

CORE SOUNDER

May 27, 2005

Reliving the Dream --- Baseball: More Than a Game!

May 21, 2005 was a special day in the history of Carteret County baseball; a day filled with stories that will be told for generations to come, and will be remembered by the people, some two hundred plus, that attended.

The air was filled with the smell of hotdogs and fresh cooked barbecue pig. The atmosphere was one of excitement, spirited and energetic. It felt like we were at a “Morehead - Beaufort” or “Straits / Harkers Island - Atlantic” baseball game.

I arrived some two hours before the program was to begin and the first thing I saw when I walked into the Museum on Harkers Island, standing there in the middle of the community-based Carteret Baseball Exhibit, was John Hamilton. John, a favorite of the 1953 Atlantic Championship team of the Salt Water League, was demonstrating to Dallas Arthur, Sr., of Bettie, who came along during the 1940s Tidewater League days, how he got three hits at Campbell College, in the same inning, with the bat he was holding.

In attendance were players, fans, family and friends dating back as far as 1910s, in addition to other younger players from the 1930s, 1940, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

The display of baseball memorabilia, the paper documentation that includes game-by-game stories and statistics, and pictures are extensive, and will remain on display through October. Teams represented in the exhibit are the Wade Brothers of Morehead City (both major league players and Ben a MLB scout); the 1940s Tidewater League teams; the 1950s Salt Water League teams; the 1960s East Coast League teams; the 1970s Seashore League teams; and various championship high schools, Pony League and Little League teams.

The Baseball Exhibit includes team uniforms,



Dennis “Chief” Chadwick, Fred Bartholomew, Doug Damren and Joe Boy Willis...Now there’s a team for you!

bats, baseballs, pictures and stories of our County Baseball Legends such as Jack Gardner, Beaufort (College Sports Hall of Fame member and professional baseball player), who played with Beaufort and then went on to play and manage the 1940s Morehead City’s Tidewater team. It was there, that Jack along with left fielder Joe Hill and Footsy Palmer became known as the ‘Murderer’s Row’ of Morehead batting order. Jack still loves the sound of the ‘Crack of the Bat’.

The stories were being told fast and often. AND they were good! Having all of those Legends in one room made many people tear up thinking of their loved ones as stories were being told about them.

The following are just a few of the players, family and friends that attended:

Alfred Gaskill – 90 years old; he was the oldest person in attendance. He played on Stacy and Atlantic teams in the 1920 and 1930s. (His uniform that’s on display still fits him).

David Chadwick – 80 years old, was just a youngster, according to Alfred Gaskill. David played with the 1940s Tidewater League team. Lee Hawkins, David teammate who played with Duke in 1929 and

played with professional and semi-pro clubs in Durham was remembered. His family was there listening to David tell how Lee, even though not a pitcher, had to pitch against Morehead one game in 1948 when Mo Willis, their regular pitcher, was out and how he threw the old blooper ball and beat them. David and Lee's teammate Tookie Willis of Harkers Island was represented by his family Fammie Lee, Mariam and Ronnie Willis and his young son.

Claude Brown was represented by his Daughter, Becky Paul, who told stories how Cluade was known for his hustle and hard playing. He was Mr. Baseball in Marshallberg in the 1930s. He played with the Cincinnati Reds farm team in Mt. Airy, N.C. in 1938.

Raymond Earl Willis of Morehead City told the story about being the only Bat-Boy ever heard of in Baseball that was thrown out for throwing a baseball at an umpire (coach told him to do it) in a 1940s Tidewater League game played in Morehead.

John Hamilton, Braxton Taylor, Julian Willis and Rodney Willis – Played on the Atlantic 1950s Salt Water League teams. John also played on the 1960s East Coast League Smyrna team. Julius, the brother of Don Willis and Buddy Willis, all great baseball players of the 1950s, then followed by young Myron Wade who followed their footsteps in the 1960s & 70s.

Fred Bartholomew, the 1961-1964 Smyrna High School Basketball and Baseball coach and Pony League coach. He also played with the 1960s East Coast League Smyrna baseball team. Alton Paul of Davis and A.C. Davis of Marshallberg played with the 1960 East Coast League Smyrna team and the Grays of the Eastern League 1974-1977.

Dallas Arthur, Sr. and J.D. O'Neal of the Grays of the Eastern League 1974-1977. Big Dallas and Miss Dorothy helped remind us of that beloved left-hander, Dallas Wayne ... And Rudolph Dowty's famous call, "Throooooow her harrrrrd Dallas! Yooooou're betttter than he are."

Paul Damren, Braxton Piner, Carroll Hill and Joe (Boy) Willis who played for the 1970s Seashore League Eastern Blues was there. And Big

Fred Nelson's family was there, a star with the Eastern Blues that like many of the others left us way too early. Iva, Susie and Brian Pigott were there representing their dad Crawford who played with the Eastern Blues in the 1970s and also played in East Coast League in the 1960s. Rodney Kemp who played for the 1970s Seashore League Carteret Tides was there telling his tall tales.

Charles Hassell, Sr. – daughter, Ginny Poindexter, represented their father who was a force in Beaufort Baseball, including the Tidewater League, from 1907 to 1992. Hugh Salter of Beaufort loved Carteret County Baseball and he was there to relive it one more time on Saturday. Ben and Jake Wade of Morehead were remembered often; their family had come weeks ago to share their story and be part of the exhibit.

Many others like Brother Gaskill who represented his Dad, Snowball Gaskill who played baseball in the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s and his brother, Manley, who played on the Blues and the ECHS team, helped bring together some of the most interesting and meaningful artifacts in the display.

Wilson's family was there too. Wilson Davis, who played and coached in the 1940, 50s, 60s and 70s and died just one year ago, would have been proud to see his family, sisters Jean and Mel and brother David Hughes, along with daughter Sally and son Larry. They cooked the pig, just the way Wilson had taught them for so many years.

There were many fans and other baseball players represented by family and friends too numerous to list as many of the County Baseball players were represented. We ended the day with a tribute to a great baseball man, Wilson Davis and with an old fashion Wilson Davis Pig Pickin' that was enjoyed by all.

The feedback from people like Hugh Salter of Beaufort said "This was overwhelming, and certainly over due." Tommy Davis of Beaufort said "To have this much history on exhibit and detailed paper documentation in one place on Carteret County baseball is historic in itself – great job!" Louie Piner of Davis said "I don't think it could be accomplished any better." Alton Paul of Davis said "The documentation you have created reads like a novel, well done."

However, in spite of how well our initial attempt of getting the stories, exhibit materials and kick-off meeting may have gone, we still have stories to be recorded and much to be accomplished.

To accomplish our goals we need help from each community throughout the County including Morehead, Beaufort, Salter Path and Newport, as well as the Down East teams that we have just begun to record. This can be accomplished with your help. Don't let the story about your family member or friend go untold. We invite you to call the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center on Harkers Island, (252) 728-1500 and learn how we can TOGETHER get all the stories recorded. (Remember the Museum is making available to you all of the documentation collected along with a DVD - tape recording of the May 21, 2005 baseball event.)

Along with telling these stories, we hope there will be many more tributes and thank-you's to our coaches, mentors and teachers – and a growing list of honorees in our “League of Honor.” Will you help?

This first exhibit will remain at the Core Sound Museum through October; come and look, remember and bring your stories. We are making plans now for another display in December; YOUR story in the exhibit is important but it is up to you to bring it to us. We have much to do for the work has truly just begun. You can make the difference.

Thank you for helping us “*Reliving the dream--Baseball: More than a Game*” and sharing with family and friends for generations to come the stories of baseball in Carteret County.

We especially want to thank Becky Paul and Brother Gaskill for bringing the idea to document baseball to the Museum and for their ideas, research and their hard work. We want to thank Pam Morris for her tireless effort in making this first Baseball Exhibit spectacular. AND we want to thank Karen Amspacher for her vision, drive and ability to get it done.

Special thanks go out to my friends Rodney Kemp and Joel Hancock for doing such a great job speaking and helping us organize and *Reliving the Dream of Baseball* and helping make it much more than a game.

Rodney Kemp, one of Carteret County's great story tellers, also loves baseball. He began playing Little League after being drafted by the Morehead Small Frys at eight years old. He played Pony League in early 1960s with Morehead Hawks. He played his freshman and junior years at Morehead City High School in the 1960s.

He returned to coached baseball at Morehead High School from 1976 to 1983, and he continues to coach Little League. He was always a great competitor. Rodney and I have been baseball competitors since the 1960s Pony League days and more recent in 1974-1977 in the Seashore League when he played on the highly regarded Coastal Stars and Carteret Tides and I played on the Eastern Blues.

Whenever we competed against each other, I knew he was going to do everything possible to try and beat us, and he knew we would too. But at the end of the day, we always ended as friends, Moreheader and Harkers Islander – win or lose. We felt good representing ourselves, our friends and our communities, that was baseball in Carteret County.

Rodney said “Baseball has always represented to me the purest form of athletic competition. The very nature of the game lends itself to friendships with teammates as well as opponents. The pace of the game allows time for friendly conversation and exchange of pleasantries. The lessons I learned from my coaches as a young person have carried over to my adult life in so many ways; i.e. fairness, neatness, focus, commitment, winning, losing, teamwork, respect and integrity. Playing in the adult leagues in the 1970's in Carteret County reaffirmed all that I am talking about. I have lifetime friendships with persons Down East that I treasure as precious jewels and they all come out of playing ball against them. The communities that were represented on the field of competition always brought great pride from the fans and was a means of me learning to appreciate the heritage of the communities to the point that I dedicate part of my life to learning all about it. There are certainly other endeavors that presents these same

qualities of which I speak. However, for me, the shout of “play ball” brings back wonderful memories.”

Joel Hancock also loves Baseball. I had the great opportunity to coach Joel Hancock who was the talented catcher on the 1970 East Carteret High School Co-Championship baseball team. Joel went on to be one of the five All-Conference Baseball Players. He won the Mariner Award for lettering in baseball, basketball and football. He also won the “Player of the Year” award presented by the News Times. He won a full Grant to play ball at Elon College.

Joel got started like many of us growing up on Harkers Island. He began to learn how to be a catcher and hit from his mentor and coach, Snowball Gaskill. He then moved on to Pony League with Wilson Davis teaching him the finer points. By the time he got to high school, he was a great all-around athletic and was one of the most ‘technically’ component players around. He was so good that if he had focused on baseball, he could have been a major leaguer.

Joel Hancock was a natural athletic, an outstanding baseball player and he loves to tell the stories about Carteret County Baseball Players. Help us tell your story.

Someone asked me once what Baseball meant to me, and I thought for a minute and said, *BASEBALL and the mentors associated with the game has been such a great part of my life I wouldn't know how to describe what I would have Accomplished without it.*

BASEBALL helped give my life direction and focus. It helped give me the feeling of self-worth and satisfaction in representing not only myself, but my friends and community. It helped me developed lasting friendships with bonds that were created that felt as strong as if we had been fighting a war for our Country.

BASEBALL has given me great memories of great hitters like Paul Damren, Straits, while at the same time, giving me goose bumps listening to people tell stories about the swing of the ‘old-timers’ like John Hamilton, Atlantic, of the Salt Water League in 1950s, or Jack Gardner, Beaufort, or Tookie Willis, Harkers Island, of the Tidewater League in the 1940s.

BASEBALL has given me great memories of the great thrower like Dallas Wayne Arthur, Bettie, while at the same time, giving me goose bumps listening to stories like what Alton Paul told me about the pitching duels at Davis, in his back yard between the great Ben Wade, local boy, winning for Morehead against Bob Porterfield pitching July 4, 1948 for the Davis Shore Tidewater team.

BASEBALL has given me great memories of the great throwing arms like Richard Arthur and Jamie Lewis, while at the same time, giving me goose bumps listening to stories being told by the great hitter of the 1940s, Jack Gardner, telling me about the great arm of Alvin Davis, Davis Shore, one of Carteret County best, who could throw a strike across home plate while standing in the woods in right field at Smyrna.

BASEBALL has given me a lot of good memories, and the people associated with it has been such a great force in my life, if I could go back I would only want to spend more time with my friends. I couldn't imagine not having ever heard the beautiful sound of the ‘crack of the bat’ of that line drive, or ever having crossed those white lines...

Join with the Museum, Rodney, Joel and myself and help us tell your baseball story.

Thanks you for your help and support in documenting the history of Carteret County Baseball

Joe (Boy) Willis