



When Garland had a ‘Dizzy’ spell . .

If, one day, you’re exploring historic downtown Garland and luck is with you, the ghostly voice of baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Dizzy Dean might ask, "Son, what kind of pitch would you like to miss?"

Or some other of his famous sayings.

Dean was a frequent visitor in the area for more than 20 years, from the 1940s into the 1960s. He lived in Dallas, but his father and two brothers had a farm just north of the city where Dizzy visited, and he spent time in Garland with his good pal James “Red” Bankston, well-known owner of a Ford auto dealership on Main Street, and other friends in the city.

One of major league baseball’s greats, Dean was a prized pitcher for the 1930s St. Louis Cardinals team that won the 1934 World Series.

In that championship season he pitched to a record of 30-7, led National League in strikeouts (19), shutouts (7), was named Male Athlete of the Year by Associated Press, and won the final game of the World Series for the Cardinals with an 11-0 rout of Detroit.

He won four consecutive strikeout titles (1932-1935) and had four seasons with 20 or more wins. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1953.

His baseball career was winding down in the late 1930s, when his brother Paul, also an outstanding pitcher and a member of the Cardinals, bought a farm of about 80 acres for their father just north of Garland. Dizzy was becoming known as for his radio and TV broadcasts of New York Yankee games, which later led to a contract with CBS/TV to be commentator for its national “Game of the Week” broadcasts. That gig made Dizzy famous all over again.

His father, Albert Dean, and Elmer, oldest of the three Dean boys, lived on the farm. Dizzy



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Dizzy Dean, left, and brother Paul (Daffy), relax in hay on Garland area farm in this 1940 Associated Press photo. The brothers kept cattle on the farm where their father and older brother, Elmer, lived for many years.

and his wife, Pat, lived in Dallas for many years after his retirement, moving in the early 1960s to a town in Mississippi where she had grown up.

Until that move, Dizzy was a regular visitor to the farm and to Garland. As late as 1961, an item in *The Dallas Morning News* reported that Dean visited with Bankston in Garland where the two, in addition to sports, had talked about real estate. “Both own properties in Garland and both are landowners in the Phoenix, Arizona, area,” the story related.

Garland old-timers remember Dean accompanying Bankston and other pals for coffee at McKnight’s Drug Store on the Square. And Bankston often entertained Dizzy and other friends in the comfortable Bankston home on

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Lost at the crossing

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Rock Creek Drive, overlooking Duck Creek across from Central Park.

Homer Johnson, longtime athletic director for the Garland school district, was a young football coach in those days and remembers attending some gatherings at Bankston's home. He found Dizzy's stories entertaining, but he says he kept the famed pitcher at a distance because of rumored Bankston/Dean involvement in gambling. "I wanted to keep my boys away from that," says Johnson, adding he was often invited to bring high school athletes with him to the gatherings. (Coincidentally, Bankston would later move to a house just off Miller Road in Williams Estates and sell the place on Rock Creek to Johnson, who still lives there.)

A 1939 *Dallas Morning News* story noted that Dizzy and Paul were in the stands at Garland cheering loudly for an Owl football team that beat the Arlington Colts, 26-19, for the regional championship. ("Billy Rosenbaum," the story reported, "120-pound Garland sophomore backfield ace, stole the show with his sensational end-around sprints and consistent passing.")

How and exactly when Dizzy's father, Albert Dean, came to the Garland area is uncertain. He was a sharecropper in Logan County, Arkansas, near the state's border with Oklahoma when Dizzy was born about 1910, according to the player's official biography. His wife died when Dizzy was eight. He had an older brother, Elmer, and a younger brother, Paul, who became a fine pitcher himself and later joined Dizzy on the Cardinals roster.

Albert Dean, with his young boys in tow, went on the road, working farm-to-farm, as they moved through Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. According to Dizzy, in one of his most popular tales, the family, traveling in two Model Ts, was separated at a railroad crossing. One car, driven by Paul, crossed the tracks as a freight train bore down, and the other, driven by Elmer, was forced to wait. "He never caught up with us," Dizzy said. "That was in 1925 and we didn't see him again until 1930."

Pete Nelson, whose father owned a blacksmith shop near Garland's Square, remembers that Elmer Dean frequented the place and sometimes carried a baseball.

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Dizzy, in 1943 Associated Press photo, tends to his Hereford cattle.

Playing ‘Bonnie and Clyde’ on hunting trip

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“He mowed our yard and did odd jobs around our house on Avenue D,” said Nelson.

Nelson says that Elmer told a variation of Dizzy’s separation story.

“He said that he, his dad, Dizzy and Paul were driving through East Texas in an old Model T. They stopped for gas, and after filling the car’s tank, Dizzy, Paul and their father had driven on down the road. It was some time later, that they missed Elmer.

“Elmer said he worked for several people around the town where he was left and then, a long time later, he saw a picture of Dizzy in a newspaper sports section. He went to the police and told them that Dizzy was his brother, and they contacted Dizzy and the family was finally reunited.”

Stories about Dizzy and his association with Garland abounded in those days, Nelson remembers.

“One story I heard was about a hunting trip Dizzy made with Red Bankston, A.V. Morrison Jr., Howard Shugart and George Bateman,” Nelson related, chuckling.

“They got drunk and had to call back to Garland to have someone come and get them. They had shot up Bankston’s new 1948 Ford to make it look like the Bonnie and Clyde death car.”

Nelson said that Elmer told him that Paul was a better pitcher than Dizzy, but that that he broke a toe and couldn’t control the ball any longer, and retired from baseball.

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A favorite of fans, but not English teachers

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According to a 1939 newspaper story, Albert, who had settled on Paul's 80-acre farm north of Garland, married Mrs. Mattie Sandifer in a Rockwall ceremony in February of that year, and they moved to his farm. She owned acreage not far from Dean's, but lived in Dallas and leased the farm. Dizzy and Paul owned a number of Hereford cattle which grazed on the farm.

The new Mrs. Dean is quoted: "I promised to do the cooking and the housework, and to be pleasant. I'm a good cook. . . I want to be a real mother to the boys, and I believe I can. . . He promised to make a good living and to buy me a car."

Paul's success in professional baseball apparently afforded him enough financial comfort to buy the Garland farm for his father in the mid-1930s. A 1937 *Dallas Morning News* story reported that Dizzy was on his way to Garland from Hot Springs, Arkansas, to see Paul's month-old son, Paul Jerome, for the first time.

Albert died in 1956, several years after his wife Mattie. Pallbearers at his burial included Garland businessmen Bankston, Roland Coomer, and McRee Davis.

Dizzy's major league baseball career was relatively short, but impressive for his pitching ability as well as his braggadocio and down-home personality, which kept him in the public eye long after his retirement from the game.

He delighted New York Yankees fans in the 1950s when he broadcast team games on TV, and built big national audiences later when he joined CBS-TV to comment for the network's "Game of the Week" until he retired in the 1960s.

He was a great favorite of baseball lovers and a bane to English teachers across the country for his twisted grammar. The Missouri State Teachers Association once



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Dizzy broadcasting in the 1950s.

filed a complaint with the FCC about Dean's mangling of the language.

In 1950, Dean had to cancel a speaking engagement with an SMU speech class to make a business trip to New York. His announced topic: "Radio Announcing I Have Did."

Of his early days pitching for a minor league team, Dizzy once said: "In those days I threw harder than a cannon and the ball looked like a pea-dab when it come over the

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‘Calm and confidential,’ as always

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plate so I didn't waste too much time getting to where I was going in baseball."

He once told ad copywriters that he couldn't read the long sentence about Falstaff beer they handed him: "I ain't going to recite this here long piece. I'm just going to say, 'Folks, they's only two kinds of beer, Falstaff and root!'"

Switching from the audio medium of radio to visual TV "commultating" didn't bother him, Dizzy told an interviewer. "I'm just as calm and confidential in front of those cameras as anywhere else. If a batter is taking his stance at the plate, all you got to do is

name 'im. All the folks can see he's taking his stance."

Albert Dean died in Dallas in April, 1956, at the age of 81.

Elmer Dean died in Dallas in September, 1956, at the age of 56.

Dizzy Dean died in July, 1974, in Reno, Nevada, at the age of 64

Paul Dean died in Springdale, Arkansas, in 1981 at the age of 68.

Red Bankston, Dizzy's close friend in Garland, died in May, 1964, of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at the age of 46. Pallbearers at his services included Sheriff Bill Decker.

What Dizzy said: Some memorable quotes

"Anybody who's ever had the privilege of seeing me play knows that I am the greatest pitcher in the world."

"It puzzles me how they know what corners are good for filling stations. Just how did they know gas and oil was under there?"

"Let the teachers teach English and I will teach baseball. There is a lot of people in the United States who say 'isn't' and they ain't eating."

"Sure I eat what I advertise. I eat Wheaties for breakfast. A good bowl of Wheaties with bourbon can't be beat."

For further reading:

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=13> search=1&entryID=13

<http://curtsmith.mlblogs.com/2006/02/15/dizzy-dean-easily-halls-best-broadcast-choice/>

<https://youtu.be/7FSYUNxSnnE>

Garland Landmark Society

Heritage Crossing

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