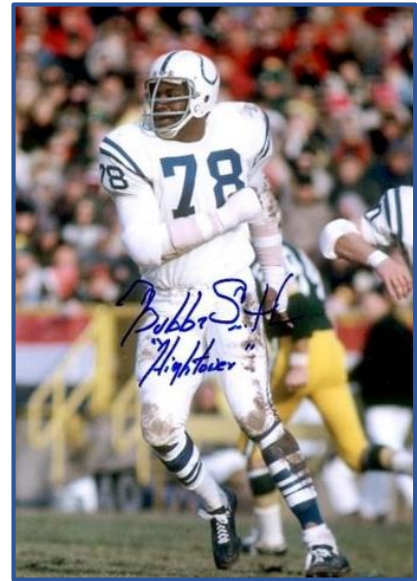


# A Legacy of Bubba Smith

I'm a football fan, and I enjoyed watching on television games in which Charles Aaron (Bubba) Smith played. Probably no one would recognize his name without the use of his nickname, Bubba. That's how most people knew him.

Smith played college football at Michigan State University, where he won All-America honors in 1965 and 1966. In 1988, he was enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame. Smith spent nine seasons in the NFL as a defensive end, playing for the Baltimore Colts, Oakland Raiders and the Houston Oilers. After football, he enjoyed a career in acting – in the movies, television and in TV commercials. Smith died in 2011.



But here is a story that measures his character:

At a point at the height of his acting career, Smith swore off booze. Not drinking it, but selling it. Smith never did drink; however, he sold a lot of beer by making cute television commercials. But then he kicked the habit. He gave up a very lucrative, stupendously easy and really amusing job making beer commercials, just because he decided it was wrong.

Here's how it happened. "I went back to Michigan State for the homecoming parade," he said. "I was the grand marshal, and I was riding in the backseat of this car. The people were yelling, but they weren't saying, 'Go, State, go!' One side of the street was yelling, 'Tastes great!' and the other side was yelling 'Less filling!' (the slogan of the beer commercials.)

"Then we got to the stadium. The older folks are yelling 'Kill, Bubba, kill!' (the cheer of the fans when he played there). But the students are yelling 'Tastes great! Less filling!' Everyone in the stands is drunk. It was like I was contributing to alcohol, and I don't drink. It made me realize I was doing something I didn't want to do.

"I was with my brother, Tody, who is my agent," Smith continued. "I told him, 'Tody, I'll never do another Lite beer commercial.' I loved doing the commercials, but I didn't like the effect it was having on a lot of little people. I'm talking about people in school. Kids would come up to me on the street and recite lines from my commercials, verbatim. They knew the lines better than I did. It was scary. Kids start to listen to things you say, and you want to tell 'em something that is the truth. Doing those commercials, it's like telling everyone in school, 'Hey, it's cool to have a Lite beer.' I'd go to places like Daytona Beach and Fort Lauderdale on spring breaks (as a spokesman for the brewery), and it was scary to see how drunk those kids were."

(more)

And Smith added: “As the years wear on, you stop compromising your principles.”

That’s an important part of Smith’s legacy.

And Smith was right. Integrity matters. And people – especially young people – are watching us. They want to hear what we say, but they also want to see how we live.

Whether we may have celebrity status or not, there is a circle of influence, probably wider than you think, for each of us.

*Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out* (Proverbs 10:9 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter