

## The Walton Tribune • Visions 2002

# Bradleys have left their mark on Walton

By Chris Bridges  
The Walton Tribune

WALTON COUNTY — In 1975 Ron Bradley decided he was ready for a new challenge.

After making Newton County High School in nearby Covington known for some of the best boys basketball in the state and even the country, Bradley accepted a job at a relatively new school — George Walton Academy (GWA) in Monroe. While Bradley would continue coaching boys basketball, he would also have the opportunity to oversee an entire athletic program.

When Bradley arrived at GWA in the mid-1970s, there were no dressing rooms, no football field, no stands. That would all change by the time Bradley's 12-year tenure at the Monroe school ended.

When talking of his coaching accomplishments, Bradley always says "we," referring to he and his wife, Jan. Bradley considers his wife a teammate and is quick to point out the underappreciated role of a coach's wife.

"When we went to George Walton, our goal was simply to continue working with young people and help them in any way we could," Bradley said. "It was fun to be a part of George Walton Academy for all those years."

At the time, many questioned why Bradley would leave Newton County for a small, private school with less-than-desirable athletic facilities. However, Bradley admits the challenge was intriguing to him.

"Many times it's easier to keep a successful program going," he said. "However, it is also fun to go somewhere and see things built from the ground up."

Successful athletic teams continued for Bradley at GWA. He won two boys state cham-

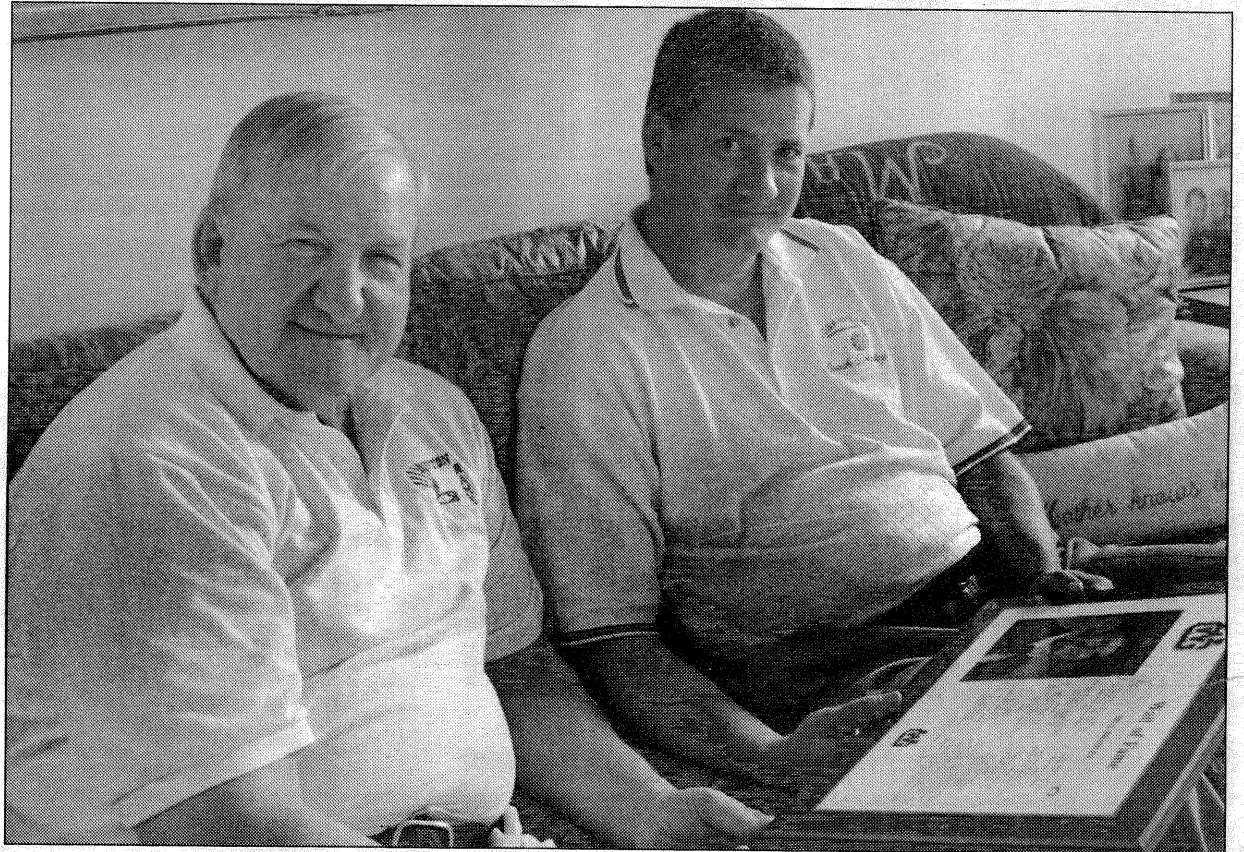


Photo by CHRIS BRIDGES

**Ron (left) and Bill Bradley have impressive resumes as coaches in Walton County.**

pionships in basketball and also won a state football title in 1979. One of his girls basketball teams was undefeated until falling in the state title game, a loss that is still tough for the long-time coach to accept.

"You remember the tough losses as much as the exciting wins," Bradley said. "Our girls really deserved that title."

Providing even better memories than winning the state titles was the opportunity for Bradley to coach his three sons.

"That is something I probably couldn't have done at a larger school," Bradley said.

One of his sons, Bill, would later have an impact himself on the Walton County sports scene.

Bradley decided to "retire" and travel after spending 12 years at GWA. However, his coaching days were far from over. After rebuilding the athletic program at Trinity

Christian School in Dublin, Bradley returned to the Walton County sports scene.

...

The boys basketball program at Loganville High School had never been much to brag about. With only one winning season in school history, many in the community wanted something done about it.

Coy Baker, who at the time served on the Walton County Board of Education, helped get things moving by pursuing Bradley. Once Bradley — who is the state's winningest active high school basketball coach — arrived, things quickly changed. The attitudes and expectations of the players changed and the losing ways also went away.

"It was such a thrill to be a part of Loganville High School for three years," Bradley said.

**Continued on Page C39**

# The Walton Tribune • Visions 2002

## Ron Bradley sparks Loganville's resurgence

Continued from Page C37

"The players wanted to be a part of something special. It's easy to coach when the players are so willing to learn and get better."

Following his time at LHS, Bradley moved on to coach at Piedmont Academy in Monticello and at Port St. Joe High School in Florida. Currently he is back where it all began — in Covington at Newton High School.

However, Walton County remains special to Bradley. In fact, he still makes Loganville his home.

"Walton County is a great place," the coach said. "From our time at George Walton to our time at Loganville, we have met so many special people. It's such a thrill to see your former players move on and become successful in life.

That's the greatest reward of all. You never stop thinking about your players, and you want them to do well in life when their playing days are over."

•••

Bill Bradley, one of Ron and Jan Bradley's four children, was a key part of George Walton Academy varsity athletics beginning his eighth-grade year. When his athletic career at GWA was over, Bill Bradley had established numerous basketball records. His picture and list of awards is still on display on the school's Wall of Fame, something Ron Bradley started in the 1970s. He was also an All-State receiver for the football team and helped lead GWA to the state title in 1979.

"The parents and community wanted George

Walton to be successful, and I believe that's why it was," said Bill Bradley, who scored 2,436 career points for the Bulldog basketball team. "I still remember after we won the state championship in 1976 (in basketball) having a parade from Social Circle to Monroe. People wanted to be involved with everyone's kids, not just their own. That's the way you have success. It has been said, 'It takes a community to raise a child,' and that was certainly felt at George Walton."

Bill Bradley obviously enjoyed attending school at GWA, as evidenced by his streak of 1,980 school days without an absence.

It can be tough going into the same career as a successful parent. Bill Bradley knew that.

Continued on Page C41

## The Walton Tribune • Visions 2002

# Bill Bradley follows in legendary footsteps

Continued from Page C39

However, he still felt that one day he might want to coach as well. He majored in business education in college and for several years pursued career opportunities outside of coaching. His first coaching position came at Flint River Academy in Woodbury during the 1989-90 school year.

Bill Bradley said he did not feel threatened by going into the profession in which his father is a living legend.

"I never felt any pressure," Bill Bradley said. "I know Mom and Dad have always supported us in whatever we do. I just try to do the best I can. I know I will never have 1,200 wins like my Dad has. However, Dad measures success in terms of helping kids. I try to take that same approach."

Bill Bradley spoke of a recent letter from former LHS player Laney Harris as something that means as much to him as any win. Harris wrote a letter to *The Walton Tribune* and thanked Bill Bradley for the positive influence he had on her.

Bill and Ron Bradley arrived at LHS at the same time, prior to the 1995-96 school year. Bill was his father's varsity boys assistant basketball coach before taking over the Lady Devils program the following school year.

"I wanted to see how he coached through motivation," Bill said. "Dad is successful in building school and community support. That helps him be successful. I wanted to see how he did those things."

In fact, Bill Bradley would have the opportunity to start a new athletic program of his own when LHS decided to begin playing fast-pitch softball. Then-principal Ken Pritchard asked Bill Bradley to be the coach.

After the normal building process, the LHS Lady Devils won the Class AAA state softball championship in only their sixth year of existence.

"It has been rewarding for me to coach two sports at Loganville," Bill Bradley said. "Many high school coaches don't have that opportunity anymore, and I am thankful to have it."

Bill Bradley, who has now made a name

for himself in the coaching profession, said he has no plans to be anywhere but Loganville High School.

"More so than my coaching career, I can't imagine having my kids be anywhere but in this school system," Bill Bradley said. "They are the most important thing and I believe they are in good hands at Loganville Primary School and Loganville Elementary School."

...

Both Ron and Bill Bradley are clearly proud of the profession they have chosen and the number of lives they have positively impacted in Walton County and elsewhere.

"We are working with the most valuable thing parents have and that is their children," Ron Bradley said. "As a coach, just as a math or English teacher, what you teach them now will always be with them in the future. That is a responsibility you have to be serious about."

"Having a positive influence on young people," Bill Bradley said, "means more than any number of wins I might one day have."