

# **‘THE G.O.A.T.’**

**A conversation with former K-  
State QB Lynn Dickey's  
daughters**

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Former Kansas State legendary quarterback Lynn Dickey, middle, and his four daughters, from left, Natalie, Elizabeth, Meredith and Paloma.  
Courtesy photo

Lynn Dickey, Kansas State's starting quarterback from 1968-1971, a KSU Hall of Famer, Ring of Honor member, Member of the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame and NFL quarterback for 14 years was the Wildcat football hero of the 1970's, the glory years of K-State football until Bill Snyder arrived.

I have for a dozen or more times interviewed former players about their Wildcat life, but this time I am taking a new twist. You see, Lynn didn't just bring us great football times, he has four beautiful and accomplished daughters — Natalie, Meredith, and Elizabeth, all of which are K-Staters. His fourth daughter, Paloma, who went to the University of Arkansas, is a labor and delivery nurse.

Due to their crazy work and parenting schedules and inability to meet them in person, we emailed back and forth over a few weeks. My initial conversations started with Meredith, then Natalie and finally Elizabeth. Their answers are in that order.

**Chapman: What's it like to be the child of a star athlete?**

**Meredith:** We didn't know anything different, so as a child he just seemed like a regular dad. Looking back, there are definitely experiences that "weren't normal". Little things like walking into the living room as he was watching film on a projector to prepare for a game. We would tip-toe around to not disturb him. In the off-season, both of our parents were home from mid-December to August when my dad left for training camp. Our mom was a very traditional stay-at-home mom and kept busy carpooling, taking care of the house, and playing tennis. While our dad was playing golf, running sprints on our street, and working out to stay fit. I didn't know anyone else who had both parents home and not going to "work". As a speech pathologist, I can spot a Wisconsin accent anywhere. I love striking up a conversation with Packer fans. We'll get to talking and his name will come up. It's funny to see people's reaction when they learn he's my dad.

**Natalie:** I knew it was unique in the sense that we went only half a school year in Green Bay and the second half in Kansas City. I did this all of my elementary through sixth grade. I had two sets of friends at each school, and it was fun to go back and forth with going away and coming home parties.

**Elizabeth:** I am the youngest by six years from Natalie and four years from Meredith, so I only did the split semesters in Green Bay/Kansas City for Kindergarten and preschool. I did love having my Fall friends and Spring friends and thought that everyone did that and everyone's dad played football. My "claim to fame" was when I was featured in the September 1983 Sports Illustrated edition. They did a feature on my dad and got a picture of us throwing a frisbee in the backyard when I was three years old. I have a vivid memory of being at the Snow Bowl in December 1985, Bucs vs. Packers, which was my dad's last season. I was all dressed up to sit in the "Packer Wives" suite with more than 12 inches of snow on the ground. We snuck hot dogs in our coats because my mom didn't want to pay for the expensive food in the suite. Yes, we grew up with my

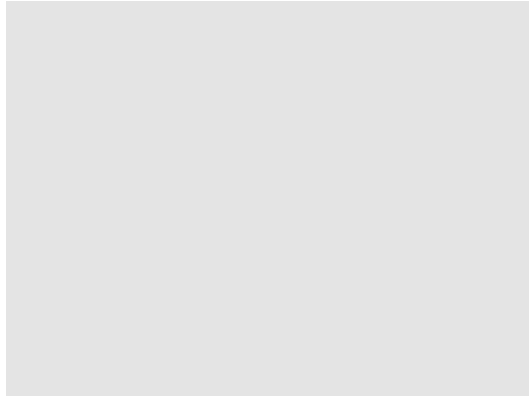
dad being a professional football player, but my parents were not extravagant with spending, and they made sure we had a very normal childhood.

We never traveled to away games, so we always watched the games on TV with my mom and sisters. No one wanted to sit next to my mom, as she would jump up and down on the couch and scream at the game. We thought she was crazy. Ha! We now get it as we are older, that would be so stressful to watch your husband play football on TV.

**Chapman: When did you realize your dad was a celebrity?**

**Meredith:** Growing up in Green Bay, which is not a big town, people would see us at a restaurant or after the game and ask for his autograph. I remember the guy who worked at the grocery store accepting a check from my mom and seeing the look on the guy's face when he read their names on the check. I knew it was a strange interaction, but we never talked about it being a big deal.

**Elizabeth:** I remember a boy in my Kindergarten class in Green Bay invited me to the zoo with all of his friends to an all-boy birthday party and thinking I probably got invited so he could possibly meet my dad or get his autograph. That was when I really realized that what he does for a living is not normal! We went to all the Packers home games and would ride home with my dad. Back then, fans had access to the players' parking lot, and they would be surrounding our car and banging on it to get a glimpse of him and get an autograph. I thought it was so crazy and my dad was just trying to drive out of the parking lot. The Packers had a Thanksgiving game in 1984, our family was asked to do a "Happy Thanksgiving" commercial. I remember having the flu and feeling horrible. They did so many takes, and it took forever when I was so sick. I remember going to school on Monday and everyone was asking me about the commercial. I don't think I really understood what we were doing until my classmates made a big deal of it.



Lynn Dickey held the K-State record for passing yards in a career for 38 years.  
Mercury file photo

**Chapman: Did Lynn encourage you to do sports?**

**Meredith:** Not really. Cheerleading was my main activity in high school. I'm sure he would have loved for us to be more competitive, but I was just too passive. I tried softball and would wait for the ball to roll to me before I would pick it up. I also tried golf one summer, but it wasn't my thing because I got blisters on my hand, ha-ha. He attended plenty of dance and piano recitals!

**Natalie:** We were all pretty girly and did dance, cheer and took piano lessons. We weren't the aggressive sport-type of girls. He accepted that and never pushed it.

**Elizabeth:** Like my sisters, I mostly cheered and danced. I definitely was the tallest cheerleader around, ha! I was 5-foot-10 my freshman year of high school. I also played basketball, softball and golf. My dad always said I had potential for basketball and golf if I had been more aggressive and practiced more.

**Chapman: Was he ever your coach?**

**Meredith & Elizabeth:** No he never did, but he did coach Natalie.

**Natalie:** He helped coach one of my softball teams in elementary school, and our team name was "Dickey's Darlings". He also coached the boys' football team of my friends when we were in middle school.

**Chapman: Tell me about each of your best athletic moments.**

**Natalie:** We've all been asked (because of our height) if we were basketball or volleyball players. I am the shortest of the three of us at 5'8" — Meredith is 5'10" and Elizabeth is 6'. Growing up, we tried various sports, but nothing majorly competitive. My best athletic moment was probably doing fitness competitions as an adult and placing in the top 5 of four shows.

**Meredith:** I feel like more of an athlete as an adult than I was as a child. I play tennis about 3-4 times a week and I've played in the championship match for my tennis league. I ran a half marathon once, then crossed that off my list!

**Elizabeth:** Mine is not traditionally what you think of, but definitely the hardest I have worked in my life and my biggest accomplishment. My husband Jeff has Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD) and was in kidney failure in 2021. It was either go on dialysis or receive a kidney transplant. I initially went through the process to become a living kidney donor and was denied based on my elevated blood pressure. I decided to make nutrition and exercise changes thanks to the help from Natalie, who owns Fired Upp Fitness and is a personal trainer/nutrition coach. After three months of working very hard, I was able to lower my blood pressure and was able to get to the next steps of being a kidney donor. After going through the whole process, I was a match for him and was able to donate my kidney in November 2021.

**Chapman: How is Jeff now?**

**Elizabeth:** He is doing great and able to live a normal life. He has had some bumps along the way, but overall, he is doing well!

**Chapman: What was your K-State experience?**

**Natalie:** All my high school friends and boyfriend went to KU, so after the first semester I tried to switch, but my dad refused my request. He said he wouldn't pay for my college if I did. So, I reluctantly went back and stuck it out another semester. Even though I

spent many weekends in Lawrence visiting that boyfriend that eventually became my husband, I'm glad I stayed. My favorite part from KSU was being a Chi Omega (Greek sorority house). It was special joining that house because our mom and two aunts were also K-State Chi Omegas. I met some of my best friends there and we still hang out 32 years later.

**Meredith:** Fun! I never thought about going anywhere else but KSU, so it was a no-brainer. I loved being in the Chi O house because I got to be there with Natalie. I met some of my best friends there, too. It was fun when my dad came up on game days. My friends would laugh because I would get dressed up for games to sit in the president's suite with my dad.

**Elizabeth:** K-State has a special place in my heart! My husband jokes that I need to tone down my EMAW sometimes. I bleed purple and college was definitely one of the best times in my life. Meredith just graduated when I started in 1998, so I didn't get the sister experience, but met my husband and very best friends in Manhattan. I also was a Chi O and game days were my favorite. I would get to the football stadium early to get a close ICAT seat and stay for the whole game. There was no going out during halftime, I didn't want to chance missing the game. My dad would come to quite a few games.

**Chapman:** Elizabeth, I met you in the President's suite a couple of times, in fact I met all three of you there at different times over the years ... yet none of you remembered me! Hahaha.

**Elizabeth:** (laughs) For those games, I was excited to get lunch with him at 12th Street, now Kite's, and sit in President Wefald's suite. I remember reading an article in the KSU Collegian my freshman year after beating Nebraska. My Dad was on the front page since the last time we had beat Nebraska was in 1968 when he was QB. That was a surreal experience for me!

**Chapman:** Meredith, you were recently in Green Bay with your husband, how was that experience for you? How was it for him? Have you all been together before? Tell me about those trips back to Wisconsin.

**Meredith:** My husband Jeremiah and I went to the Chiefs-Packers game this past season with Paloma and her boyfriend, my dad and his wife and another couple. We all went to the game when they played at Lambeau in 2015. Natalie's husband had been once before, but it was the first time for Jeremiah and Jeff. It was really fun to be back in GB, see Lambeau renovated and how that area around the stadium has been developed. My dad took us down on the field and he even saw one of his trainers who was still there. We visited the Packer Hall of Fame, and it was crazy for our husbands to see how he was recognized by other visitors and asked for his autograph.

**Elizabeth:** The trip in 2015 was a blast to show our husbands our old stomping grounds and where we lived in Green Bay. Lambeau was a treat to see how much it had changed. Before that, we hadn't been back since my dad was inducted into the Packer Hall of Fame in 1992. My husband and I took my son (15) and daughter (11) to Green Bay with my dad in 2021, a month before our transplant. To see Lambeau and the Hall of Fame through my kid's eyes was pretty neat. We had a couple of fans stop my Dad to get autographs and my kid's minds were blown. To them, he's just Papa Dickey.

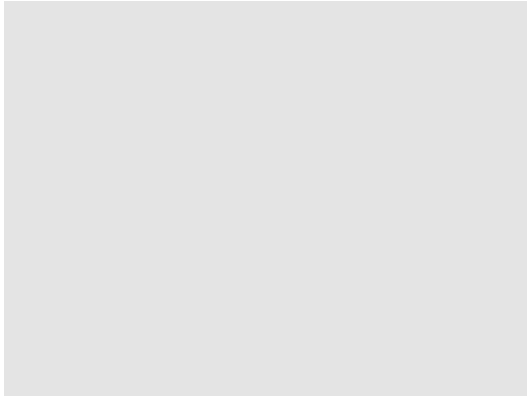
**Chapman: Are you all Packer Fans?**

**All Three:** I'd say we root for the Packers unless they are playing the Chiefs. We are actually all much bigger Kansas City Chiefs fans.

**Chapman: Tell me your thoughts about Aaron Rodgers or Bart Starr?**

**Meredith:** It was weird to see Aaron Rodgers wear our dad's number 12. When I see someone wearing that jersey, I find myself looking at their back to check for Dickey or Rodgers. It's usually Rodgers!

**Natalie:** I can only really speak about Bart Starr. Elizabeth was probably too young to remember, but Meredith and I always felt honored to have met Bart. He was a "class act" as our dad would say. He and his wife, Cherry, were as nice as nice can be.



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Former Kansas State quarterback Lynn Dickey holds his plaque after being inducted into the Ring of Honor on Aug. 31, 2002.  
Mercury file photo

### **Chapman: What are your favorite Lynn Dickey stories?**

**Meredith:** It amazes me that I'm still learning stories about my dad. We recently had lunch for my birthday, and we were talking about his draft experience coming out of KSU. It was very different than it is today. He didn't have an agent and didn't even attend the draft. He also didn't own a suit and had to borrow a sport coat from a friend to be honored when his hometown of Osawatomie celebrated "Lynn Dickey Day". My dad was picked in the 3rd round by the Houston Oilers, but they had also taken a quarterback in the 1st round. He played behind Dan Pastorini for 5 years. Every week he prepared for the game and showed up ready to play, waiting for his turn. He worked hard in the off season and kept meticulous notes on the game. After 5 years of perseverance, his patience was waning, and he wanted to play. He asked to be traded and ended up in Green Bay where he would play as the starting quarterback for the next 10 years, leaving his legacy and earning a spot in the Packer Hall of Fame.

**Natalie:** I'll share a story of a lesson that my dad taught us. He has told us many stories about his adventures growing up in Osawatomie. He did some funny and ornery things for sure. But he was always serious about sports and his responsibility to his team. He has one story about goofing around with his buddies on railroad ties. They had a big game the next day and when his friends were trying to get him to take part, he said, "I'm out" on messing around and went home. He said he didn't want to get hurt accidentally

and not be able to play the game. Silly story, but it has always stuck with me. If either of my kids have something big coming up, I'm always telling them to think twice before doing anything risky leading up to it. As my dad would say "how dumb would that be to get hurt and not be able to play your game?"

**Elizabeth:** Tagging onto Natalie's story about his time growing up in Osawatomie. ... He talked about how he played/practiced outside until it was time for dinner. And then go back outside again. Whether it was shooting baskets, throwing the football, or playing catch with a baseball. He was always practicing, he wanted to constantly improve the sport he was playing. No one told him to practice, he didn't have a special coach for each sport like we have now in today's world. He had a strong drive to better himself. After Friday night football games, his buddies would go drink beer and hang out. Not my dad, he wanted to go home and stay focused. He would study the playbook frontwards and backwards. Soak up everything he could. I believe his discipline, hard-work, focus, and determination lead him to his successful career in football.

**Chapman: What was it like for a guy to try to date a daughter of Lynn Dickey?**

**Meredith:** This is a common question we've been asked before. I think people would be surprised how normal he was as a dad when he came to his daughters and dating. He wasn't any more protective than any other father. The boys' perception of him was that he was going to be scary, when in fact he is a very laid-back guy with a great sense of humor.

**Elizabeth:** Natalie and Bryan had already been married for a year when Meredith and I met our husbands. My dad and step-mom Ana were hosting a Mexican night with tostadas and margaritas. Meredith and I decided to bring our boyfriends, now husbands, to meet our dad for the first time. Jeff and I were the last to arrive, we walked in, music was blaring, and everyone was dancing in the living room drinking margaritas. I thought for sure Jeff was going to run the other way! My Dad loves to joke around and is the most welcoming guy around. We had a lot of fun that night!

**Chapman: Is football your favorite sport?**

**Meredith:** Yes, it's fun to watch because we have a decent amount of knowledge about the game.

**Natalie:** Yes, I'd say football is number one, but I also really enjoy watching soccer.

**Elizabeth:** Yes! I love to watch football. My husband and son also share our love for football. My Dad has given my son Jackson quarterback lessons and tips on being a linebacker. They talk plays and coverages, it's a sweet connection that they share with him being his only grandson.

**Chapman:** Which one of you can throw a football better?

**Elizabeth:** I think we all agree that would be me! But only because I have a son and have played a lot of catch throughout the years.

**Chapman:** Who are your dad's favorite football friends?

**Natalie:** Paul Coffman and Jan Stenerud, because he played with them at Green Bay and still talks and travels to Green Bay events with both of them often.

**Meredith:** I agree. I was recently surprised to find out that my dad is friends with Archie Manning, and they were in the same draft class.

**Chapman:** Who is Lynn Dickey in your words?

**Meredith:** Lynn Dickey is laid back but fiercely competitive. He's detail oriented but also forgetful (thanks to many years of football). He's the only person I know who can tell a longer story than me. He has a nickname for everyone and makes strangers feel like they are his friend. My dad is charismatic, funny, loyal and loving. He has friends from all stages of his life, each with a shared interest in football, golf, fishing or hunting. My dad is the G.O.A.T.

**Natalie:** Lynn Dickey loves his daughters unconditionally and would do anything for us. He's always true to who he is and will always say what's on his mind. He's taught me

grit and hard work. He loves to joke around and always uses funny one-liners from old movies like Caddyshack and Grease. My dad is an awesome dancer and can keep a great beat to music on his steering wheel in the car. He loves to tell (and repeat) stories, and he'll become friends with any server at a restaurant. He's known as Dad and Papa Dickey, and we love him dearly.

**Elizabeth:** My Dad is a big jokester and has always been young at heart. He answers the phone with "watch it jerk" which is a Caddyshack reference. I am worried if he answers the phone with a proper hello! He is a fantastic golfer and has won many tournaments. In his younger years, he may have chucked a few clubs in frustration! He is a guy's guy, but also big on having a neat appearance and being well manicured. He has taught me to never expect anything from anyone, so then you won't be disappointed. My dad is one of the hardest workers I know and just like we are proud of him, he is proud of his five grandchildren: Marley (19), Ellie (17), Jackson (15), Georgia (14), and Callie (11).

**Chapman: What are your dad's nicknames for each of you?**

**Elizabeth:** Natalie is "Rat," Meredith is "Murdith," and Elizabeth is "Lizzy."

**Chapman: What were your K-State degrees and what do you do now for careers?**

**Natalie:** I graduated from KSU in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and went on to get a master's in occupational therapy from Rockhurst University in 1999. I currently own Fired Upp Fitness. I'm a certified personal trainer and nutrition coach specializing in helping women transform their bodies during peri-post menopause.

**Meredith:** I graduated from KSU in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in family studies and human services and majored in communication sciences and disorders. I finished my studies at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln for my master's in communication sciences and disorders. I am a speech-language pathologist and work in early intervention.

**Elizabeth:** I graduated in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in advertising and worked for the General Services Administration in a communications role for about 16 years. I have been a stay-at-home mom for the last six years trying to keep up with all the kids' activities.

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