraband!

During the dark period of the Middle Ages (before electricity), study was kept alive by the monks. Most famous of these monks was Nefarious, who dedicated his very life to Peace, Justice and the Appian Way. Nefarious oft took his sword, Mexcalibur, and slew many a dragon. However, when his stint of military service was over, he retired to his castle to work and study. After years of dedicated research (and romping around the countryside), he published his famed epic, *How to Study for Fun and Profit*.

From these humble beginnings, study eventually made its way into the United States. (It was deported from Siberia — they had no time for it there!) It has gone on to become the national sport of this peace-loving country of high ideals and sound principles. In a little nutshell, every full-blooded American talks about studying . . .

"Hey, wanna go to a movie?"

"Nope, gotta study awhile."

"Swell, pick you up in five minutes."

"Right."

. . . but nobody does it!

CHRISTOPHER McGONNELL '69

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In the last months of his college career, Bill Butler agreed to go out on a regular schedule of speaking engagements to area high schools. The successful athlete seems to have a close and warm interest in his involvement with teenagers. As an outstanding sports figure, he took seriously the responsibility of providing good example to all the younger people who looked up to him. He advises students to get as well-rounded an education as possible. "In college it's completely up to you as an individual. College is what you make it. I think the majority of students leave college after four years not so much with a lot of facts in their head, but with an education about people and life."

Upon graduation from St. Bonaventure University, Bill loses his 2-S student deferment with his Selective Service Board, and will be re-classified 1-A. To fulfill his military obligation Butler hopes to enlist in the reserves. But in the light of a possible proximity to military service, it was interesting listening to Butler's comments on campus draft card burners.

Bill says, "To each his own, but don't try to force your philosophy on another. I can't really say who's right or who's wrong over the draft question. I think, however, all people should be able to freely express their opinions on the matter. But also, everyone should be willing to fight for his country if necessary. I personally would never burn my draft card or march in an anti-draft demonstration," Butler continues. "I would consider participating in a peace march, however."

Butler's own economics studies have indeed prepared him for a career in business, if he wishes one, but, at the moment, it's safe to assume, Butler will enter the world of professional basketball after graduation. The New Jersey Americans of the American Basketball Association named Butler as a draft choice as did the Boston Celtics of the National Basketball Association.

I heard earlier such comments as "accept people for what they are," take publicity in stride," and "college is what you make it." Although these at first sound like merely common sense phrases, they take on a new meaning when you see them evident and practiced in a person like Bill Butler. Perhaps one of the best quotes Bill gave me when I interviewed him on Black Tuesday, 1968, was an explanation of how he had reached success in athletics and studies. "I had to set goals and objectives," Bill says, "and I had to prepare myself objectively for what I was apt to run into. To succeed I think you must go out with a clear mind and expect to achieve with hard work . . . TO PREPARE FOR THE WORST BUT EXPECT THE BEST."

When I left the St. Bonaventure University Fieldhouse after interviewing Billy Butler, I felt I had, scribbled in my notebook, the answer to the question I had wondered about earlier, "Besides being an athlete, what makes Billy Butler so great?"

There are many stories as to how study originated. I, for one, believe in the story of Lacedemon, of the ancient country of Melsepotamia, who was one of the great thinkers of that time. Lace, as his good buddies called him, was sitting under an apple tree when an apple fell on his head. Greatly excited, he studied the apple, thinking that he had discovered gravity. (A fellow countryman, Adrom-edon, had recently discovered "thinking". He had been in the middle of the road, faced with the problem of whether or not to jump from the path of a careening chariot. Ten seconds later, he was the world's first traffic fatality.)

Back to Lace who had just been struck in the head. The thought suddenly occurred to him, "What am I doing with this apple when I should be eating it?" Without further hesitation, Lace ate the apple. (He discovered how to study two weeks later, but I thought it would be interesting to show how he would have discovered gravity if he hadn't been such a glutton.)

One thousand years later, we find study in Egypt, land of the ancient Pharoahs (an extinct animal.) The first Pharoah to use study was Tutankmelum, the mighty Prince of the Land, Keeper of the See, and a Son of Lebanon (he knew a good deal when he saw one.) Tut would often take study with him in his chariot, an 11 B.C. Phaeton, with bucket seats and a padded frame. He would use study to pass the time away between wars or pyramid christenings, but

ADROMEDON

his lack of concentration bore no result — he did total a few chariots!

Time passes and study makes progress too. We now find study almost anywhere in Athens, city of profound teachers and eager learners. A leader in study was the famous Melsticles. It was he who initially coined the phrase, "It's Greek to me," upon reading Sparta's warning, "Thirty Days to Perfect Conquest." He also originated the last minute study when he memorized the tracksheet for the Marathon Downs before placing his last bets. This was just minutes previous to drinking the Old Hemlock Lager. (Old Hemlock was later considered to be a contributing factor in the decline of the Golden Age.)

We now move on to sunny Italy (no relation to little Sicily.) We find in the metropolis of Roam a great advocator of study, Salad Caesar. It was he who first spoke those immortal words, "Study is a waste of time!" (Time, who was a chief scribe, was verily pleased.) Caesar, though, was misunderstood and Time eventually caught up with him on the steps of the Senate.

When the barbarians attacked the fallen empire, they were thrilled to learn how to study from the Roamins. One of these was Attila the Crumb. Unlike the Roamins, he used study for personal profit. (The crumb, he wanted to have his cake and eat it too.) Attila studied the stock market and made a fortune selling Contraband weapons, toiletries and household goods.