Foreword

CACTUS PRYOR

Texas lost another one to Oklahoma when Darrell Royal was born a Sooner. But the University of Texas fixed that in December 1956 when Royal signed on as head football coach of the Texas Longhorns.

I had the pleasure to co-host Coach Royal's syndicated weekly television show for a number of years. My timing was perfect. I signed on just before the wishbone came to Austin. I was not a football journalist. I was a fan. One of the first sounds I heard in my life was the cheers riding the southern wind to our home a half mile north of Memorial Stadium.

So when I was offered the television opportunity I was delightfully shocked. The philosophy behind the station's choice was that a typical fan would ask the questions that John and Jane Doe would, not the deep stuff into which professional journalists would delve.

Every day I had watched the Longhorn workouts, from the era of Coach Clyde Littlefield to that of Dana X. Bible. My heroes ranged from Bobby Layne to "Spot" Collins to Noble Doss to James Street. Now I could add Darrell Royal, even before he coached a UT game. I sensed it. He looked right. He said the right things. He had the right chin. His accent was Texan. He had a sense of humor like Will Rogers's. At our first meeting I was in awe of the man, but soon I felt comfortable with him. He's down-home, and he out-married himself! And, what the heck! I was one year his elder.

Every Sunday at 8 A.M. during the season, we would gather in Lady Bird Johnson's television station in Austin to tape the *Darrell Royal Show*. Often we dragged ourselves into the studio. Some of the out-of-state games often meant very little, if any, sleep before taping. There was little rehearsing. We might decide what topics to discuss and I'd throw 'em and the coach would hit 'em. Of course we showed and discussed the game highlight films. And we'd usually have a pre-film feature that the producer had prepared. One that the coach suggested was a film of Mrs. Campbell working in her flower garden in Tyler,

Texas, talking about Earl and his brothers and sisters. Another of DKR's suggestions was an interview with a blind man who never missed a game in Memorial Stadium. It was a wonderful feature on a remarkable, happy man who saw the games with his ears and his accompanying friends.

A Texas newspaper wrote a feature about Darrell's good taste in clothes. The coach, who went barefoot during most of the Depression, did enjoy being able to dress for the occasion. I read the article on camera to Darrell. I should explain that, on Sunday mornings when we finished the shooting of the show, Royal would head straight over to the stadium to view with his coaches the entire film of the previous day's game, and I would head straight for the fields to train my Labrador retrievers. After reading the article to Darrell and the TV audience, I said, "Let's step out in front of our desk." Dutifully he consented. The television audience was treated to the sight of the coach's sloppy, grass-stained workout pants and tennis shoes that must have gone through World War II. They also saw my blue jeans splashed with mud and ventilated with several rips, plus boots dating from another generation. I then reread the news story about the natty coach. Royal responded with, "Well, you ain't Clark Gable yourself."

Darrell was President Lyndon Johnson's favorite football personality. After Johnson stepped down from the presidency he began attending University of Texas games. These were probably the only games he'd attended since his days at Southwest Texas State University. He would ask DKR to bring his players up to the LBJ Ranch on the Pedernales River for some barbecue, country music, and visiting. Several times Darrell, out of loyalty to the chief, shifted his schedule in order to accommodate LBJ's hospitality.

Once LBJ invited Darrell and Edith to join him and Mrs. Johnson for the Christmas holidays in Acapulco. During that vacation, when DKR was playing in a foursome with Bob Hope, former president of Mexico Miguel Alemán, and President Johnson, he was called on by LBJ to verify the correctness of a shot which Johnson had just made and which Hope and Alemán were questioning. Royal courageously agreed with Hope and the former Mexican president. For the rest of his life, LBJ would, with tongue in cheek, remind DKR of the day when he was not loyal to the president of the United States.

Royal was a master at handling a negative. Every Monday after the Saturday games he would face an auditorium full of tea-sippers waiting to hear his feelings about the game. One year, when the Texas Longhorns had been beaten yet again by the Sooners, the theater was running over. DKR faced the audience and began with typical Royal sincerity: "I didn't expect to see so many of you

here today. Guess you wanted to see what the SOB was going to say about this one." The laughter signaled a touchdown.

I recall another such incident at the Headliners Club. This huge Austin club includes headline makers, newsmakers, Austin icons, and politicians. The entertainment is live, plus there are showings of films featuring goofs committed by the well-known during the preceding year. One year, after yet another defeat by Oklahoma, the auditorium was standing-room only. The crowd wanted to hear how Royal would handle this one.

The film showed me interviewing him in the usual post-game setting. My question to the coach was, "Darrell, we brought you down here to Texas to beat Oklahoma. Now we have suffered yet another defeat by the Sooners. What do you have to say about that?" The camera came in for a close-up of the coach's face. He spoke quietly and with great sincerity. "Well, I've done a lot of thinking about this situation. And I've turned to that famed scholar Oliver Wendell Holmes, who once said, 'As I look back on the days of my life I appreciated my defeats more than my victories, because I have learned more from my losses.' Well, I've been thinking about those words of that great man and I'd just like to say, 'Screw Oliver Wendell Holmes!'"

A five-minute side-splitter!

Coach Royal looked ahead. I shared a bedroom suite with him in a hotel in Rogers on the eve of the Game of the Century: Texas versus Arkansas. I would have slept better in a New York City bus. All night long the coach was calling his coaches in for yet another brain session. He didn't sleep a wink. In the morning, the buses waited to deliver the team to the stadium in Fayetteville. The players were very silent—even James Street, if you can believe it. Royal was the last to board the bus, only to turn around and disappear for a few minutes. I asked him what drew him back to the hotel. He explained that he had placed a call to a prospective hot high school recruit in a North Texas town. He wanted him to know that, even on this historic day, UT was thinking of him. (Incidentally, the guy signed with Oklahoma.)

And then there was the day when the hottest player in America, who was being sought by every college recruiter in the country, signed with Texas. Darrell went to visit with Ann Campbell. She welcomed him to their humble house. Coach Royal said, in essence, "Mrs. Campbell, we are here to tell you that we are offering Earl a good place to earn an education and the opportunity to make the Texas football team." Her response: "Coach Royal, you're the only one who said that Earl would have the OPPORTUNITY to make the team and to EARN an education. We're coming to Texas."

I've lived through over eight decades of UT coaches. I've seen them close-up, seen them adored and disliked. I've never seen one as admired and appreciated as Darrell K Royal. I doubt that our current football coach, Mack Brown, would have come to Texas had he not had the blessing of DKR.

Royal was the last major collegiate football coach to win a championship with an all-white team. He was the first coach to recruit a large number of extraordinary black players. He has continued to give to the University of Texas and to the city of Austin where he lives. There's hardly a good cause in Austin that doesn't bear his name, and he also gives to helpful causes throughout the nation. Edith Royal is side by side with her high school sweetheart. The Royals are our royalty in Texas.