

A pair who made a difference: Bob & Gwen Tatum

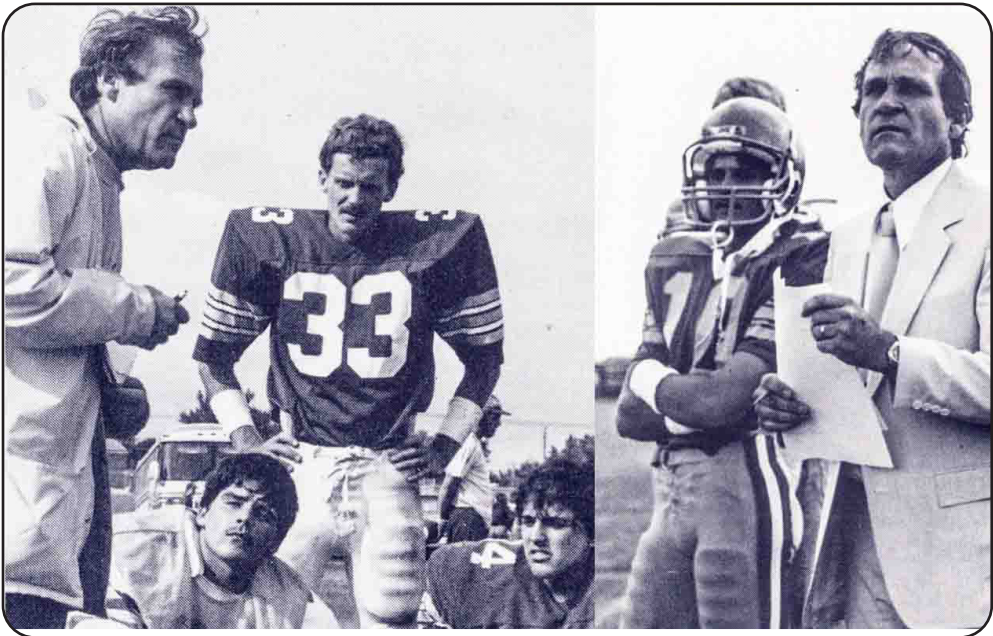
(continued from page 1)

A few weeks later, the administration asked Bob to do some research to find out how much a program would cost. The answer, after considerable figuring, was that at bare bones, the school could organize and equip a team of thirty for ten thousand dollars. Asked to re-check his figures, Bob returned with the same answer: ten thousand dollars. A short time later, he was given the go-ahead to start the program.

Bob's eyes lit up with delight as he described how, through an unexpected set of coincidences, he was able to obtain all of the necessary equipment—much of it from a college in Stony Brook, New York that had discontinued its program—for just under the promised amount. Likewise, Bob stayed faithful to his pledge to use football not as an end in itself but as a means of developing young men spiritually, physically, socially, and educationally. He also maintained his penny-pinching ways throughout his seven-year tenure as coach. Ministry and economy were core principles. "We used to stay at churches and at Christian schools," he emphasized. "We never had a hotel bill. I never stayed one time, not one night in a hotel, nor did our team in the seven years that we were coaching. And we always had a ministry. We never played one single football game that didn't have a ministry after it."

Bob's time at TBC (1983-1990) fell within the Lundstrom years, a period when the school experienced dramatic growth. Not only was a football team started, a girl's volleyball program and a men's wrestling program were started, both student initiated. The Crusader football team (the name of the original Trinity mascot, which was changed to "Lions" in the mid 1990s), experienced enough success to maintain a reputable program. Coach Tatum was named 1984 "Coach of the Year" by the schools in the Trinity Bible College league. It was the team's honor in 1987 to contest the University of Mary Marauders, in the inaugural game of that institution's football program. In those years, Trinity's team limited the distance traveled, often playing junior varsity teams. Facing off against second and third-string teams never bothered Bob, since in his view, the entire reason for playing had to do with learning and spiritual growth, not getting glory. Sometimes a bit of glory came, but he wasn't discouraged when it didn't.

Sitting in his living room and hearing him recall those years, it is easy to sense Bob's enthusiasm. And yet, coming away from the discussion, one is struck that his recollections focus not on memorable games (of which there



These photos, which were printed in a Trinity Bible College yearbook in the mid 1990s, show Bob in action as a coach. He established strong relationships with his athletes, and they showed their respect by playing to the best of their abilities.

were many), but on individual athletes whose lives were changed (some dramatically) by experiences on the team. When Bob retired from Trinity in 1990, he left a legacy that would be carried on by others with similar ideals. The college would later honor him by naming its football field in his honor. He remained a faithful fan of the team, often sitting in the stands unrecognized by young students who knew little of his pioneering work. He has been content to watch with appreciation the games played beneath the looming blue-and-white-and-gold scoreboard that declares in huge bold letters that the teams are playing on "Bob Tatum Field."

In its 35-year history, Trinity's football team has had few winning seasons, and a few very discouraging ones. Following the 2001 season, the program was almost dropped. But again, it was rescued by the players themselves, who lobbied the school's board of directors and persuaded them to keep it, partly on the promise that the players themselves would serve as recruiters on a voluntary basis. But the results on the field were often disappointing. The 2004 season, in which the Lions suffered a humiliating 105-0 defeat, was also the season that *Fargo Forum* sportswriter Shawn Fury traveled with the team, and then published a compelling book titled *Keeping the Faith: In the Trenches with College Football's Worst Team* (Lyons Press, 2005). The book, well-written and popular, has been widely misunderstood by friends and critics of the team alike. It was never meant as a criticism of the school or its program.

Rather it was an effort to understand the deep motivations that drive some hardy people to persevere amid what seem like overwhelmingly bad odds. When told of the decision to end the program after 35 years, Fury wasn't surprised. But he responded with emotion. "I always admired the kids and coaches who always kept battling," he told the *Leader*. "I still think often about my time at TBC and still am so grateful I got to meet so many wonderful folks and had the chance to tell their stories." Fury's book can be found at www.bit.ly/kpngfth.



TBC fans savor a narrow victory following a September 22, 2018 game. Bob was highly honored to have the field bear his name, and he attended games there whenever possible. (photo by Ken Smith)

In the wake of the announcement of the program's demise, Bob Tatum remained philosophical, and as committed as ever to the principles he brought with him when he came to Ellendale 36 years ago. His faith hasn't waned, but his years in the local hospitality industry have. He spoke of the future of the Oxenrider motel (at least, under his management) as a matter of months, not years. Shortly before Thanksgiving, the motel stopped taking new visitors. Long-termers (including a few wind farm workers) would stay until their employment in the area is finished. Bob and Gwen continued to live in their home at the Motel for some time, but beyond that, their plans were uncertain. This, however, did not seem to bother either of them. They believed, without question, that they did the right thing when they left southern California for Ellendale. And they remained certain that their future would also be in the hands of Divine Providence.

Newspapers were in her blood: A tribute to Gwen Tatum

Editor's Note: Our "Transitions" column for January 23 was a tribute to Gwen Tatum, who like her husband Bob, made significant contributions to the community. Our column's mention of Gwen's newspaper background was noticed by Cecile Wehrman, the director of the North Dakota Newspaper Association, and she included the column in the monthly NDNA Bulletin, where it was widely read. We reprint it here again, as we say a final goodbye to Bob and Gwen.



Gwen Tatum
December 17, 1938 - January 6, 2024

Newspapers were in her blood

Two remarkable people in our town passed away recently: Bob Tatum (88) died in December. His wife Gwen (86) died in January. Both were extraordinary people, and widely recognized as such. They are missed already.

Gwen spent half her years in Ellendale, and filled numerous valuable roles here. She worked at the Registrar's Office at Trinity Bible College, served as the Activities Director at the Ellendale Nursing Home, and was Director of Tax Equalization for Dickey County. In later years, she worked at the Ellendale Public Library and wrote a little newspaper column called "The Bookworm." In each column, she shared her passion for literature and a brief description of several favorite books and/or authors. She usually served up an author's quote about books and reading.

Gwen did not avoid quoting a children's author (Dr. Suess) who advised "The more you read, the more you'll know, and the more that you learn, the more places you'll go." And she quoted the intellectual, C.S. Lewis: "You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me." And in her column we learned of a quote from another luminary who insisted that "The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library." That man's name was Albert Einstein.

Humility was an attractive thing about Gwen and her husband Bob. They knew they weren't on the level of a C.S. Lewis or an Einstein, but they contributed what they could. For decades they owned and managed an economy motel called the Oxenrider. They gave hospitality and a kind, listening ear to innumerable guests. They gave the same for countless others that crossed their paths. They shared their faith with acts of kindness and service. For Gwen, that service included writing "The Bookworm."

The inevitable decline that comes with aging didn't seem to dampen the couple's spirits or dull their minds. One reason for that, I think, is that they kept up the habit of reading. "The mind needs books as a sword needs a whetstone if it is to keep its edge" observed a quote in one of Gwen's columns. She hoped her little space on page nine of the paper would encourage people of all ages to pursue books and thus maintain that edge.

Gwen was an encouragement to the *Leader*. She knew a lot about newspapers, and regularly affirmed her respect for them. As a youngster she'd worked for her family's weekly, *The Daniels County Leader* of Scobey, Montana. She even learned to set type by hand, a rare craft even eight decades ago. Gwen also understood the value of local contributors, such as the correspondents who report the news and social chatter from neighborhoods or townships, most of it unpaid.

From her early life to her final weeks, then, Gwen contributed to newspapers. Coincidentally (and proudly for us) those papers both shared the name *County Leader* and even the same initials—"DCL."

Gwen's contribution over the last few years reminded me of a June 1882 letter the *Dickey County Leader* received from Mary Ellen Merrill. Mary Ellen was expressing her hopes for the new town the Milwaukee railroad had named in her honor: *Ellendale*.

"May the promise of [Ellendale's] early babyhood be all fulfilled by a healthy moral, intellectual, and religious growth," she wrote. "*May its men be temperate, patriotic, honest and brave; its women noble, patient, hopeful and intelligent.*"

In that letter, Mary Ellen also enclosed funds for a five-year subscription to the *Leader*. She later sent money to help found a library, which ultimately grew into the one Gwen loved and promoted in her column.

I often think that Mary Ellen Merrill and Gwen Tatum, though separated by a century or more, were two of a kind.

We owe this kind a debt of gratitude.

SAMPLE BALLOT FOR THE
JUNE 3, 2025 EPS SCHOOL
BOARD ELECTION

**Official
Ballot**

Ellendale Public School
District No. 40
Dickey County
State of North Dakota
Tuesday, June 3, 2025

**Vote for One (1) Member for
the ELLENDALE SCHOOL BOARD.**

Area: City of Ellendale for
a term of three (3) years.
Vote for ONE (1) name only!

Michele Thorpe ----- ☐

Write In
Fill In Name ☐

**2025 ELLENDALE SPRING
RESIDENTIAL CLEAN UP HOURS**
*on May 5th through May 17th,
the landfill will be open as follows:*

Monday May 5	3 PM to 8 PM
Tuesday May 6	8 AM to 12 PM (noon)
Wednesday May 7	3 PM to 8 PM
Thursday May 8	8 AM to 12 PM (noon)
Friday May 9	10 AM to 2 PM
Saturday May 10	10 AM to 4 PM
Sunday May 11	CLOSED
Monday May 12	3 PM to 8 PM
Tuesday May 13	8 AM to 12 PM (noon)
Wednesday May 14	3 PM to 8 PM
Thursday May 15	8 AM to 12 PM (noon)
Friday May 16	12 (noon) AM to 4 PM
Saturday May 17	10 AM to 4 PM

There will be NO Curb side pickup available

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Ellendale Landfill Hours

The hours (weather permitting) for the inert landfill April 1 to September 30 are:

Monday & Wednesday: 5 pm to 8 pm
Saturday: 10 am to 4 pm
Saturdays, 10 am to 4 pm

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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April 25th - April 27th
Check out our website or Facebook page for more info!

Molher's Day Buffel
May 11, 2025
*+Free Games Galore Kids Carnival
10:30am - 1:30pm
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PUBLIC WORKS EMPLOYEE

The City of Ellendale is looking to hire a Public Works Employee to be responsible for the following maintenance to keep the City in

- Streets
- Alleys
- Water system
- Sewer system
- Landfill areas

- General maintenance of equip-ment
- Mowing
- Cutting & trimming trees
- Cemetery

good working order and sound condition:

- Perform a variety of manual labor duties which will include all maintenance, heavy equipment operations, snow removal and other duties as required.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationship with other employees, public officials and the public.
- The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 75 pounds or more.
- This job typically works 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday – Friday and will be required to be on call during scheduled evenings and weekends.
- Must be legally authorized to work in the United States. No sponsorships considered.
- A valid ND Driver's License is required and the ability to obtain a Class B CDL.
- A high school diploma/GED is required; the ability to pass and obtain all required ND State licensing and certification requirements when eligible.
- Successful applicants will be highly motivated and self-directed.
- Successful applicant will require a background inquiry.
- Experience preferred; and essential that the public works employee be service oriented.
- Must live within 30 minutes of the city limits.
- Wages DOE

*Applications/Resumes will be accepted until filled, please submit to
City Hall (P O Box 267 - 55 3rd Ave S – Ellendale ND 58436).*

Benefits included: BCBS – Health, Vision, Dental, Retirement, Vacation, Sick Leave, On-Call pay, Overtime past 40 hrs, Garbage/Water discount if live in city limits

For further details, please contact Mayor Don Flaherty; Council Member Justin Meidinger or City Hall –701-349-3252.

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