



BY STUART ROBINSON | PHOTO BY BOB COLEMAN

LEAVING A

# Legacy



Ronnie Peacock and several of his former Rogers High Mounties football players are gathered in the atrium of the Embassy Suites in Rogers. The players' fathers are also present and, naturally, everyone is huddled around chatting. They shake hands, share hugs, and joke back and forth – it's been a while since the retired coach has seen these guys. He takes it in with a big smile.

Peacock was a gifted athlete growing up, but endured his younger years with an absent, alcoholic father. "I never got that kind of support," he says, looking around at the young men and their dads. They're here this evening because of him, because of his unorthodox approach to coaching, and because he's credited for strengthening the relationships of all these guys and their fathers.

"It is life changing," says Peacock, emphasizing the importance of family ties. His adversity of growing up without a father is what encouraged him to adopt a distinct style of coaching, both on and off the field, more than a decade ago.

In his playing heyday, Peacock set numerous records as a wide receiver while on scholarship at Harding University. After a short stint with the Pittsburgh Steelers in '72, he forayed into coaching at his alma mater. Peacock then coached high school football at Greenwood and won the 4A state championship there in 2000. After that, he moved to Rogers where he stayed for nine seasons until retiring last year. He led the Mounties to a 7A conference championship in 2006, the first of such victories for the school in 28 years.

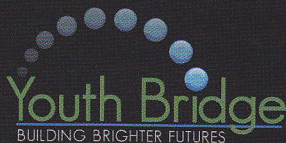
In 2000, his last season at Greenwood, Peacock initiated father-son retreats – weekend trips with his coaching staff, his senior players and their dads. Instead of running routes, together they floated rivers and navigated ropes courses at Camp Tahkodah near Batesville, in the Ozark Mountains. Blindfolded walks up and down mountainous terrain served as trust exercises between players and their dads. This was among many activities that highlighted the purpose of Peacock's retreats: to strengthen bonds.

"The inaugural father-son retreat was a great success," says Peacock, who believes in the influence of frequently acknowledging care and love to others. →

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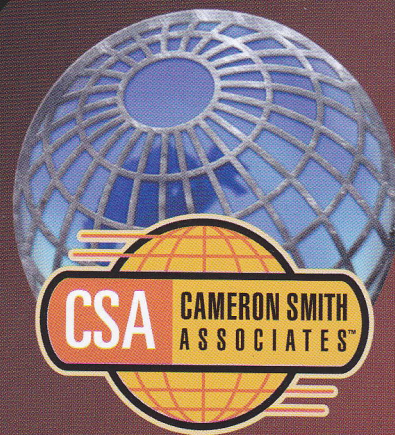
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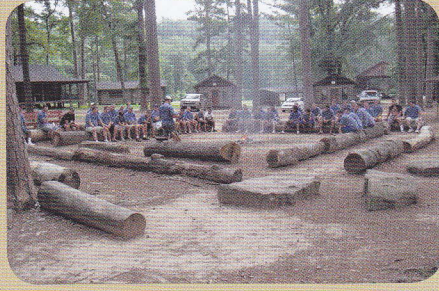
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# “Every man has a legacy and I want mine to be more than coaching”



“I’ve had players at the retreat say, ‘I know my dad loves me, but he doesn’t tell me. And I need to hear him say it. I know my dad loves me, but he doesn’t hug me,’ and for a kid not to get a hug from his dad when he needs one can change him.”

After the death of one of Peacock’s former players, the parents approached the coach and simply said, “We will never forget.”

Peacock regularly speaks the phrase, “getting emotionally naked.” He explains it as an important part of the retreat that occurs when fathers and sons come face to face and strip the barriers between them.

All it requires is a hug, and saying, ‘I love you.’

It’s obvious men aren’t naturally free with their emotions or comfortable with physical exchanges, and Peacock understands this, while offering the following:

“When you hug someone, when you really hug someone, things change. It’s like walls are broken down. You begin to understand

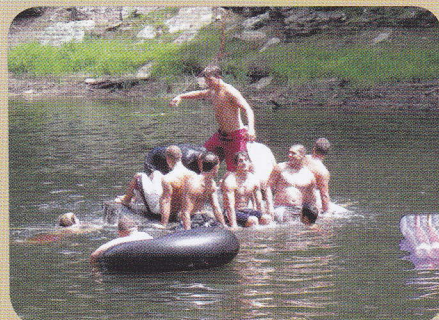
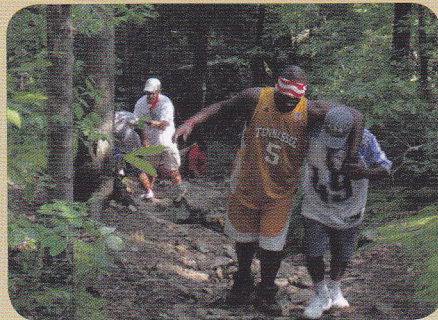
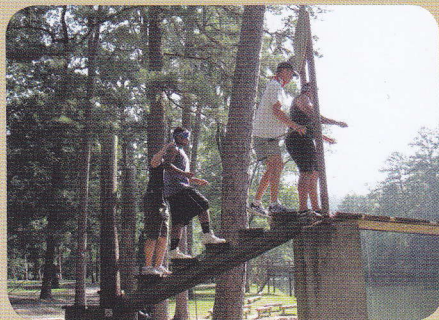
one another better.”

Despite Peacock’s accomplished career, he credits his off-field work as his greatest achievement.

“Every man has a legacy and I want mine to be more than coaching,” says Peacock. “What I tried to do was make a positive difference in kids’ lives and I think the annual father-son retreat is the way by which I did the most good. It’s the best thing I did in my 38 years of coaching.”

Peacock no longer coaches from the sideline but is continuing the work he started a decade ago. By using his approach from the father-son retreats, he’s now sharing his program with churches, businesses, and other schools. He says he enjoys the occasional round of golf but is fulfilled by spending time with his wife, Martina, and his children and grandkids. ■

For more information, visit [Ronnie Peacock’s Facebook page at Peacock Father-Son Retreats](#). You can also reach him via email at [coachrpeacock@yahoo.com](mailto:coachrpeacock@yahoo.com).



## TESTIMONIALS ABOUT THE FATHER-SON RETREAT FROM THE DADS AND THE PLAYERS

### Father: Gary Hahn

It’s one of the most meaningful experiences I’ve ever had. I’ve been to nine out of the ten retreats to support them and it’s such a great opportunity for fathers and sons and obviously for the growth and development of the young people. It’s a time you get to spend with your son and it’s very personal – not about football.

### Son: Kyle Hahn

*Position: Wide/Tail Back*

My greatest memory was the relationship I had with my father after the retreat. It grew from a father and son relationship to him looking at me like a man. It created a friendship between us. Some great experiences were fishing with my dad and sharing memories and talking about stuff we hadn’t before.

### Father: Roger Clement

The amazing thing about the retreat was that it focused on building relationships between fathers and sons. We wrote letters to one another and it allowed us to share things we probably wouldn’t have otherwise.

### Son: Bobby Pennington

*Position: Inside Linebacker*

The really special thing is that you can still have a wonderful experience regardless of the family situation. Time was reserved for us the weekend of the retreat, which gave us the opportunity to share things we had never talked about.

### Father: Mark Schatzman

Coach offered us the opportunity to say what probably every dad already wants to say, but a chance to say it in a condensed way. Many of us give the messages of love and pride and belief in our sons, but to have a whole weekend where you can put those thoughts not only in to words but on paper and in a fun environment is the beauty of the retreat.

### Son: Ryan Schatzman

*Position: Receiver*

The timing of the camp was perfect. It was after two-a-days so it was nice to not focus on football. We had personal and intimate times with our dads and players and spent time fishing, swimming, hiking, making bonfires, and playing softball and basketball.