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## BEST POST-GAME TRADITION in AMERICA -- 'The Walk' Sports Illustrated (8/31/92)

\* \* \* VIDEO: Walkin' in 2010 \* \* \*



The debut of "The Walk" November 13, 1971  
Photo by Gregg Peterson '72

### Greg Peterson talks about iconic "The Walk" photo.

Every Williams football game, home and away, the Ephs arrive by bus. The ride to home games is usually in a school bus from Cole Field House on the northern edge of campus to Weston Field on the southern edge.

The history of "The Walk" after a Homecoming win over Wesleyan or Amherst is generally thought to have started as a team event in 1971, the first year Bob Odell was head coach of the Ephs. Odell did not start The Walk, nor encourage it. "We were just so darn happy to have beaten Amherst it did not surprise me to see our team go out the main gate and head up towards Spring Street," said Odell. "I just thought, 'Well isn't that nice, the boys look like they are having a little fun.'" Odell walked over and got in a car and drove back to Cole Field House.

While Odell did not start The Walk, he did re-introduce the Ephs' to purple helmets. Odell had unveiled the solid purple helmet at his first team meeting saying, "See this helmet? From now on, we're going to be the bad guys," recalled Ernie Smith '72. Williams has played in purple helmets ever since.



Current Eph helmet

On November 13, 1971 Williams snapped a three-game Amherst win streak with a convincing 31-14 win on Weston Field. In the three previous games Amherst had tallied an impressive 115 points to the Ephs' 49. The 1971 football Ephs were a happy bunch that November day. They were more than ready to get a shower and begin celebrating the end of an Amherst win streak and the beginning of a Williams streak.

No Eph player who walked that day and no Eph fan who saw them walking had any idea just how big an event had just been born.

The Ephs walked the first seven years under Bob Odell. "You know, this is an event that could only happen at Williams," said Odell. "It just seemed so much about how close the teams are and how much they want to celebrate their victory with everybody in town."

The 31-14 win was the backdrop for a Williams tradition that Sports Illustrated dubbed "The Best Post-Game Tradition in America" in its August 31, 1992 issue.

Many Eph football players had walked in uniform up Spring Street after beating Amherst or Wesleyan on Homecoming weekend before, but November 13, 1971 stands out as the first time the whole team made The Walk as a group. "For some reason, either due to the crowd being in the way or a mechanical malfunction, we sat there [on the school bus] not moving for what seemed to me to be too long," remembered Smith. Dave "The Tank" Shawan, a defensive tackle from Columbus, Ohio who is credited with urging the team to forego waiting for the bus, shouted out, "To hell with the bus, let's walk back!"

"Suffice to say, we were giddy with our victory over Amherst and the first Little Three Championship for Williams football in a very long time," said Smith

Shawan, a big lug of a guy with a gregarious personality, was one of the leaders of the merry Ephs as they went right up Latham Street and turned right and proceeded up the middle of Spring Street, stopping traffic and being bathed in showers of cheers and applause as fans responded to seeing their team celebrate on The Walk back to Cole Field House.

"The story is that I was at the game and had my camera along," said Gregg Peterson '72. "After the game was over I snapped a few crowd photos, including a couple of my future wife Carter standing in front of the scoreboard.

"Then we just started wandering back up Spring Street toward campus. The team had gone into their shelter building after the game, but somebody decided to walk back to Cole [Field House]. I recall hearing that the bus was tardy coming to get them.

"Anyway, about the time I reached the post office, I heard this commotion behind me and looked back to see the team coming around the corner. I ran across the street so that I'd have the afternoon light to my back and got up on the steps of some store or perhaps the Williamstown National Bank for a higher angle and then snapped off several frames as the guys swept by up the street."

"The Walk" is for the players only.

St. Pierre's Barber Shop on Spring Street became a team destination for The Walk in 1987 when David Montgomery, a Williamstown resident and Eph standout, told Roger St. Pierre that, if the Ephs won and stopped a four-year Walk drought, the team would be stopping by to celebrate. The Walk has stopped at three different St. Pierre's locations on the street over the years.

"The barber on Spring St. was Roger St. Pierre and for years he'd been telling Dave [Montgomery] about how the team would march up Spring Street after the homecoming game," said Mike McLaughlin '89. "It was such a great tradition that he wished the players still did it. So, the week before Homecoming, Dave told him that when we wore Amherst, that we'd be making The Walk. Roger and his long-time assistant Vern said they'd be ready for us. So, after the win, those of us within Dave's sphere of influence did just that. There were only about 10 of us and we were all underclassmen, but we made The Walk and, when we got to St. Pierre's Barber Shop, Roger and Vern were inside with beer and some hearty congratulations.



**Dave "The Tank" Shawa**



**Victorious 2005 Ephs walk up Spring Street**

"The two things I remember about that day were that we were inside the barber shop drinking beer and the crowds walking up Spring St. all took notice, and they seemed to get a kick out of it. Also, by the time we walked back to Cole Field House the place was pretty empty and they were getting ready to close up, so we were lucky to get back into our street clothes."

When the Ephs won 25-7 over Amherst not only did the Williams players show up at St. Pierre's, where Roger had some cold beverages and cigars on hand for the celebration but David Montgomery's twin brother Gordon who played for Amherst also stopped by – well after the Williams players had left. Gordon was not in uniform as he had already showered and put his tie and sport coat back on.

David Montgomery is credited with rejuvenating The Walk by making good on his prediction that the Ephs would win the 1987 game and since then The Walk is as close to mandatory for all players as you can get in a free society.

You can't really get 75-100 football players into St. Pierre's, but you can if you win the Homecoming game.

College Football Hall of Fame coach Dick Farley (1987-2003) debuted in 1987 as the Ephs' head coach and ended a six-year win streak by Amherst, leading to Montgomery's revitalization of The Walk. Farley went on to compile an amazing 16-0-1 record in Homecoming contests, with only the scoreless tie with Amherst on a quagmire called Wesley Field in 1995 keeping him from 17-0-0. "It's something the kids started and they get excited about it," said Farley. "They don't want to be the team that doesn't Walk, I know that much, but I've never seen it and I've no idea what goes on inside, except I've seen a few of the haircuts days later."

On occasion a photographer has been admitted to the festivities in the barbershop for a moment, or a videographer, or a celebrity, but other than that it's just Roger and the Ephs. Today sodas and water are the cold beverages on hand, along with victory cigars. The barber shop pulsates to the singing of the Williams fight song and various cheers while Eph fans gather outside to cheer along and await the scene that is unveiled when the team exits the shop and is greeted by another loud roar.



**ESPN's Chris Fowler in St. Pierre's**

In 2007 when ESPN's College GameDay was at the 122nd confrontation with Amherst, GameDay host Chris Fowler stopped at St. Pierre's for a moment to congratulate the Ephs on blanking Amherst 20-0 and thank them for allowing ESPN to experience their Homecoming.

The Walk has now taken on a life of its own as the Williamstown Police Department closes Spring Street and hundreds of people gather along the street and in store fronts and the apartments above the street, with hundreds more congregating just outside St. Pierre's to see what spectacle will emerge.

The large group of Ephs that parade up Spring Street and into St. Pierre's emerges after about a half hour and parents and friends are surprised but proud to see who has what hair left. Some players gather for group photos with others who have been shorn or "styled," and just as darkness looms the large group splinters into twos and threes that laugh and joke as they cheer their way the last half a mile to Cole Field House.

Celebratory haircuts entered the picture when St. Pierre's became a destination. Sometimes it's upperclassmen after a victory over Wesleyan wanting to fire up the boys for next week's visit to Amherst or first-years after the Amherst game honoring their older football brothers with some unusual stylings of their hair (or lack thereof).

The Walk to Cole Field House from St. Pierre's is one of those on which your feet don't even touch the ground.

Sometimes players branch out after leaving the barbershop and head to their rooms and more than a few have stopped by Sawyer Library to let out a few passionate cheers.

"Beating Amherst is always a wonderful thing because they're such worthy opponents," stated Ernie Smith. "At the time, there was nothing better. My days at Williams and that day in particular will always remain as a highlight in my life."

Former Eph head coach Mike Whalen won the first five Homecoming Games he has participated in. "There is no other tradition in college football today that means more to the student-athletes than The Walk," noted Whalen. "Our players understand that in order to take The Walk up Spring Street they must prepare as hard as they possibly can during the week before the game. If they're successful and earn the victory, then they're rewarded with The Walk. Some of our players most memorable moments occur when they make that Walk with their teammates, supported by our fans, student body, and families."

On the morning of November 14, 2009, a group of Dave Shawan's former Eph teammates and his sister Diane gathered in St. Pierre's Barber Shop to unveil a commemorative plaque proclaiming the start of The Walk as being November 13, 1971.

Shawan succumbed to a long illness in 2008 and his Eph friends have not forgotten him or his sister Diane.



**All-American Graham Goldwasser does some styling in 2003**



**Reg Pierce '72 (l.), Diane Shawan Luken and John Murray '72 at the unveiling of the plaque**

While Dave was going through his final days, former teammates made their way to Ohio to be with him, and they've continued reaching out to Diane to let her know how much they love and missed her brother is.

Awhile back, a grateful Diane Shawan Luken sent a note to Reggie Pierce '72 conveying her thoughts of Dave's teammates love for Dave and their support for her.

Diane wrote:

"I hope you know how MUCH it meant to Dave that you and Ernie Smith made the trip to Columbus to visit him!!! I honestly believe that being with you guys and receiving much support from other classmates and teammates is what sustained him through his toughest times!

"I am truly blown away by the way so many from the Williams community rallied and reached out to Dave to remind him that he was still a beloved part of that community. I am also so very touched and so humbled by the outpouring of love and support sent to me by all of you! I came into this world with just one brother and as I lost him, so many of you embraced me and made me part of the Williams 'family!' Now I feel as though I have lots of brothers! I cannot begin to tell you how much that has meant to me. It really and truly is what has gotten me through these past sad weeks, Reggie! I can never thank you enough for that!!!"



**"The Walk" plaque at home on the wall of St. Pierre's Barber Shop on Spring Street.**

The football Ephs have been walking since Dave Shawan led them up Spring Street as a group for the first time. Since that November day in 1971, The Walk has taken on its own and has been formally recognized as truly unique.

Tradition never graduates.

Walk on Ephmen!



Est. 1908

"Only 3 hours from Fenway Park"

18 Spring Street  
Williamstown, MA 01267

413-458-5861

July 20,

My name is Roger St Pierre. I began working as a barber at St Pierre's Barbershop located on the west side of Spring Street between Bemis's store and The Williams Co-op the spring of 1968, I was 18 years old. In September 1968 the barbershop relocated to the new Centre building at the corner of Bank Street and Spring Street. The following May I enlisted in the Army. I rejoined the barbershop in 1971 at its new location in the Walden block next to the movie theater on the east side of Spring Street. Finally, the barbershop moved to its present location at 20 Spring Street in December 1989.

It is well known that **THE WALK** really began in November 1971 when [after Williams upset Amherst 31-14] Senior lineman, David "Tank" Shawn, grew impatient with a stalled bus and directed his team to walk up Spring Street to the Cole Field house with the now famous cry, "To hell with the bus, let's walk back!"

I vividly remember Spring Street merchants and patrons rushing to the sidewalks to witness about 75 football players walking up the middle of the street like victorious warriors. Helmets in hand singing and cheering, no one would guess that that moment would give birth to a 30 plus year tradition.

I have read and heard many accounts on how the barbershop got involved with this amazing celebration and most are incorrect. This is an attempt to invite players and fans to fill in the gaps in my memory and maybe together get it closer to the truth.

## THE WALK

In 1972 Williams beat Wesleyan 35-2. Because it was not the last game of the season the team did the traditional bus trip back to Cole Field House and did not walk. The 1973 30-14 win over Amherst brought the whole team up Spring Street only in smaller groups with a few riding in cars. This pattern continued in 1975 with a 25-6 win over Amherst. By 1977 it was expected that the team would come up Spring Street after a win over Amherst, which they did after prevailing 21-13. The barbershop had become friendly with some of the players and we tossed a few cold beverages to some of the players to celebrate the win. Some came in the barbershop briefly to share stories, but involvement was short and sweet. Over the next two years, this tradition grew in popularity.

Williams lost to Amherst in 1981 so the walk up Spring Street did not take place. However, in 1982 Williams beat Wesleyan with a miracle last play of the game finish. Against breaking with tradition, the team spontaneously walked up Spring Street. Due to the barbershop's strategic location near King's Package Store, we were able to quickly finish a few cold beverages to hand out.

From 1983 to 1985, Williams lost their Homecoming games. By 1986 the barbershop had developed a close relationship with some of the players. One of those players was a hometown boy, David Montgomery. On one occasion, Dave and I were talking football, recalling the team walking up Spring Street after Homecoming wins. We agreed that if the team beat Wesleyan the barbershop would receive them after the game. Because it had been a few years since the tradition, no one walked except for David and about seven of his sophomore friends. As the players shed their football pads and relaxed over some cold beverages and some chicken left over from the Lions Club food booth, they shared stories. Two hours later they walked back to Cole Field House to find it closing. A new tradition was born.

Williams hosted Amherst in 1987. Defensive lineman David Montgomery had an even bigger incentive to win this game. David's older brother Gordon was an offensive line player for Amherst, which had a six-game win streak over Williams. This time everyone that I talked to on the team promised they would march up Spring Street when they won. They did, 25-7, and just like that first walk in 1971 they came as one unit like an army of gorillas. The barbershop could not possibly have prepared for what came next. As the team walked up the middle of Spring St. and approached the barbershop they turned and about 75-85 players charged into the 20 ft sq. barbershop. Not knowing what would come next I found a perch next to the cash register and watched as the team began singing songs. My favorite:

**Yard by yard we'll fight our way**

**Through Amherst's line,**

**Every man in every play,**

**Striving all the time, [For Williams]**

**Cheer on cheer will rend the air,**

**All behind our men,**

**For we'll fight for dear old Williams**

**And we'll win and win again**

After an hour of sharing great game moments and cheering and singing the team left the shop and headed back to the Field House. I remember feeling incredibly pleased to have taken part in the celebration but shocked at the mess the barbershop was left with. There were pieces of sod even on the ceiling. Yet the ritual of cleaning up the mess after the game has given me the opportunity to greet many of the Williams football alums stopping by to say hello.

Since 1986 every Homecoming win is completed with "The Walk" up Spring St. After the 1989 season the barbershop moved to 20 Spring St. Over the years The Walk has added new rituals -- cigars, crazy haircuts and more songs. What has not changed is the fun the players have celebrating and the respect they give to each other, and of course the frequent and proud singing of Yard by Yard.

Sincerely,

Roger St Pierre

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**Former Eph football players if you would like to share**

**a comment about The Walk or add a remembrance**

**email it to Dick Quinn – dquinn@williams.edu**

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**Williams vs. Amherst (odd years) and Wesleyan (even years) in the Homecoming game.**

Williams victories on Homecoming since 1971:

2010	Williams 45	Wesleyan 7
2008	Williams 48	Wesleyan 14
2007	Williams 20	Amherst 0
2006	Williams 51	Wesleyan 21
2005	Williams 34	Amherst 23
2004	Williams 30	Wesleyan 12
2003	Williams 14	Amherst 10
2002	Williams 41	Wesleyan 7
2001	Williams 23	Amherst 20 OT
2000	Williams 28	Wesleyan 7
1999	Williams 10	Amherst 7
1998	Williams 57	Wesleyan 19
1997	Williams 48	Amherst 46
1996	Williams 13	Wesleyan 12
1994	Williams 45	Wesleyan 15
1993	Williams 31	Amherst 2
1992	Williams 28	Wesleyan 23
1991	Williams 37	Amherst 0
1990	Williams 30	Wesleyan 3
1989	Williams 17	Amherst 14
1988	Williams 19	Wesleyan 0
1987	Williams 25	Amherst 7
1982	Williams 27	Wesleyan 24
1980	Williams 9	Wesleyan 0
1979	Williams 19	Amherst 13
1977	Williams 21	Amherst 13
1976	Williams 34	Wesleyan 7
1975	Williams 25	Amherst 6
1974	Williams 35	Wesleyan 16
1973	Williams 30	Amherst 14
1972	Williams 35	Wesleyan 2
1971	Williams 31	Amherst 14



The Ephs are 32-8-1 in Homecoming games since 1971

**In 1999 "The Walk" was a part of the 'Rites of Autumn' that aired on ESPN.**



**Victorious Ephs march up Spring Street to St. Pierre's Barber Shop in 1991**



**2003 Ephs led up Spring St. by the Purple Cow**

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