

## Keith's Corner/McGill News

February 24, 2023

### Growing Up With Sports

Living in McGill in the 1940s/50s, we local heathens learned how to play baseball, football etc from our peers, or by ourselves.

We had a strong desire to learn a sport and be good enough at it to be on one of the local teams. Take baseball for instance. We wanted to get on the local American Legion baseball team when we were old enough to join. So we started by batting rocks with a stick in the back yards or alleys. It was frustrating at first, but we soon mastered it by learning to swing fast and aim accurately. Most of us spent a lot of time playing catch with our fathers or a friend.

During the WWII years baseballs were hard to come by. We would try to get some foul balls that were hit out of the ballpark. A lot of the time we played with an old ball with no cover on it. We would wrap black electrician's tape all over it, to keep the strings from coming apart. Bats were usually some old, scarred bat that was cracked and bound with tape. Not everyone had such things, so if we wanted to have a game on a vacant lot somewhere, we had to find someone with a bat and/or a ball. As we improved and got older we would play with the older kids at the ballpark. The ballpark in those days was dirt and sloped up hill to the grade school.

Early each spring a lot of baseball folks would show up at the ballpark with their fine toothed dandelion rakes. They would form a long line at the top of the park and rake downhill to the baseline. The rocks were then picked up by KCC and hauled off.

The bases were there, only during scheduled games, so we used an old shingle or piece of cardboard for a base. We played one eyed cat or something like that, depending on how many future Babe Ruth's were there that day.

We attended all the games to watch our heroes play. There day games on Sar/Sun and night games during the week. These night games started after the men got off work at NCC and KCC. These games were known as 'The Twilight League' games. The large covered grandstand and the two side bleachers were filled with baseball fans.

Some of my favorite ballplayer's were, Jordan 'Turk' Eliades, John 'Bonnie' Sertic, Wayne Pearson, Bob Gidley, Gordon 'Nucoa' Cooper, Denny Sampson, Bill 'Irish' Ireland, Jerry Collis, Don 'Beans' and Tom Carline Joe 'Pinky' Krmpotic, 'Buck' Tartan and many others.

I remember 'Bonnie' Sertic hitting a long ball up left field and bouncing against the Catholic Church. Many balls were found above the grade school. That is a long way in anyone's book.

Jerry Collis had a habit of hitting the ball so hard that he broke a lot of bats. One time I remember him going to home plate to bat and he had a spare bat stuck in his back pocket. .

There was a lady in the grandstand that used to heckle 'Pinky' Krmpotic all the time he was at bat. He got mad one time and turned around and walked to the screen on the front of the grandstand and hollered, "is that you Beth" ? She screamed back, "yes, of course, it is". Pinky than retorted with, "sorry, I didn't recognize you with your clothes on". She never heckled him again.

They loved the game and were good at it and they also had a great sense of humor.

We were very eager to improve our baseball skills enough to join a team and play alongside our heroes. That was quite an incentive for us youngsters. It gave us a lot of pride when we made a team. Some of never made the teams or were too young, so we formed our own teams, sold raffle tickets and bought our own uniforms. It was easy to find an older baseball player to coach us. That is why McGill was such a powerhouse in baseball for many years. A lot of town pride.

## McGill News

The snow is still here in large piles along the streets and in yards. It is melting rather slowly and we have more coming in the next few days along with some more frigid Artic cold. All us old timers know that here in McGill we have usually 2 seasons, summer and winter. Not much in the way of spring. We sometimes have a nice 'indiginous peoples' summer' or as us old time normal folks would say, an Indian summer type fall. No wonder they call them, 'the good ole days'. Boys were boys and girls were girls. Imagine that. Individuals were honored for what they did, not what they pretended to be.

Just got an email from Electra Gianopolus that her book on the history of the Greeks in McGill is ready to go to the printers. Should be quite a book.

Speaking of books, I am gathering information on a new book about the drugstore. I have a list of 24 names of former employees that worked there in the 30s,40s and 50s. I am seeking names of those that worked there after those years. I am interested in photos of them also, like this one of Joan and Thalia.



## Old Photos

Talking about sports!!! How about this 'sport' from the old days, 40s/50s—"Dragline Miller", the old prospector that was in all the parades with his mule and his prospecting gear. Seems like we had a lot of 'sports' like him back then. Like 'Dirty Steve', 'The Professor', etc. I have no date on this photo, guessing, late 40s early 50s.

