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[Fewer 'Go-Givers'; an...](#)

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"In an age that has stamped itself as the era of 'go-getter, he was a 'go-giver,' giving himself, spending himself like water, not for himself, but for others."

--Notre Dame President Charles O'Donnell in his Eulogy of Notre Dame Football Coach Knute Rockne

Saturday, February 2, 2008, funeral services were held in Bazaar, Kansas for a 90 year old farmer whose life at a very young age became entwined with the life and death of the legendary Notre Dame football coach, Knute Rockne. The farmer was James "Easter" Heathman. On the morning of March 31, 1931, Easter, 13 years old at the time, his father and two of his older brothers were shelling seed corn by hand on their farm when they heard an explosion and saw smoke from the bluestem prairie grass hill across the road. They immediately drove up the hill in their pickup to the smoke and were among the first to discover the wreckage of a TWA plane and the scattered dead bodies of the pilot and seven passengers. One of the passengers was Knute Rockne. It was an event that shook the sports world but Easter had never heard of Knute Rockne or Notre Dame, for that matter. Yet 75 years later in Notre Dame Stadium, this kind and gentle man became a Notre Dame Monogram winner, awarded only to

varsity athletes and people like President Reagan, Ara Parseghian and Pope John Paul. Why the monogram to Easter?

In 1935, a memorial to the eight victims was built on the crash site and Easter became the gatekeeper, caretaker and host to the thousands of people who came from all over the United States to see the crash site of Knute Rockne. Easter also became a friend to the families of many of the victims and a friend of many of the people associated with Notre Dame. I was fortunate to get to know Easter after visiting the site a few years ago and I quickly learned what a wonderful person he was and how much he cared about other people. He was a man with integrity, humility, loyalty and he had respect for everyone who visited the memorial site. Over the past 35 years the maintenance of the memorial and the tours with all of the visitors was without compensation and none was asked. Easter only cared about honoring the victims and treating all the visitors with dignity and respect. When Ivan Maisel, senior writer for ESPN.com, asked Easter why caring for the memorial was so important, Easter replied, "It was just something that needed doing." In preserving the memory of the legendary Rockne and the other seven victims Easter became a legend as well. In fact, one of the eulogists at Easter Heathman's service, Dr. Bernie Kish, former Executive Director of the College Football Hall of Fame and now a lecturer in the Sport Management program at the University of Kansas, compared Easter's ethical qualities with those of Knute Rockne. High praise, indeed, for the modest man from Kansas.

O'Donnell's quote is so appropriate today since we have seen dramatically escalating coaching salaries and a changing attitude among some of the coaches. Unfortunately, we're seeing a number of "go-getters" in coaching who are in it for the money and fame and don't really care about the academic and personal welfare of the student-athletes. There are plenty of outstanding people coaching for the right reasons but I'm worried that we're getting fewer "go-givers" and more "go-getters." We need more people like Knute Rockne and Easter Heathman leading our young people. What do you think?

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