



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

April 2022

Carter Back In ‘Bona Territory’

By Scott Kindberg *The Post-Journal* June 8, 2021

ALLEGANY — The Rev. Dan Riley, O.F.M., stood at a podium in the St. Bonaventure University cemetery at midday Saturday.

To his left, was the gravestone for Silver Creek native George Carter.

Directly in front of Riley, who has been connected to the college, either as a student or staff member for more than 50 years, was a crowd numbering well north of 100. The people were gathered on a picture-perfect, late-spring afternoon to honor the memory of Carter (Class of 1967), one of the Bonnies’ all-time great basketball players, who died last November.

And directly behind Riley — maybe 100 yards away — was a huge oak tree.

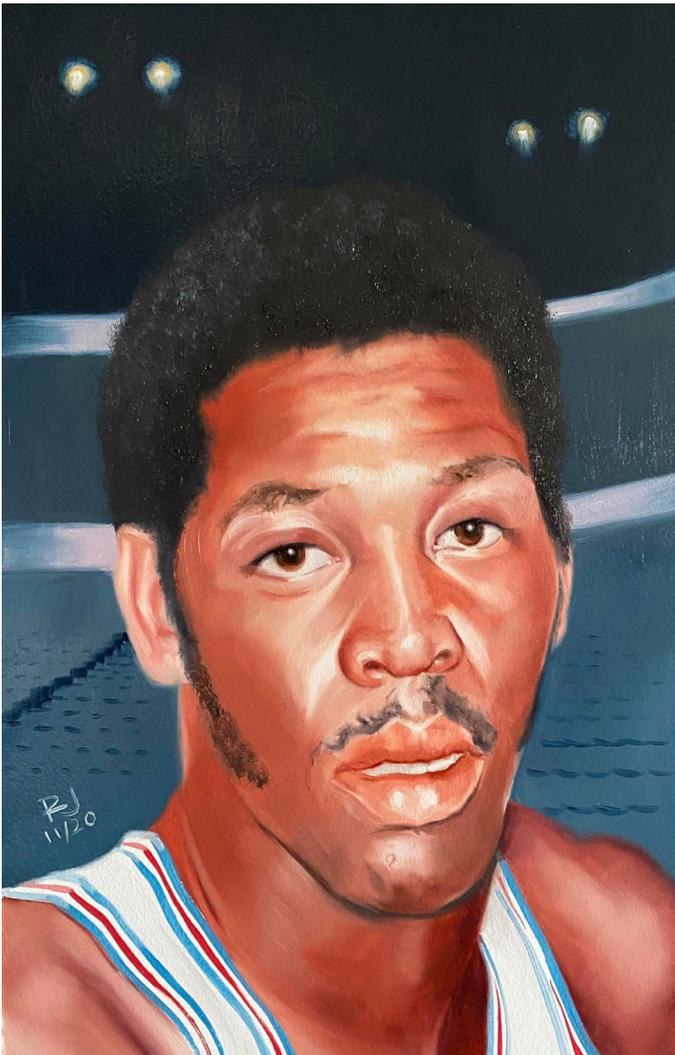


“Oak trees are signs of something, and part of it is strength,” Riley said. “Part of the strength of that tree is its roots go deep and we don’t see them. It can stand through storms only because it’s rooted here, and where are we rooted?”

Riley leaned forward for emphasis, getting as close to the microphone as possible.

“Bonas!” he bellowed.

“For women and men who have found this home, my family has a tradition of being here and playing basketball for almost a century. I had an uncle who was on the basketball team. I almost didn’t come to Bonaventure, but I heard what I heard today, wonderful basketball stories. ... I’m just amazed, and why shouldn’t I be? This is Bonas.”



Then Riley’s delivery slowed and his voice lowered briefly as he continued.

“This is Bona territory,” he chanted, his voice quickly crescendoing as he repeated those four words two more times. *“Go, George, be with God forever and know that you are at home.”*

Drafted in three professional sports and selected to St. Bonaventure’s all-century team, Carter hardly needs an introduction.

Upon graduating from Silver Creek Central School, Carter took his talents to Allegany where he scored 1,322 points and averaged 19.4 points per game in three seasons with the Bonnies. He ranks fifth in

rebounds with 849, including a career-high 305 in 1966-67. His 12.4 rebounds-per-game average is second only to Bob Lanier in school history.

Drafted by the Detroit Pistons of the National Basketball Association, he played in one game before being drafted into the U.S. military, serving for two years. He returned to professional basketball upon his discharge, this time in the American Basketball Association, where he stands among the top 20 all-time in scoring, scoring average (18 points per game) and free throw percentage.

But success on the court — Carter was once traded for Hall-of-Famer Julius Erving and cash — didn't mean life was going to be a slam dunk off it, especially in his later years when cancer left him unable to work. Without steady income and no pension to fall back on, Carter was on the verge of being evicted from his Las Vegas apartment.

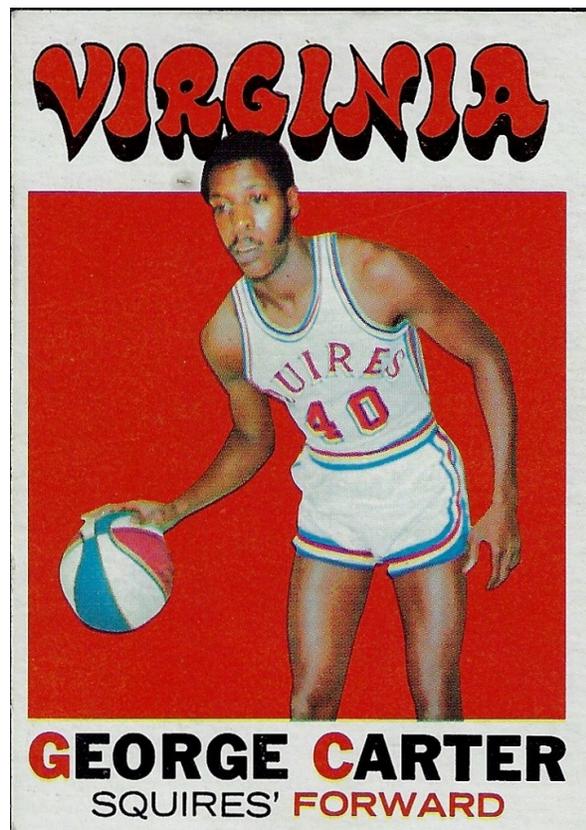
And then, in 2018, Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame President Randy Anderson received a phone call from Kevin Blackstone that changed the trajectory of Carter's final years. Researching a story about an ABA team that Carter played on in Washington, D.C. in the late 1960s, The Washington Post columnist and a regular on ESPN's "Around the Horn,"

discovered that Carter was a 1984 CSHOF inductee, prompting him to call Anderson to see if the latter had contact information for the former hoops star. *"He had called me to try and get George's number,"* Anderson said Saturday before the memorial service. *"... I told Kevin I wouldn't give out George's information without his approval."*

Carter declined to give the OK.

"When I called Kevin back," Anderson said, *"I asked, 'Who can help him?'"*

Blackstone had an answer locked and loaded: The Dropping Dimes Foundation, a not-for-profit organization based in Indianapolis.

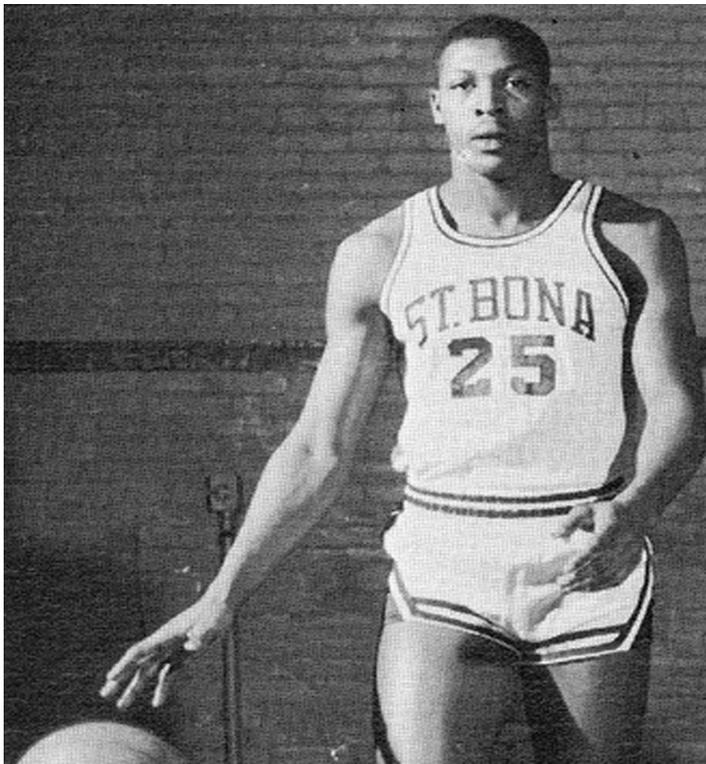


The foundation's main focus and concern, according to its website, is for *"the well-being and betterment of former ABA players and their families, who are experiencing financial or medical difficulties and have encountered significant financial hardship or sickness."*

"I called (Anderson) because (Carter) was in the (Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame)," said Blackistone, who was also in attendance at Saturday's memorial service. *"I figured if he's in your Hall of Fame, (Anderson) had to know where he is, and he did. When he got back to me with that information, I just tried to help."*

Blackistone's assist was far greater than any *"dime"* Carter received on the court during his playing days.

Anderson wasn't done helping either.



"I called George back and said, 'George, you need to call Dropping Dimes,'" Anderson recalled. *"He said he had a letter from them from years ago and he had a lady friend in Las Vegas who would help him write the letter."*

With the assistance from Jennifer Stauffer in Las Vegas as well as Scott Tarter and John Abrams with Dropping Dimes in Indy, Carter's life would ultimately get better.

It just took a little while.

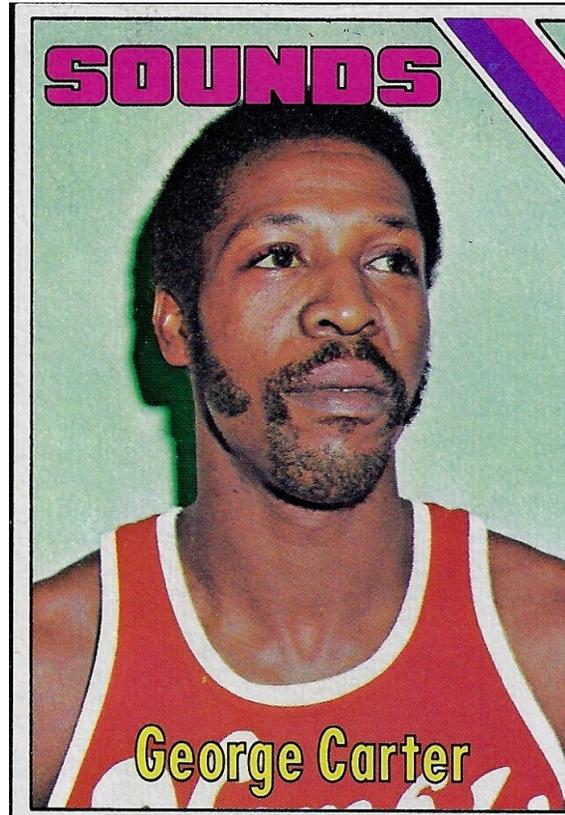
"The first conversation I had with George, he and I had words with each other," Tarter said, *"... because I don't think he believed that the Dropping Dimes Foundation was actually going to help, and I don't blame his skepticism."*

But as the volunteers with the foundation started to prove themselves and to show that they cared about him as a human being and not just for what he did as a basketball player, his heart opened up, his voice lightened demonstrably and George and I started to have fantastic, positive conversations about life.”

Ultimately, Carter was moved into senior housing in Las Vegas, thanks to Dropping Dimes, which also paid for his moving expenses. For the last year of his life, Carter, finally, found some peace.

And when he passed away seven months ago, the St. Bonaventure community immediately began conversations to have Carter buried in the cemetery across the street from the campus. Abrams called the response from the alumni, who raised money for the headstone, the transport of the remains and the memorial service, “*phenomenal.*”

“We were going to have a funeral (in Las Vegas),” he said. “Of course, there wouldn’t be anybody there. ... This says a lot about St. Bonaventure.”



Bonnies’ men’s basketball coach Mark Schmidt was the last person to offer reflections at the memorial service. Those who preceded him were Carter’s family members, including brother Chuck of Jamestown; former Carter teammate Fran Satalin; and Carter’s former coach, Larry Weise.

“This is Bonaventure at its best,” said Schmidt, who was accompanied to the service by his entire team. *“We always talk about the ‘Bonaventure Way,’ ‘Once a Bonnie, always a Bonnie,’ and ‘Bonaventure people take care of Bonaventure people.’ Sometimes, that’s shallow, but this isn’t shallow. This is fact, this is reality.”*

Speaking without the benefit of notes, Schmidt said, “these people wouldn’t be here if George wasn’t a special man. Everybody has played on teams, and you have good teammates, you have so-so-teammates and you have some bad teammates. George must have been a helluva teammate, because of what this day has become.

“There is nothing better than being a Bonnie and George epitomized that. This is a special day. This just shows what Bonaventure is all about. People are coming hundreds and thousands of miles away to celebrate a teammate. Accolades to the people who put this together. It’s a testament to the teammates, but it’s more of a testament to George. He’s looking up now and, I assume, he’s thinking, ‘Holy god, I had no idea I was this important,’ but he is.

“And out of the dark there is some light.”

In the shadow of an oak tree.

