"Old Man River Will Be Missed"

Next spring when the robins come back to scratch for worms in the lush, green grass of college ball parks, they may notice a difference. They will miss Virginia Tech's venerable Coach "Red" Laird amongst the ground crew that combs and pets the infield with the affection of good masters grooming their dogs.

The red beneath Laird's baseball cap now has turned to silver and it is reported that the once red-head is "going fishing."

If "Old Man River" of college coaches has taken his last after-game shower and is turning in his towel, he must feel a special kind of satisfaction. Deep in his heart he knows that he has spent his life in his own way. That is a rare and satisfying accomplishment.

Traditionally, the coaching profession is a treadmill to oblivion. For "Ol' Casey," as Laird is affectionately known, it has been a long, long trail. At Virginia Tech for 36 years he served as assistant football coach, scout and recruiter under all coaches from Henry "Puss" Redd to Jerry Claiborne. For 28 years he was head basketball coach, and for 30 years he was head baseball coach. "Red" Laird has lasted where others have failed because the old law permits the fit to survive.

Some will remember his won-and-lost record and his superiority as a coach. This was only a minor part of the whole man. Others will enjoy re-telling and re-hearing the humor of his Rockne-like anecdotes.

The real Laird is a man deep in ethics, sincerity, loyalty and dedication. All his players have become better men because some of this "Red" dust has rubbed off on them.

Laird is a product of the "old school." The old school knew no generation gaps. He was graduated from Davidson College when education justified major athletics as character builders. There he played under WL "Monk" Younger (later Athletic Director at Virginia Tech) when four letters in four major sports were still a possibility.

Those were the days before money, specialization, and "The Image" were a factor. The days when the "All American" boy was supposed to be an all-around gentleman, athlete and student.

The "Red Head" still is a colorful and fiery leader. Among his boys he is the fatherly counselor who knows that through discipline he gains respect.

In these days of "win or else," only a few, if any, head coaches reach the age of seventy still riding in the saddle. "Red" Laird made it by thinking less of being a man of prestige and more of being a man of value.

"Red" is married to the former Naomi "Sis" Carrigan. The robins will miss her too. If behind every successful man there is a good woman, and if every athletic team is the shadow of that coach, then some simple syllogism also should reward Mrs. Laird with glory.

Red Laird--A Man Of Value