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DUFFY AND HIS LEGACY

“Time is neutral, and the time is always right to do right.”—Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. visited Michigan State University’s campus in East Lansing on February 11, 1965, and spoke to a full house of 4,000, who greeted him with a standing ovation at The Auditorium. Only two months earlier King had accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway.

His East Lansing speech praised Michigan State president John Hannah, whom President Dwight Eisenhower had appointed in 1957 as Chairman of the Civil Rights Commission. King urged the government to adopt Hannah’s recommendation to use federal registrars to overcome widespread discriminatory voting practices in the South.¹

Less than a month after King’s trip to East Lansing, “Bloody Sunday” took place in Alabama when 600 Civil Rights protesters attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery. In another six months, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 would be signed on August 6 by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

When King finished his Michigan State speech, the students rose again with a second standing ovation.

There was no mention from King of the trails blazed by Michigan State’s Underground Railroad, head coach Duffy Daugherty, or the Spartans’ fully integrated roster that would start its remarkable two-year run in the fall with back-to-back Big Ten and national championships. But a portion of King’s speech was about Daugherty more than

any other college football coach in the nation. King addressed the issue of when was the “right time” to push integration despite push back from those who asked for patience—to wait for the “right time.”

“Time is neutral,” King told the audience, “and the time is always right to do right.”



Michigan State football coach Duffy Daugherty and Ara Parseghian shake hands after their game at East Lansing that resulted in a 10-10 tie, Nov. 19, 1966. [AP Photo]

Time had been neutral for Daugherty throughout his coaching career. He did not wait for approval from the alumni to tell him when the time was right to recruit black athletes. He did not wait to defy Jim Crow and put on clinics for black high-school coaches in the South. He did not balk when his 1966 team voted in two black team captains, Clinton Jones and George Webster, believed to be the first pair of black team captains in major college football. Daugherty also knocked down the last position of white supremacy on the football field when he decided time was neutral for a black quarterback, Jimmy Raye, to be his starter. Daugherty later encouraged Raye to join in his staff in 1971 as a pioneer among black assistant coaches.

“[Daugherty] was one of the most courageous persons I’ve had the privilege to be associated with in my athletic career,” Raye said. “I can

only imagine the pressure he must have been under and received when he made the decision to make me the starting quarterback in the mid-1960s. Most of the things that happened to me in my coaching career—if not all—came as a direct result of the opportunities he gave me. I will be forever grateful for the courage he had and the kind of individual he was to give a chance to a young man who was denied a chance in the South to pursue an academic and athletic career.”

A smaller legacy within Daugherty’s overall legacy was the number of black players on his roster who did not turn out to be stars, starters, or even play. It is important to remember that the 1950s and 1960s was a time when professional teams only kept black athletes who were starters. Daugherty was willing to take a chance on a lightly recruited black player who may not turn out to be a star.

Michigan State All-American tight end Billy Joe DuPree was lightly recruited when Spartans assistant coach Vince Carillot found him in 1968 in West Monroe, Louisiana. In the 1972 season, DuPree was Daugherty’s last All-American player among his Underground Railroad recruits. He was an NFL first-round draft pick by the Dallas Cowboys and three-time Pro Bowler in 11 seasons.

Carillot discovered DuPree as he pursued a more highly recruited Louisiana player (who eventually picked Grambling State). Carillot asked the recruit’s high-school coach if he knew any other players in the area.

“You should talk to this kid Billy Joe DuPree over in West Monroe at Richardson High School,” the coach told Carillot.

DuPree said he had considered either attending historically black Southern University in Baton Rouge or joining the military before Carillot invited him to take a trip to Michigan State. His college options in the South were limited when he graduated. Not only were Louisiana’s high schools still segregated, Louisiana State University’s football program remained all-white until 1972.

“I knew about Michigan State’s great teams,” DuPree said. “I knew they recruited black athletes from the South, and that was inspiring to me.”

DuPree met Daugherty on his recruiting trip and came away feeling Daugherty and Grambling coach Eddie Robinson were men of similar character. DuPree had originally wanted to play at Grambling—until he met the great Robinson on a visit to Grambling’s campus. When DuPree

said he wanted to major in civil engineering, Robinson candidly told him Grambling lacked a civil-engineering program and he should consider another school.

"I have to give Duffy and Eddie a lot of credit," DuPree said. "Eddie showed me he was looking for more than a football player. He asked you what you wanted to do with your life. When I went to Michigan State, I had heard about big schools that offered to take care of you and your family. But Duffy said the only thing he was offering me was a chance to play football and an education. That's all I was looking for, and I committed to Michigan State."

Not all of the chances Daugherty took paid off with an All-America player, of course, but the number of lightly recruited black players offered scholarships was the reason Michigan State had more black players on the bench in the 1966 Game of the Century than the University of Southern California had black starters in their famed 1970 game at Alabama.

In 1966, Michigan State had 20 black players, with 11 starters and nine backups. In 1967, USC won a national title with only seven total black players. And in their untelevised 1970 contest at Alabama, USC started only five black players—quarterback Jimmy Jones, fullback Sam Cunningham, tailback Clarence Davis, defensive end Tody Smith (Bubba's little brother), and linebacker Charlie Weaver—though they now had 17 black players overall on the roster, presenting an evolving image of integration.

"They talk about that 1970 USC-Alabama game and how it enlightened Bear Bryant," said Steve Garvey, a white football-baseball star at Michigan State in the late 1960s from Tampa, Florida. "A lot of people want to give Bryant credit for integration, but Duffy was at the forefront."

Dan Daugherty, Duffy's son, said Duffy's father Joseph Daugherty taught his children from an early age not to judge people by the race, creed, or religion. The Daugherty ancestors were Irish Protestants who left Ireland for Scotland during the potato famine to work in coal mines that fueled the Industrial Revolution. Consequently, Duffy, even with his Irish surname, has been sometimes misidentified as Scottish. In both Ireland and Scotland, the Daughertys faced religious conflict. Joseph Daugherty's parents subsequently left Scotland for America to work in the central Pennsylvania coal mines.

“My grandfather taught my father it’s what’s in the heart and soul of people—not their skin color,” Dan said. “Skin color or religion didn’t matter to my father or his brothers, Jack and Joe. My father was Irish Protestant and he married an Italian Catholic.”

Duffy, who grew up in Barnesboro, worked in deep-shaft coal mines after high school before he saved enough money to play football at Syracuse University. His teammate in 1937 and 1938 was Wilmeth Sidet-Singh, only the third black quarterback in college football. Sidet-Singh was light-skinned and had taken his Hindu Indian stepfather’s surname, thus avoiding attention.

Daugherty served in World War II as an officer in the South Pacific before he returned to Syracuse in 1946 on the staff of new head coach Biggie Munn.

Munn’s Syracuse stay was a short one. Michigan State president John Hannah viewed football as a building block toward raising the profile of a school he ultimately turned into a world-class university. Hannah sought a dynamic football coach who could quickly build a powerhouse. He tapped Munn, who brought Daugherty with him. By envisioning a powerhouse, Hannah eyed an invitation to join the Big Ten in order to fill the void created in 1946 when the University of Chicago departed the conference and the ranks of big-time football.

Hannah hired Munn for his background as a former University of Michigan assistant coach familiar with the Big Ten. Munn built national champions in 1951 and 1952 and then retired to serve as athletic director following the 1953 season and 1954 New Year’s Day Rose Bowl victory over UCLA. The 1953 season was Michigan State’s first Big Ten title, serving as co-champions with Illinois.

Daugherty succeeded Munn in 1954 and stayed 19 seasons, compiling a school record for most wins with a record of 109-69-5.

Daugherty and Munn eventually had a falling out in their AD/coach working relationship and argued over the direction of the football program in the late 1950s. Hannah stepped in, sitting the two men down in a room to settle matters. He told them the university was bigger than their egos and ordered them to work out their problems. Daugherty later acknowledged in his 1974 book that Munn was the man who saved him from going back down in the coal mines.

Civil Rights was more than a college football story to the Daugherty family. True, Duffy talked football at home, but the coach and his wife

Francine together discussed the nightly news with their two children, Dan and daughter Dree. Dree said she and her mother were horrified when watching television news coverage of Bull Connor and his Birmingham policemen beating Civil Rights protesters with clubs and fire hoses in 1963.

"My mother was actually more liberal than my father, but they were on same page," said Dree, an emergency-room physician. "I was very young, but I grew up watching Walter Cronkite every night. We were very upset to see the way blacks were treated and the injustice going on in our country. I used to write letters to the editor."

Doing the right thing defined Daugherty, said Father Jake Foglio, who served a half-century at St. John Church and Student Center on M.A.C. Avenue just off the Michigan State campus. Foglio long knew Daugherty and his family through his association with the football program. He often traveled with the team. Clinton Jones and Gene Washington served as altar boys at St. John during their All-American seasons for the Spartans.

"When you do the right thing only because it's the right thing to do, a lot of good comes from it," Foglio said. "The black coaches in the South wouldn't send Duffy a player if they felt he used the black players. They were sure he would treat them fairly. The players he recruited were strong people. They would not have respected Duffy if they felt he was treating them as underlings. He got the best out of them by loving them and respecting them.

"He never made a big thing of bringing players up from the South and integrating college football. That speaks for itself. St. Francis of Assisi said you preach who you are by your actions. That was Duffy."

People understood Daugherty had contacts in the South to build the Underground Railroad, but few, including Foglio, knew how he defied Jim Crow with his clinics in the South for black high-school coaches.

Daugherty and Munn both brought their progressive attitudes to Michigan State long before the Civil Rights movement gained momentum and spread awareness to Americans in the 1960s.

Tom Yewcic, Michigan State's first two-sport All-American in football (1952) and baseball (1954), played quarterback for the Spartans from 1951 to 1953 under Munn as the head coach and Daugherty as an assistant. "We never had problems with white guys and black guys on our team and I believe it was because of Biggie and Duffy," Yewcic

said. “Biggie and Duffy respected people and they didn’t show favorites. If you were white or black, they played whoever deserved to play. We never had a confrontation between a white guy and a black guy—never once in my four years there.

“The only time I remember a problem for black athletes at Michigan State was on the baseball team when we went South in the spring. The black players were not allowed to eat in the dining hall. They had to eat in the kitchen, so we ate in the kitchen with them.”

Daugherty also invited the Southern black high-school coaches up to Michigan State’s campus in the summer for a clinic. In the era of segregation, many of the coaches were forced to drive non-stop through the night to reach East Lansing since they were unable to stop and spend the night along the way.

“I remember we would be doing our conditioning in the summer and Duffy would have me run patterns with Jimmy Raye throwing passes for the coaches to watch,” said College Football Hall of Famer Gene Washington. “The first time I saw all these black coaches, I was wondering where they were from. I asked some and they said they were from all these places in the South. I was surprised. Duffy never said anything about what he was doing. As I got older, I began to understand the leadership he was providing. Duffy led the way in setting aside time for black coaches. He really enjoyed those clinics.”

A prominent Texas high-school coach attending the Michigan State clinics was Bubba Smith’s father, Willie Ray Smith. Daugherty provided the Beaumont Pollard teacher and coach with a carload of school supplies to bring back to his segregated (and resource-lacking) school.

Once Daugherty’s network was in place, he faced no recruiting competition from schools in the South and little from the North.

“You have to remember the mentality of the era,” said Carillot, Michigan State’s defensive backs coach. “In both the North and the South, too many coaches believed black athletes weren’t that good. Duffy said blacks were as good as anyone else. He said, ‘Why not recruit them?’”

Ernie Pasteur was a fullback/linebacker that Daugherty recruited out of Queen Street High in Beaufort, North Carolina, as part of his 1963 recruiting class. Pasteur took recruiting trips to Michigan State, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Purdue, but he said only Daugherty among coaches from those four schools traveled to Beaufort to visit with the

promising young Pasteur and his coach, Shadrich Barrow. Duffy Daugherty, said Ernie Pasteur, “was probably the first white person at my high school.” Later Daugherty made a home visit with the teenager’s parents, Joe and Mildred.

“My mother cooked fried chicken and collard greens for Duffy,” Pasteur said. “My mom loved him. Duffy told my mom if I went to Michigan State, I would graduate. My mom didn’t hear anything else. She didn’t care about football. My mom said, ‘You’re going to Michigan State.’ ”

A shoulder injury ended Ernie Pasteur’s career, but his scholarship was never in doubt. He received the All-American treatment from Daugherty as a reference in the job market. Pasteur was 26 years old, teaching school and had earned his master’s degree when he asked Daugherty to write a letter of recommendation for him. He had applied for a vacant vice-principal position at Grand Rapids Union High School, 70 miles northwest of Michigan State’s campus.

“Duffy called in his secretary and he dictated a letter on Michigan State letterhead,” Pasteur said. “The superintendent was a Michigan State graduate and football fan. When I went in for my interview, all he did was ask questions about Duffy and players like Bubba Smith and Jimmy Raye. Then, after about 30 minutes, he said, ‘When can you start?’ ”

Pasteur later served as Grand Rapids Union principal from 1972 to 1977. He went on to take a job as the campus director at Maxey Training Facility near Ann Arbor. There were 600 juvenile students, most of them from Detroit.

“That was one of the most rewarding jobs I had,” Pasteur said. “Bubba came to speak to the kids; George Webster came too. I had always wanted to be a principal. I didn’t want to be in just one classroom. I felt it was my calling to lead. That letter Duffy wrote jump-started my career.”

The DuPree and Pasteur stories are examples of how Daugherty was at his best when he was recruiting and building men with the comfortable attraction of his personality.

Before developing the Hawaiian Pipeline and the Underground Railroad, Daugherty relied on his Pennsylvania roots for his first pipeline to talent and winning football teams.

Michigan State’s 1950s teams were national powers with rosters

that included center Dick Tamburo, quarterback Tom Yewcic, and guard Frank Kush, three Pennsylvania players who earned All-America honors in the 1952 season. Fullback Gerald Planutis of West Hazleton, Pennsylvania, was an All-America pick on the 1955 national championship team that won the 1956 New Year's Day Rose Bowl. Daugherty learned about the Pennsylvania prospects through childhood friend Hugo Vivadelli, whose recruiting eye he trusted. Vivadelli was a high-school principal in Spangler, Pennsylvania, and he moonlighted as a referee for Friday night high-school football games. Yewcic specifically observed that Daugherty recruited him on the advice of Vivadelli.

"It didn't matter to Duffy what color his players were, but in turn he had to take a lot of crap for it," Foglio said. "He didn't get the credit he deserved for integrating college football, but he got the crap that came with it."

Daugherty ignored the racial hate mail, the comments that he was an N-lover turning Michigan State into the Grambling of the North—a reference to historically black Grambling State in Louisiana. Dan Daugherty added, with a laugh, that only one letter from an upset fan bothered his father throughout his 19 years as head coach.

"The letter was addressed to 'Duffy the Dope,' but it got delivered to him at his office," Dan said. "It didn't say Jenison Fieldhouse, Michigan State, East Lansing—nothing else—and the post office knew where to deliver it. My father said, 'I take my job seriously, but I don't take myself seriously.' He had the ability to laugh at himself."

During the peak years of Daugherty's career, he never used job offers from Texas A&M in 1958 or Notre Dame in 1964 as leverage. (It was a trait that George Perles failed to copy during his tenure as Michigan State's head coach in the 1980s and early 1990s. Perles used NFL job offers after his 1987 success with a Big Ten title and Rose Bowl victory to leverage for the dual role of football coach and athletic director.) Dan Daugherty, Duffy's son, said Texas A&M offered his father \$50,000, a house, and a car among other perks. In comparison, his father's peak salary at Michigan State was \$29,000 in 1972. "He came home and talked about it and asked us what we thought," said Dan, in middle school at the time. "I told him I didn't want to move to Texas—all my friends were here. I don't know if that played a part, but he turned down a lot of money to stay at Michigan State."

The Texas A&M offer came after Michigan State's 1957 national

championship season. By then Daugherty already had to his credit two national titles, one Rose Bowl victory, one American Football Coaches Association national Coach of the Year award, and one *Time* Magazine cover.

Texas A&M, of course, was still segregated in the 1950s, which raises an interesting question of how Daugherty might have influenced the integration of college football if he was at a school in the South. Texas A&M's student body was integrated in 1962—one year before Alabama and the same year Mississippi students rioted to protest the admission of black student James Meredith. The Aggies' football program was integrated in 1967.²

The Notre Dame opportunity began to breed rumors in the spring of 1963. On March 13, 1963, Notre Dame announced that Hugh Devore would succeed Joe Kuharich, who had resigned, on a one-year interim basis. Duffy Daugherty was asked to comment on the potential Notre Dame head coaching vacancy following the 1963 season. "You can speculate all you want—I have no comment," replied Daugherty. "Notre Dame is a fine school, but the day Kuharich quit, I had a staff meeting trying to jack up our offense for next fall."³

The rumors persisted, and they were not without foundation. Notre Dame president Father Theodore Hesburgh called Hannah to request permission to speak with Daugherty about the job. Hannah broached the subject with Daugherty on October 14, 1963, when the team traveled to face USC at the L.A. Coliseum. The Spartans lost 13-10, but they stayed the night at the Sheraton Hotel before traveling home the next day. Hannah invited Daugherty up to his suite after the game.

"My Dad told me this story," said Dan Daugherty. "Hannah said, 'Sit down, Duffy. Father Hesburgh called me and wants to talk to you about Notre Dame. I'm not going to let him do that. In this room are the two most important people to Michigan State University.' It was only my Dad and Hannah, and my Dad started looking around. My Dad said, 'It's just the two of us—who else are you talking about?' Hannah asked, 'What will it take to keep you?'"

According to Dan Daugherty, Hannah had previously told his father he had job security as long as he had a winning record against Michigan and Notre Dame. Entering the 1963 season, Daugherty was 7-1 against Notre Dame (he finished his career 10-7-1) and 5-2-1 against Michigan (he finished 10-7-2).

The hotel suite meeting ended with Hannah presenting Duffy Daugherty, who had worked as a tenured professor without a contract, with a five-year deal. Hannah also eased the animosity between Munn and Daugherty by agreeing that Daugherty would report to Hannah and not to Munn.

In return, Duffy was about to lift Michigan State to its greatest heights with a 19-1-1 overall record, back-to-back Big Ten titles with a 14-0 conference record, and shares of the national championship both seasons.

No Big Ten school has duplicated Michigan State's 1965-66 run. Ohio State and Michigan dominated the Big Ten throughout the 1970s, but following each unbeaten season the Buckeyes or Wolverines suffered either a loss or a tie in conference play the next year. Ohio State had back-to-back unbeaten 12-0 seasons with 8-0 Big Ten records in 2012 and 2013, but the Buckeyes were ineligible for the Big Ten title in 2012 after NCAA sanctions and were beaten by Michigan State in the 2013 conference title game.

Oddly enough, another major turning point in Daugherty's coaching career would occur in a Los Angeles hotel during a stay for a USC game. Before the third game, he called team captains Billy Joe DuPree and Brad Van Pelt and told them that 1972 would be his final season. A month later Daugherty made his decision public before the Spartans beat Purdue.

Munn was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1959 and passed away in 1975 at the age of 66. Daugherty was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1984 and passed away in 1987, at the age of 72.

Michigan State named athletic facilities on campus after both Daugherty and Munn—football's Duffy Daugherty Building and the Munn Ice Arena. But otherwise there has been a feeling among Daugherty's players that the school officials wanted a separation from the high-water marks of the Daugherty era. Michigan State waited until 2012 to add Daugherty and Munn to the Ring of Fame alongside seven players previously honored.

"I think the powers that be were determined to start with a clean slate," Raye said.

He also believes that was why former Daugherty assistants from the

1960s who had moved on weren't considered candidates to bring back to East Lansing.

Daugherty compiled impressive win-loss numbers on the field, but the opportunities the brave coach provided for his Underground Railroad passengers and the African-Americans they subsequently influenced is incalculable.

"I tell my six children the most important thing to remember about their grandfather and his legacy is he helped facilitate integration with black athletes," said Daugherty's daughter Dree. "Football opened the door to everything else that happened in that era. I teach my children—and now my grandchild named for my father—we're very proud of that. It's a wonderful legacy and the one I try to pass on."

Notes

1. *The State News*, Feb. 12, 1965.
2. archiveexhibits.library.tamu.edu.
3. *Lansing State Journal*, March 15, 1963.



Duffy Daugherty announcing his retirement. Photo courtesy Michigan State University.