

## The Billings Years: 1957

By BILL GOODWIN, JR.

Contrary to his first three years, Bill Billings found a heavy gang of experienced linemen when he first called his Edenton Aces in August of 1957. David Fletcher was returning at tackle, Charlie Small was back, and both ends, Henry Overton and Marvin Ashley, were returning from 1956. As Billings looked over his big crop, he said he hoped that "we'll be able to move as well as the light lines we've had in the past."

The backfield had only Bruce White returning, and Billings commented, "We have a lot of positions which have to be filled, but the boys are coming along fine and win or lose, I'm sure they will give a good account of themselves."

After two weeks in the summer sun, Billings had juggled his material and came up with a starting line-up. Overton and Jack Bunch were at the ends, Fletcher and Small at tackles, Sid White and Donald Roche at the guards, and Jack Overman at center. In the backfield, Robert White—the hero of the

first two 1956 games—was at quarterback, Ashley was shifted to halfback to team with either Ted Hardison or Bobby Ashley, and veteran Bruce White was at his fullback spot.

In the first game against Roanoke Rapids, the big line did not impress Billings. The Aces were far from sharp, but Bruce White managed to punch over a touchdown, and Bobby Ashley broke away on a 65-yard scoring romp to give the Aces a 12-0 victory.

If there was ever a test for a line, it came the next week as Wallace-Rose Hill brought their monsters to Hicks Field. Billings put his boys through his fierce routine during the week, and the line played inspired ball to take a 6-0 lead at halftime.

Wallace came on strong and gained a 12-6 advantage in the third quarter, but Billings fired the Aces back and they knotted the count as Robert White sneaked over. A final drive brought hopes of another Great Bridge upset, but the Aces' threat died and a respectable

12-all tie resulted.

Williamston led 7-0 at half-time in the first conference game, but the Aces, after facing one of Billings' most blistering intermission trades, came roaring back. Bruce White grabbed a Green Wave lateral and ran 52 yards to score and capped a drive with a touchdown as the Aces dominated the second half and won 12-7.

Elizabeth City, with Bill Burgess and crew, ran up a 32-0 lead before a stunned Edenton mob around Hicks Field. Billings went into the half with fire in his blood and, while blasting his team, made one of the most important coaching decisions of his career. Henry Overton became the quarterback, Marvin Ashley went back to end, Robert White became a halfback, Charlie Small returned to center and big Frank Johnson came in at tackle. Bobby Ashley scored a 20-yarder, and Bruce White added another as the Aces avoided a complete rout and absorbed a 32-12 loss.

Robert White took his injured brother's place against Tarboro, Bobby Ashley plunged over for a score, Overton passed to Marvin Ashley for another, and Third-Down Hardison added a third as Billings' new combination worked effectively. Tarboro scored once to make it 18-7 when Bill Hull, the later Wake Forest star, caught a pass.

Tommy Mathews electrified the Edenton legions as he galloped 79 yards on the second play of the game to give Hertford a 7-0 lead the following week. The Aces failed to falter, however, and Bruce White repeated his performance of the previous year by pulverizing the Perquimans line 34 times for 134 yards. Edenton scored a safety, Overton tossed two scoring passes to Marvin Ashley, and on the second attempt Overton kicked the Aces' first extra point of the year. White and Overton each scored again to run the score to 28-7.

Ahoskie came to Edenton as a four-touchdown underdog, but Billings saw otherwise as the

Great Asiatic Flu Epidemic of 1957 humbled his team. His sick starters played the first half and ran up a 21-0 lead on scores by the White brothers and Hardison. After the half the regulars played long enough for Bruce White to score, but when they went out Ahoskie rampaged for four touchdowns. Fortunately, they missed two extra points and Billings took his fourth conference championship, 27-26.

Both Edenton and Plymouth were hobbled by the influenza, and the game was played on Monday night. Bobby Ashley, Bruce White, Billy Wilkins and Ted Hardison scored to give the Aces a 26-0 win.

The district playoff was postponed by rain at Ahoskie until Monday, a bitter cold day, but the Aces used the rest to recuperate and pounded Weldon 40-13. Bruce White scored once and took an Overton pass for another, Overton returned an intercepted pass 50 yards for a marker, Bobby Ashley got one, and Hardison scored the last.

The highlight came when Ashley took a punt 90 yards down the sidelines to score.

Erwin scored first in Greenville during the regional championship, but the Aces came uphill for a 19-6 advance in the rain. Bruce White got the equalizer, Overton sneaked for the go-ahead score, and Overton pitched to Marvin Ashley for the icer late in the game.

In Greenville again for the eastern title, Overton hit Bunch for an early lead over Farmville. The Red Devils came back for two, however, and after Robert White scored, they went ahead again. Bruce White evened things, and Bobby Ashley added another late in the contest to cap a 28-18 win.

Never had one section of the state dominated high school football in North Carolina as the Albemarle section did during the Thanksgiving week-end of 1957. Williamston had just won the state AA-C title, Elizabeth City was hosting Charlotte's Myers Park for the AA crown, and Edenton was rewarding its loyal fans by bringing in Mebane for the Class A championship game on Hicks Field. Mebane, after revenge for the 1956 humiliation, was firmly established as a three-to-four-touchdown favorite.

The game saw no score during the first quarter, and the only outstanding feature was the punting of Overton. Then, early in the second period, Robert White blasted Mickey Walker with a mighty tackle. Walker's following punt went out of bounds on the Mebane 30, and in six straight carries Bruce White was over for the score. Overton's kick made it 7-0.

The lead was short lived, for big Irvin Poteet took a screen pass, ran 60 yards to score, and kicked the point to tie it before the half. After the intermission, Overton boomed a punt deep into Mebane territory, the Aces held there, and the Tigers punted. Bobby Ashley received on his own 45, cut right toward the home stands, and turned behind a solid wall of blockers. Mebane, unaware of the old Billings trick, let the scabbard score untouched.

On the next series of plays, the Tigers punted again. Ashley gathered this one on his 25, followed the same procedure as before, and crossed the goal in the same place. An official detected clipping on the play, but Mebane never got off its feet after those two mighty bolts.

Billings took his second consecutive State Class A title, and there was no question then of his dominance in the single-A ranks. His 1957 champs had probably received more of his personal direction as any of his teams—considering the great mid-season change. After 1957 there would be frustration for two years, but one thing loomed big in the future after the 1957 season. That thing was the freshman class—Billings' first class of his own in Edenton. He had trained them from the eighth grade, and upon that class Billings would call for the next three years.

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Mankind's need for prayer based on heartfelt gratitude to God will be brought out at Christian Science church services Sunday.

Highlighting the Lesson-Sermon on the subject of "Love" is the Golden Text from the Bible (I John 4): "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

A citation to be read from "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" by Mary Baker Eddy states (p. 4): "What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds."

### SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Cont'd. from Page 4—Section 2.

this happen to me?" "Where is God?"

Our knowledge, however, also forces us to hear answers to the questions. In reply, many state outright that there is no living God in the first place. According to their view, historical events are determined by natural, material and social forces. Events of history, then, are the results of man's manipulation or failure to manipulate these forces in accordance with impersonal universal laws. On another hand there are those who hesitantly say that there may be a living God. But, granted that there is, he is beyond or removed from what takes place in history. He is either powerless to act, or he does not care.

A third group replies that there is, indeed, a living God. He is Creator and sustainer of the heavens and the earth. In character, he is righteous, just and gracious, and he requires that man exhibit the same characteristics in his individual and social life. What is more, this living God is greater than all that takes place in history. At the same time, he is active in historical events and in the experiences of individual man. Additionally, this God has a will for mankind and a purpose in history. God is working out that purpose despite all that man can or may do to the contrary. Evil men, instead of defeating God's purpose, are used by him

to advance it. Man either lives in harmony with God's will and purpose or he suffers the judgment of God to his own destruction or hurt. And what is true in the life of an individual man is also true in the life of a nation.

The third view above is biblical. It holds that God speaks to men in everything that happens. He speaks in the events of history. He speaks in the solitary experiences of a solitary man. His voice may be heard whether the events and experiences are what we call fortunate or unfortunate.

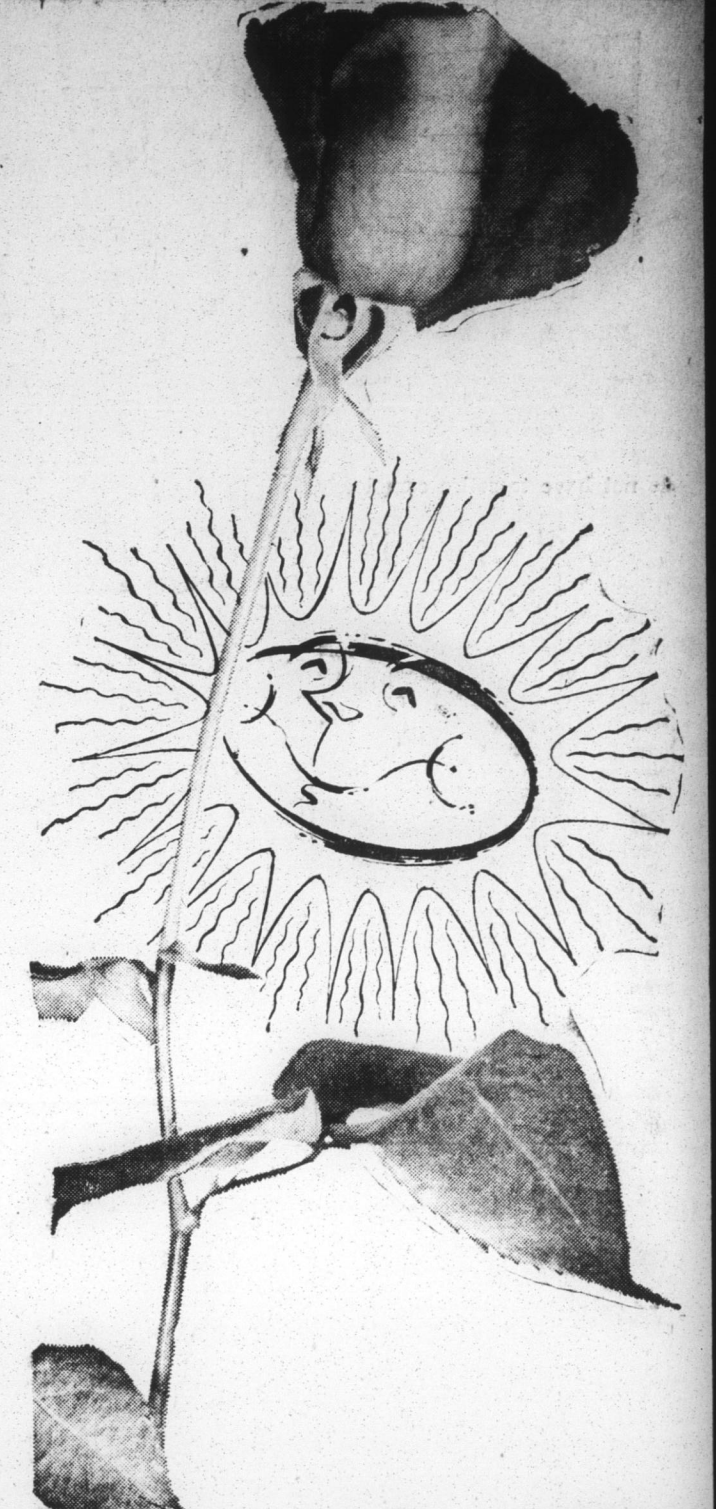
Such a belief as this is not hard to hold when all goes well. But when tragedy strikes, it is difficult for us to accept. According to the biblical viewpoint, however, greater than any tragedy would be the failure to hear God speak in that tragedy. The universe is a moral one, like the God who made and sustains it. In the moral realm we reap as we sow. This truth is affirmed in the Bible; it is confirmed in our own experiences. Christians are called upon to sow in keeping with God's righteousness, justice and love. We are called upon to sow to the Spirit. In so doing, we reap a reward that overcomes tragedy, now and in the world to come.

(These comments are based on outlines of the International Sunday School Lessons, copyrighted by the International Council of Religious Education, and used by permission.)

Peace begins just where ambition ends. —Edward Young.

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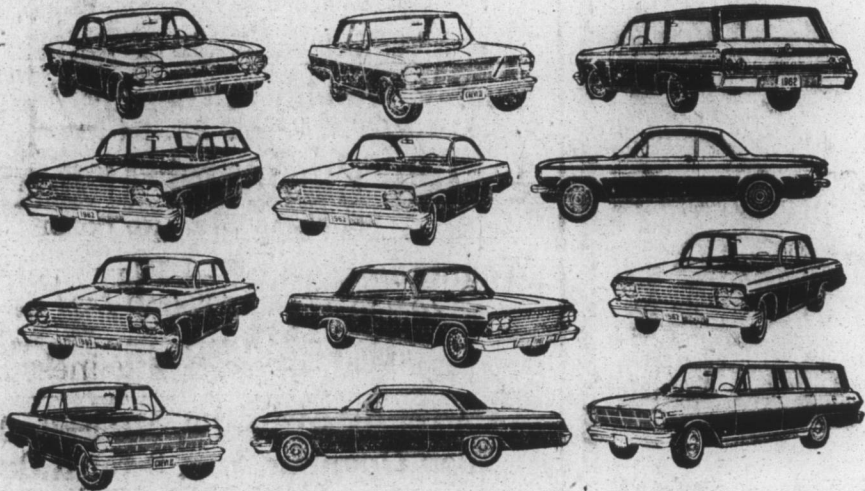
The JILL Shoppe

**RECAPS** Bill PERRY

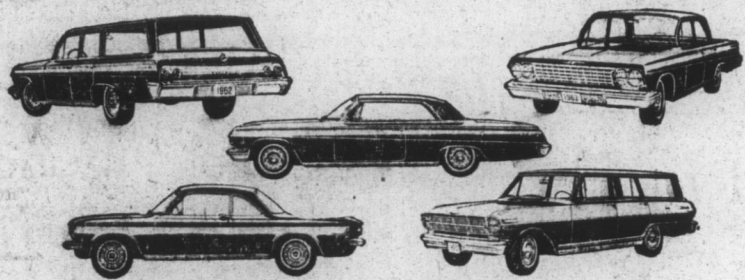
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