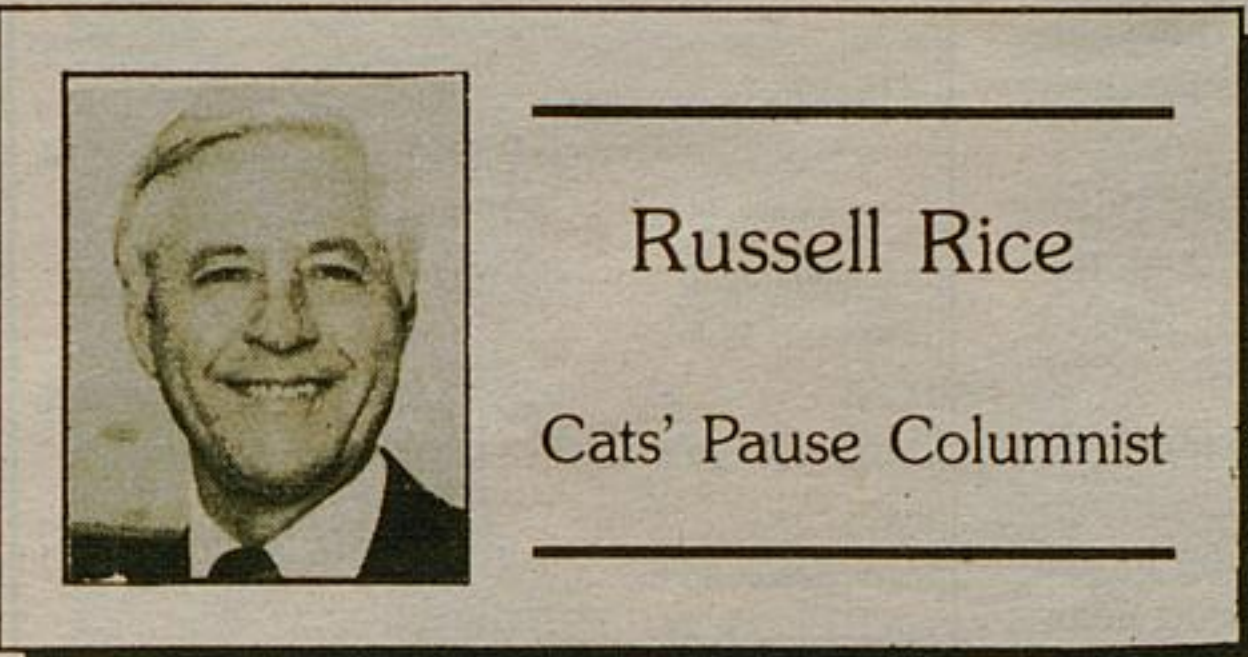


Tying up some loose ends from the ol' mail bag

Questions about Skippy Whitaker, B.L. Pribble

The following letter is from Walt Whittaker, who was a 6-foot-5 substitute forward-center on the 1949-50 and 1950-51 Wildcat squads who now is vice president, Deposit Services Division, Wilmington Trust Co. in



Russell Rice
Cats' Pause Columnist

Delaware.

February 17, 1987

Dear Mr. Rice:

Received your letter dated January 31, 1989 referring to Harry Lancaster's book (*Adolph Rupp as I Knew Him*). Host Communications (Mr. Richard Ford, Director of Publishing) did write me but the book has not been reprinted since 1984 and they no longer have any remaining copies. That was too bad. Harry had an interesting life; of course, I just knew him through basketball.

Yes, I did know Cliff Hagan well on the basketball court. I was a sophomore in 1950 and I believe Cliff was a mid-year freshman then; anyway, Rupp always had the varsity and freshmen scrimmage every day and I got to know Cliff very well under those circumstances. No question he was something special—had a real good hook shot back then that I couldn't stop even though I was taller than he. I also remember him as a real nice guy, quiet and on the shy side.

I had written to Cliff a couple of times in the last three years. He was the one that directed me to get a yearly subscription to *The Cats' Pause* newspaper.

When I came to the University of Kentucky (1948) from Rockville Center, New York, there was another Whittaker—Skippy Whitaker (spelled with one "t"). His first name was Lucien. Skippy was a guard while I played center and forward. Neither of us were starters at that time and I left Kentucky in 1951 and transferred to Columbia University in New York City where I received a BA degree. I often wonder what happened to Skippy and what he is doing today.

Now I see that C.M. Newton will be Athletic Director. C.M. was also part of our team during the same years that I played. We still communicate now and then. He will be good for the University of Kentucky, especially now.

Thanks for the assistance in trying to find a copy of Harry's book. I'll keep bugging the book stores in case one pops up.

Enclosed is a (photo) copy of the 1949-50 team.

Sincerely

Walter H. Whittaker,
Vice President

February 21, 1989

Dear Walt:

After graduating from UK, Skippy Whitaker served a hitch in the Marine Corps and then entered Harvard Graduate School of Business. He worked in the Trust Department of the National Shawmutt Bank of Boston before returning to Kentucky in 1957 to enter the investment business with his uncle, Holman Wilson, of Louisville. I now have him with Frontrange Consulting, Inc., 1909 Broadway, Boulder, Colo. 80302. He is mar-

ried to the former Betty Ortman of Philadelphia.

I enjoyed the copy of the old Ashland Oil photo-print of the 1950-51 Wildcats, which contained individual autographs. A complete set of those old prints probably would be worth a bit on the current market. Wonder what happened to the original autographed glossy prints? In light of the card-collecting craze of today, it's too bad Ashland Oil discontinued the practice.

Best Wishes,

Russell Rice

November 5, 1988

Dear Sports Information Director:

My grandfather, Birkett Lee Pribble, was on the last team from Kentucky to defeat Alabama in football. I was told he also was an All-American from Kentucky. Would you please confirm for me and send me any information you might have about his football career at Kentucky?

Sincerely,

Steve Larkin,
P.O. Box 471,
Washington, D.C.

February 1, 1989

Dear Mr. Larkin:

Your grandfather, Birkett Lee Pribble, earned letters in football at the University of Kentucky in 1919, '20, '21 and '22. He was assistant varsity coach of the Wildcats, working with the line, from 1923 until 1927, when he became assistant freshman coach. He took over the frosh team in 1928 and remained in that position through the 1936 season. Assisting him in 1930 was the university's new head basketball coach, Adolph Rupp.

Having lost track of Mr. Pribble after that time, I would appreciate any data that you might have on him. Was Holton Pribble, who lettered in football for UK in 1932, '34, any relation?

Sincerely

Russell Rice

February 5, 1989

Dear Mr. Rice:

Thank you for your informative letter about my grandfather, Birkett Lee Pribble. Mr. Pribble's brother was Holton Pribble who, as you so stated, lettered for UK in football in 1932, '34. Birkett Lee Pribble died 12-24-87, and is buried in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Mr. B.L. Pribble went on from coaching in Kentucky to selling life insurance with Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Co. He was transferred in the late '30s to Sioux Falls and spent the rest of his working life there.

Can you tell me if it is true that Birkett Lee Pribble was an All-American in football or baseball? I was told that he also played baseball for the university, too. Your help answering these two questions would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Steve Larkin

February 14, 1989

Dear Mr. Larkin:

Please accept my apologies for not answering the questions that were posed in your letter of 11-5-88. The University of Kentucky's first football All-American was

Clyde Johnson, a tackle from Ashland, Ky., in 1945. I find no mention of your grandfather's name in our lists of baseball lettermen of his era.

Yes, Birkett Lee Pribble was a member of the 1922 Wildcat football team that beat Alabama, 6-0, in Lexington, which remains as UK's only win over the Tide in 31 outings. Otherwise, the best the Wildcats could do was a 7-7 tie at Birmingham 50 years ago.

Another highlight of Mr. Pribble's career at UK came in 1921, when the Wildcats lost by only seven points to Vanderbilt (21-14). Here's how I reported the event in my book, *THE WILDCATS, A Story of Kentucky Football*:

"It was considered a moral victory when they scored on Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt had scored twice in the first half. Then Pribble went over for a touchdown after a long drive by State. Next, (Bob) Lavin scored on a pass from (Bruce) Fuller. However, the Commodores also scored again, to take a 21-14 halftime lead—and that was the final score."

In 11 previous meetings in a series that began in 1896, the Commodores had outscored the Wildcats, 267-0. The biggest margin was 50-0 in 1897. The Wildcats managed a scoreless tie in 1919. Their first victory over Vandy was a 21-13 win at Nashville in 1939, the 18th game in the series.

I assume Coach Rupp and your grandfather were very close in their years together at UK, as evidenced by the following excerpts from my book, *Kentucky Basketball's Big Blue Machine*:

"I remember Birkett Pribble and I drove up to Corinth to see Dave Lawrence. He was working on putting a ditch in the road under a railroad track. He was down in the mud digging around, and we talked to him and asked him to come to UK. There were some fences on the campus that needed painting, and that sounded better to him than fooling around with that dynamite, which gave him headaches, and digging in the mud."

"I remember the first aid we gave... We had a filling station at Euclid and Upper. Pribble was in charge. He was a part-time coach and a full-time insurance man. His job was to find places where these boys could work. We decided to go into the filling station business, providing employment for some of the boys, but that didn't work because there were times when Pribble would come by in the evening to close the station and there was very little cash in the drawer. We were pumping more gas than we were getting money for."

Lawrence lettered three years—1933, '34, '35—for the Wildcats, playing on teams that were 55-6. An All-Southeastern Conference forward in 1935, he scored a career total of 485 points, which was pretty good in those days of low-scoring games. Now retired, he is a former dean of men at the University of Louisville.

Contacted at his home in Louisville, Lawrence recalled that the engineer on the railroad job was a "UK" man who kept urging him to attend the university.

"We dug tunnels to draw water," he recalled, "and another guy and I had to crawl back into the tunnels. I would get a headache one day and have to go right back the next. That helped me make my decision."

"At UK, Ellis Johnson and a bunch of us (athletes) had summer jobs painting the aluminum fence around the football field. We were paid 50 cents an hour, which was better than the 30 cents I was getting working on the railroad."

"Pribble was a football man," Lawrence said, "but he was always around. He and Rupp were good friends."

In closing, Mr. Larkin, I would like to request information on the career of Holton Pribble, whom Lawrence also knew well. For years, I have been building a master card-index file containing all the information available from various sources on former Wildcats. The next move is to computerize the list, but that takes a lot of time.

Best Wishes

Russell Rice