

FORUM

Kids and Books



Nigel Alston
Motivational Moments

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket.

Chinese Proverb

About this time of year, I can count on receiving an invitation from Judy Davis, home-school coordinator at Old Town Global Academy, to participate in the school's African American Read-In.

The annual event, the 19th nationally, ultimately is intended to promote literacy.

"I look forward to seeing you tomorrow," read the note from Davis. "You are scheduled to read to group of 2nd graders at 1 p.m. The teacher whose class you read to last year... signed up for you again this year."

I don't know who had the better time last year, the students, or me. Maybe it was the teacher. It was a fun time. Reading to students is exciting. I laughed, they laughed and I made some new friends.

Usually visiting a classroom, especially an elementary school class, and reading a book results in students being

engaged as I read and involves them in the story. Sometimes they look over my shoulder to see the pictures in the book and encourage me to hold it up for all to see.

Their participation is an incentive for our agreed upon reward. This year I left owing the second-graders an ice cream party.

I decided to read another one of my favorite books this year, "The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig." Usually, I read another book I like, "The True Story of the Three Little Pigs," by A. Wolf. Yes, it is told from the Wolf's perspective, he was framed. His name is Alexander. Last year it was a book by Bill Cosby, "The Worst Day of My Life."

Before reading to the class and asking for volunteers I found out they received rewards for reading. So, "what would you like today as a reward for participating?" I asked. They enthusiastically responded with things like erasers, ice cream, candy, and tattoos. That last response caught me off guard. "Tattoos?" That's what the young boy said, as he giggled.

It was story time. I needed a volunteer to play the Big Bad Pig. After he stepped forward, I had volunteers to jump out of their chairs to play the three little wolves. They were

described as being cuddly, with soft fur, and fluffy tails. And they lived with their mother.

There were other characters too, like the kangaroo who helped the little wolves with building materials, bricks, for their first house. Of course the Big Bad Pig would huff and puff and in this case, not blow the house down. He used a sledgehammer instead; it was more effective.

Another house had to be built which required more student involvement. There were beavers that supplied the wolves with messy concrete. The huffing and puffing didn't work this time either, so the Big Bad Pig used a pneumatic drill. Another house down.

Fortunately, the little wolves manage to escape again and this time a rhinoceros, played by two students offered a hand with new building materials barbed wire, iron bars, armor plates and heavy metal padlocks. Well, you know how the story continues. This time the pig used a stick of dynamite. That huffing and puffing just wasn't working.

We were engaged now. The Big Bad Pig, the three little wolves, a kangaroo, beavers, and a rhinoceros were all over the room. From time to time, we would recap what had hap-

pened and who did what. The class was responsive and into the story.

The last house the wolves built was somewhat unusual. They had to try something different. After meeting a Flamingo pushing a wheelbarrow of flowers, the wolves changed tactics. They built a house of flowers. The Big Bad Pig took a deep breath to huff and puff again, and... taking in the fragrant scent of the flowers, decided to become a good pig. His heart had changed. You can imagine the little wolves were hesitant at first to accept the change, but they did. They danced and eventually invited the pig into their house.

The class danced too as we had our curtain call, with the host of characters standing up and accepting applause from the class while the teachers sat in the back of the room with smiles on their faces.

After a round of high fives with the class, I agreed to come back and host an ice cream party. I am looking forward to my return trip.

Nigel Alston is a radio talk-show host, columnist and motivational speaker. He is the chairman of the Winston-Salem State University Board of Trustees. Visit his Web site at www.motivationalmoments.com.

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A big mistake omitting Floyd Little



George Curry
Guest Columnist

Over the Super Bowl weekend, which finally featured an event that lived up to its pre-game hype, the Pro Football Hall of Fame announced the induction of six new members. It announced that a second Denver Bronco would join John Elway in the elite club - but it picked the wrong Bronco. Instead of selecting Floyd Little, sportswriters who vote on the honor picked former tackle Garry Zimmerman, whose career was split between Minnesota and Denver.

It's not that Zimmerman is not worthy - he is - but he doesn't deserve receiving the NFL's highest compliment before Little, the first No. 1 draft choice to sign with the Broncos. When he retired in 1975, Little was the seventh leading rusher in NFL history. The six ahead of him - some with less impressive stats - have been already enshrined in Canton, Ohio. After the annual enshrinement ceremonies in August, there will be 247 inductees.

Little, who owns a Ford-Lincoln-Mercury car dealership in suburban Seattle, says he has been passed over so many times that he doesn't care about winning the honor anymore. But I care and so do many other football fans that recognize Little as one of pro football's premier running backs.

Before signing with

Denver, Little had firmly established his credentials as a superstar. He was a three-time All-American at Syracuse (1964, 65 and 66), eclipsing school records set by two others that had worn the famed #44 jersey for the Orangemen - NFL great Jim Brown and Ernie Davis, the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy

Little broke most of their records, rushing for 2,704 yards, returning punts for another 845 yards, kickoffs for 797 yards and passed for 19, a total of 4,947 combined yards. He scored 46 touchdowns in the 30 games he played in, including five in one game. In the 1966 Gator Bowl, he ran for 216 yards against Tennessee, averaging 7.4 yards on 29 carries.

Sunday's Super Bowl featured the answer to a sports trivia question: Who played in the same Syracuse backfield as Floyd Little and Larry Csonka? Answer: New York Giants Coach Tom Coughlin.

Writing in his book, "Tales From the Broncos Sideline," Little recalled that Coughlin "got on the nerves of a few guys because he not only knew all the plays, he also memorized all of the assignments of every player. If quarterback Rick Cassata called a play in the huddle and he mispronounced it or called the wrong formation, Tom would correct him. And if someone was unclear on an assignment, Tom wouldn't hesitate to tell them what they needed to do."

Before there was a John Elway, before there was a Randy Gradishar, before there was a Terrell Davis and, yes, before there was a Gary Zimmerman in Denver, there was Floyd Douglas Little, nicknamed The Franchise.



Floyd Little in his heyday.

At 5'10 and 195 pounds, even small by standards of the day, Little pioneered small running backs being featured in an NFL offense. An exciting runner that could cut on a dime and give you a nickel in change, Little was a human highlight film. At his size, he could drag would-be tacklers an extra five or six yards. And in the open field, the best view tacklers had of him was reading #44 on the back of his jersey as he crossed the goal line.

Unlike most players today, Little played his entire career with one team. From 1967 to 1975, he collected 12,103 All-Purpose yards, including a team record 2,523 on kickoff returns. He led the NFL in rushing in 1971 and played in five All-Star/Pro Bowls.

Entering the Hall of Fame

is not always a fair process and some teams and former players are inevitably slighted. Twelve players from the Pittsburgh Steelers teams of the 1970s are in the Hall of Fame. But the San Francisco 49ers, which also won four Super Bowls, has only four representatives. The Dallas Cowboys, winner of three Super Bowls, has only two members. Retired Oakland Raider punter Ray Guy, in his 17th year of consideration, still has not been selected.

In an introduction to Little's book, Jim Brown adds: "I've said for years that Floyd deserves to be in the Hall of Fame. There's no question in my mind that he's one of the game's greatest players."

Others that share their view have created a Web site, www.littleinthehalloffame.com, to collect petitions on his behalf.

The tragedy isn't just that Little has been passed over, he was not even among the finalists to be considered for the honor this year. When pro football writers on the 44-member selection committee meet in Canton next August, they will have yet another opportunity to correct this travesty.

In the meantime, sign the petition on line protesting this slight and contact sportswriters in your community, urging them to voice their support. The ball is now in our hands.

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