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"Baseball Stories - Interview with Players From the East Coast League – 1960-1964"

May 21, 2005
By Joe (Boy) Willis

L to R: Joe Willis, AC Davis, Dennis Chadwick and Fred Bartholomew



L to R: Carol Hill, Braxton Piner and Alton Paul



Note: Players Not Pictured Who Were In Attendance: John Hill and Vaughn Yeomans

Interview: [Players in attendance](#) for this interview were AC Davis, Fred Bartholomew, Carroll Hill, John Hill, Braxton Piner and Vaughan Yeomans. Others in attendance were David Chadwick, Paul Damren, Doug Damren, Joe and Lillie Miller.

- ◆ AC Davis started by telling us a story about Fred Bartholomew, who was at that time, the Smyrna High School baseball coach, and was playing for the Smyrna Semi-Pro Baseball Team. AC was catching a double header and Fred came in to pitch the second game. Fred told AC that since he knew the players that he would listen to his signals. Deep into the 9th inning Fred had a No-Hitter going when he shook off AC signal and the hitter got a single. Then Fred shook off another signal and the hitter got a hit. That was the only two hits in the game, which meant Fred would have had a No-Hitter if he had not shook off those two signals. AC said it was hard to teach those college boys. Fred said, "He regretted that he shook off those two signals."
- ◆ AC Davis told the story that happened around 1948 when Myron "Ace" Harris was pitching for Marshallberg in a Tidewater League Game. Marshallberg played at the Smyrna field which had a big backstop and a big grand stands that ran all the way down the left field foul line. Ace threw a pitch that forced the catcher to stand up to catch it, and someone in the stands stood up and said throw your high one. Acting like he didn't pay any attention to the fan, Ace got on the rubber and reared back and threw the ball over the grand stands. Looked at the fan, and said, "That was my high one."

- ◆ What was it like on Sunday, game-day? Always a lot of fans. AC said his daddy had a seafood place in Marshallberg and had a big pickup truck with a flat bed on it. His brothers, Donnie Gray, Lambert and himself, built a box on the truck so they wouldn't fall out. On Saturday they would wash out the back of the truck and put boxes on the side to set on while at the game. We take off after lunch on Sunday to where ever the game was whether at Salter Path, Smyrna, Atlantic, Beaufort, Morehead or Newport. Along the way, we would stop and pick people up that were going to the game. It was a big time on game-day.
- ◆ Fred Bartholomew said, "The one thing he could remember, was at every ball game, the little kids like Paul Damren, Manley Gaskill, Joel Hancock and Dallas Arthur were always at the games shagging baseballs and getting fly balls. They were eager to learn and loved baseball."
- ◆ Vaughn Yeomans told us a story about Wilson Davis when he was playing in 1948 in the Tidewater League with Harkers Island-Straits. He said, Wilson during, the first game, hurt his arm and shoulder real bad playing outfield. They had to call a doctor out of the stands to tend to him. AND the second game, Wilson started and pitched a no-hitter. Wilson was tough!"
- ◆ Fred Bartholomew mentioned how great Mack Pigott was playing in the East Coast League. Mack was a student of the game of baseball, and he remembered every game that he ever saw. Mack used to umpire at Smyrna for Fred. Mack and his family did a lot for baseball from the 1940s on. Mack could hit, play third and throw a knuckle ball.
- ◆ What are some of the homeruns that you have seen at Smyrna? AC Davis said he remembered how Mack Pigott and John Hamilton hit back to back homeruns at Smyrna; and Fred said he remembered Jimmy Parker, Morehead, hit one over the pines in Smyrna on him. Vaughn Yeomans said he remembered Lee Hawkins, in the late 1940s, hit one over Josh Davis's House.
- ◆ How did the roses get in the Smyrna outfield? The roses were planted around 1958 by Joe Owens and his Agriculture class, which AC Davis was in. Dennis Chadwick said Joe Owens planted around 1952 created the drain field and planted grass on the Smyrna field.
- ◆ AC remembers catching Jamie Lewis, Harkers Island, one game and his hand was swollen about 1/2" the next day. He said Jamie had a strong arm with a hard fast ball and he could hit.
- ◆ Fred Bartholomew mention that Doug Damren, who played from 1960-64 on the Smyrna High School team, was a tough competitor and that he batted over .400 his junior year. He said, "Doug was a singles and doubles man, and he could steal on his own." Doug, who was in the audience, said, "I knew I was good, but not that good." Actually Doug batted .430 that year – he was good. I told the story about Doug and I beating every window pane in his house out, hitting cork balls, while Paul Damren used to chase them down. Doug parents just boarded up the windows until we finished high school.
- ◆ Fred said, "Joe Willis was more like Yogi Berea, if he thought it looked like a good pitch, he tried to hit it. He was hard to strike out."
- ◆ AC Davis and Vaughn Yeomans told the story how in 1960, Jimmy Parkins, coach at Smyrna High School, tried to teach Vaughn not to step in the bucket on every pitch. Jimmy would lay on the ground

with his arms wrapped around Vaughan’s legs and Vaughan would hit the ball. As soon as he got up, Vaughan would start stepping in the bucket again. I remember Vaughan being a pretty good player; however, I asked him about playing with the Eastern Grays in the 1970s, and he said, “they used to come get me when they were three men short. They could play without him if they were only one or two men short.” Vaughn can still stretch them...

- ◆ AC, tell me about when you got hit in the mouth with the baseball? AC said, “I was hit mouth by a hard grounder when they were playing Broad Creek. Broad Creek played on the Newport field. I was playing third and the infield was pretty rough. The batter hit a ‘Skimmer’, and even today I can see the lump of grass on the dirt part of the field, when it took a hop and knock out my two front teeth. Glenn Arthur carried me to the Sea Level hospital in Mack Pigott’s 1958 Chevrolet. My brother, Donnie Gray, found my teeth after the game; however, they couldn’t put them back. They problem could today.”
- ◆ Who played? AC and Fred Bartholomew said usually there were nine of you, and for 1961 and 1962 Smyrna did pretty good. Smyrna ended up in second place with a 12-3 record. In 1962 Fred was selected to the All-Star team batting .327. Havelock dominated the East Coast League. See below for some statistics:

1961 All-Star Game

- ✓ **East Won the All-Star Game 8-0**
- ✓ **Ms. Donna Bell Won M. East Coast**

June 23, 1961 East Coast League - Standings			1962 Standings
	Final 8-24-61	Percent	
Havelock	13-1	.928	14-1
Smyrna, Henry Sermons-Manager	12-3	.800	
Salter Path	8-8	.500	
Broad creek, Grady Willis-Manager	7-9	.437	
New Bern, Bill Price-Manager	5-11	.312	
Coast Guard	3-13	.187	

Players (Not a complete list, I listed the ones that were in the newspaper or that I could verify.):

1960	1961	1962
Bruce Babitt	Fred Bartholomew*	Fred Bartholomew*
Osborne Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis
Wilson Davis, Manager	Donnie Gray Davis	Wayne Davis
Curt Nelson*	Wilson Davis, Manager	Wilson Davis, Manager
Alton Paul*	Grady Fulcher*	Dale Lewis
Jim Parkins	John Hill	Jamie Lewis
Crawford Pigott *	Jamie Lewis	Curt Nelson
Mack Pigott*	Wump Lewis	Braxton Piner
Braxton Piner*	Curt Nelson*	
Louis Thomas	Crawford Pigott*	
Laurie Willis	Mack Pigott*	
	Braxton Piner*	

*Note: Denotes Player Selected to All-Star Team

Note: Information, especially statistical information, from the newspaper was limited for 1960. 1961 and 1962 was better, but not great. Also, this is the only picture I could find of the teams or players.

Havelock Beat out Smyrna in 1961 with a 13-1 Record versus Smyrna 12-3; In 1962 Havelock won the League and Tournament with a Record of 14-1, and there was no other record listed in the newspapers for any other team.

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THE HAVELOCK PROGR

Sermons And His Gang



The semi-pros of Havelock break down and smile a little after tying Smyrna for first place in the league. Front row, left to right, Jack Justice, Lloyd Culpepper, Bob Labeau, Earl Jarman, Tom Childress, Johnny Hoke. Second row, l. to r. Henry

Sermons, team manager, Bob West, Tommie Salter, Verlon Bass, Randy Randolph, Steve Alkowski, Don Koontz. Bat boys are Tommie Justice and Donnie Koontz. Not present were Russell Hoke, Richard Hubbard and James White.

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