

PROFILE

Dave Diamont

NAME: David Hunter Diamont
OCCUPATION: Coach, Teacher
BIRTHPLACE: Greensboro
AGE: 47
FAMILY: Wife, Debby;
Daughter, Ashley, 8;
Sons, Davy, 4, Hunter, 2
EDUCATION: B.S., Wake Forest
University; M. Ed.,
Appalachian State University
HOBBIES: Reading Newspapers

By NANCY CRUTCHFIELD
Staff Writer

Dave Diamont has come face to face with one of those situations that forces a man to make a decision that will drastically alter his life.

It was late March when he suffered the chest pains and, upon being examined by a doctor, was admitted to N.C. Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem.

At the age of 47, Diamont, a football coach and avid sports fan, underwent four heart bypasses, a step that was necessary to ensure his quality and length of life.

But, his recovery was not yet complete when a recurrence of those chest pains in June forced him to undergo yet another procedure — an angioplasty in which a balloon was inserted to open his arteries.

The experience changed nearly every aspect of Diamont's life. From the foods he ate to his work habits to his time with his family at their Pilot Mountain home.

"In a way, it sort of robbed me of some of my youth," he said.

"It plays mental games with you. Anybody that has gone through this, and there are many, many people out there with the exact same thing, you feel like you're living on borrowed time in a way. You worry you're doing all you can do to extend your life or live as normal a life as you possibly can. You hope medical technology advances quickly. And at other times, when things go real well, you forget about it."

Diamont's entire life has been linked to athletic competition in one form or another.

It started shortly after his birth in Greensboro to David Elijah and Hyacinth Hunter. His father was a teacher and coach, which meant the family moved quite a bit.

His earliest memories are when the family lived in Statesville where his father was the coach at football, basketball, boys and girls and baseball at Statesville High School.

When Diamont was in the second grade, the family moved to Tabor City. That resulted from his father's summer job at a camp in what is now part of Myrtle Beach.

Diamont's most vivid memory of living in Tabor City was when Hurricane Hazel struck in 1954.

"We were right in the eye of the storm," Diamont said. "We lived in a two-story white-frame house with no underpinning."

There was no curbing on the roads at the time, with the rain turning them into rivers, Diamont said, while the tall pine trees snapped under the heavy winds.

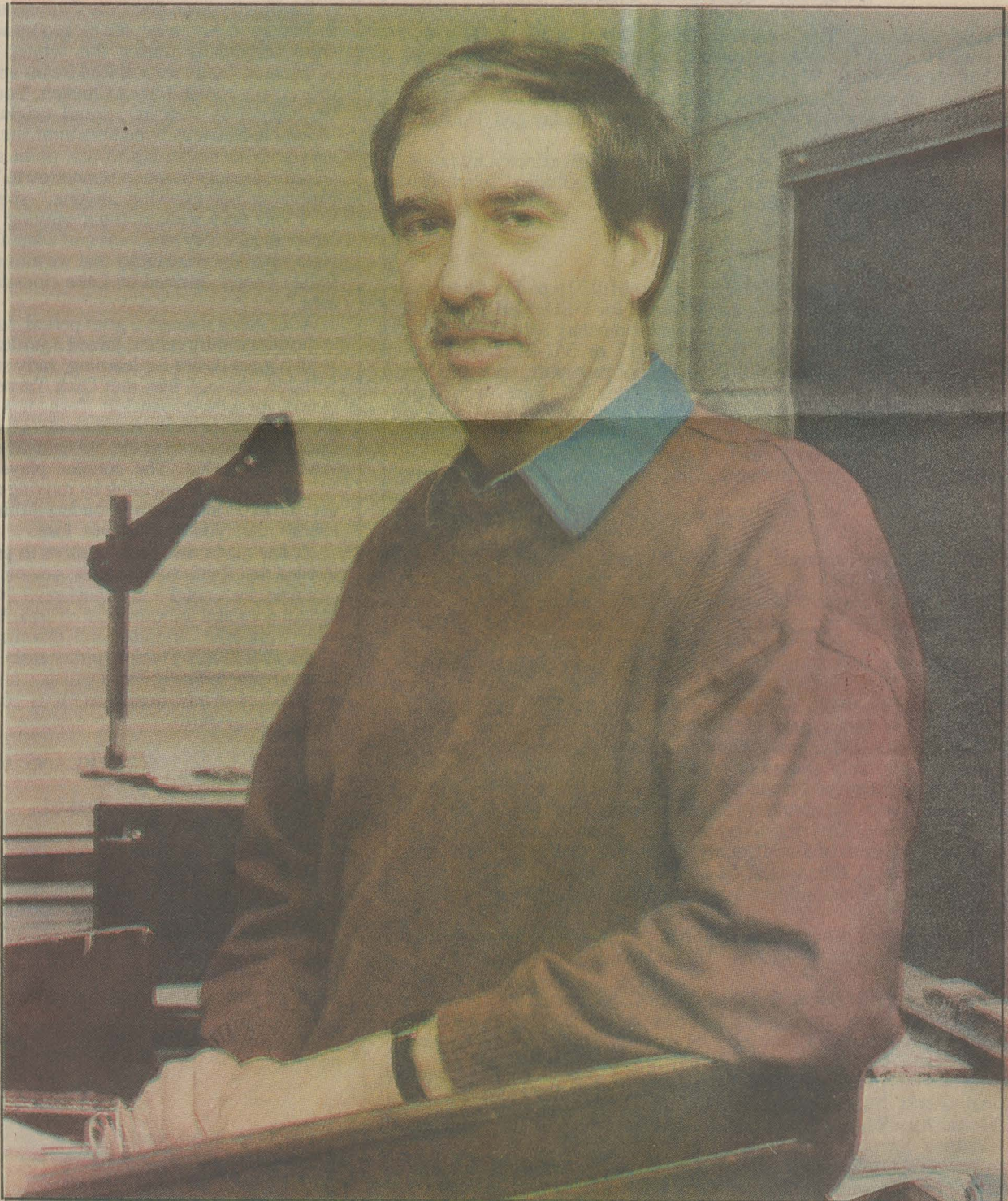
The next day, he said, he traveled to Myrtle Beach and found the two-lane road wiped out. A trip on the beach meant dodging the houses strewn throughout.

The family then moved to Pilot Mountain where the elder Diamont took a job in 1956 coaching football, basketball and baseball at Pilot Mountain High School. Diamont attended school there until the 10th-grade when the county schools consolidated and it became East Surry High School.

He also found himself on the football team coached by his father, which caused a rather uncomfortable situation for the young football player, when the starting quarterback, Skip Archer, a junior, broke his leg in practice just before the team's first game.

"Daddy did not want to start his son, a ninth-grader, so he converted a second-string senior center into a quarterback. He was going to hand off and the guy fumbled the first two snaps from center.

"We were playing Ashe Central and they got up 13-0. He finally put me in."



Tim Preston/The Mount Airy News

The elder Diamont called the plays and East Surry came within a point of a win.

Just before Diamont's senior year, his father accepted a position at the YMCA in Gastonia and Diamont found himself attending Frank L. Ashley High School, a 4-A school in Gastonia, now consolidated into Ashbrook High School.

Diamont tried out for the football team.

"Having been a big fish in a small pond, suddenly I was nothing in the ocean. There were five people going out for quarterback."

He made the team and played basketball as well.

In 1964, Diamont graduated from Frank L. Ashley High School, his father took a job at Pilot Mountain Elementary School and the family returned to Surry County.

He enrolled at Wake Forest University, with no idea of what he wanted to do. He did, however, play basketball, making the Demon Deacons team as a walk-on.

Diamont graduated and got his teaching certificate, even though his plans were to join the U.S. Marine Corps and attend the Officer Candidate School at Quantico, Va.

But Alex Gibbs, the head football coach at Mount Airy High School, recruited Diamont, with the support of his parents who preferred to see him somewhere other than in the Marines. Diamont agreed to teach school for one year.

"So, we sort of made a deal and I told my parents I would teach school for one year. I was probably headed to Copeland Elementary School."

His father wanted him to go to Surry Central High School and coach football.

He wound up at Mount Airy High School through the efforts of Gibbs and spent three years coaching the junior varsity basketball team. He had hoped to get the varsity coaching job when Ed West quit, but didn't.

"I was young and got all mad," he said.

He left and went to Appalachian State University, where he earned his master's degree, taking classes in the morning and teaching in the afternoons at Watauga High School and coached basketball there.

In 1972, he returned to Mount Airy and became an assistant to Coach Jerry Hollingsworth.

Politics beckoned in 1974 after a Republican sweep at nearly every level.

Diamont was serving as president of the Surry County Young Democrats and also on the Democrats Executive Committee when a group, in early 1974, was meeting to plot strategies for candidates.

Diamont, sporting a fu manchu mustache and long hair and sideburns, was urged by those in attendance to run.

"I said, 'You people are crazy. I don't have the time and I don't have the money. The idea sort of settled in and it was more or less, well, could I win? And I said that's a challenge.'"

After talking with several people, Diamont decided to give it a shot.

"I didn't know anything about politics," he said.

How quickly he learned.

He went on to land a two-year term in the state House of Representatives, representing the 40th House District, a seat he still holds.

He divided his duties between teaching at Mount Airy High School and serving in the General Assembly, an easy task since he was a bachelor at the time and had no other obligations.

See PROFILE, page 4C

Favorite Book: "The Firm" by John Grisham

Favorite Food: Anything fat-free

Favorite Movie: "Gone With the Wind"

Favorite Song: "Sitting On The Dock Of The Bay"