

"Alton Paul - "Carteret County Baseball League of Honor"

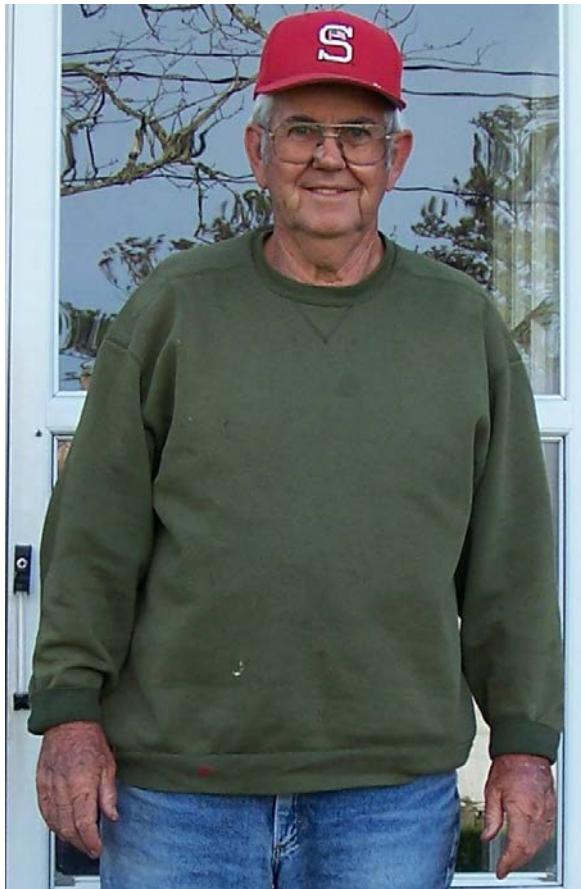
April 8, 2005

By Joe (Boy) Willis

Alton Paul in Baseball Uniform Around 1960



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Baseball Hall of Fame opened June 12, 1939 in Cooperstown, New York. It gives people the pleasure of having their accomplishments recognized and honored. I think that it is something we could use more of, and that is why I am writing about a person that fits in a class of individuals that fit in the "Carteret County Baseball League of Honor." This league recognizes the men that have impacted the lives of our children through baseball. The person that I am writing about is Alton Paul, who lives in Davis Shore, and who has had baseball in his life since he has been old enough to swing a bat..

I had the pleasure of visiting with Alton and Becky Paul on April 8, 2005 to talk baseball and the part that Davis Shore played in the evolution and development of the game in the County. It seems that Davis has had a baseball team since the late 1890s. When Davis Shore had a High School for two years, boys from surrounding towns would stay or enroll in the Davis High School so they could play Ball.

I was very excited about my visit because Alton Paul with his friendly smile and inviting demeanor has always been a person that I have looked up to since 1954 when our preacher, Charles and his wife Jesse Paul, who were from Davis, would take a number of the Harkers Island young boys, Curt Nelson, Genius Jones, Cranston Jones, Dales Lewis, Perry Ryan, Dukie Nelson, a few others and myself to play the Alton Paul's Davis Shore team, which was as close to organized baseball that the County had in those days.

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They had a nice field to play on and they acted real friendly to us. I believe Charles and Jesse had told Alton not to beat us too badly since we weren't as organized; otherwise, he wouldn't bring us back. In either case, his team, including the likes of Grady Davis, Braxton Lee Piner, Chuck Lewis, Carol Hill and a number of others always beat us, but they always let us get a few runs.

We always enjoyed the competition and friendships that were developed in Davis. It wasn't just a baseball game to us you see, we've had only just begun to live and we were developing hopes, and formulating what we wanted to be in life. He thought he was playing a game, but he was really helping us to think about what we wanted to be in life. Those games and relationships helped us broaden our perspective of our options for our lives.

As many of you know the hardest thing about discussing baseball in Carteret County is where to start? Today was no exception. I found out quickly when he starting talking about how Davis Shore has had Baseball as far back as his Daddy, Charlie Paul, and Grand Daddy, Mr. Henry, could remember. The first five minutes, in an auctioneer style, he rattled off, intermingling more than ten to fifteen stories that involved Little League, Babe Ruth, High School, Tidewater, East Coast, Salt Water, Eastern and the Seashore Leagues, which ranged from 1940s through the 1970s. I was all caught up in the excitement of the stories and didn't write much down and Becky said, "You see what I mean, I can't get anything from him. He doesn't make any sense."

Well he was making sense to me. He was excited not only excited about playing and coaching but also talking about it. He talked about his grand daddy, and Daddy, telling him stories about when Davis' Island was bought by Mr. Lacker (Unsure of Name), a man from New York, and how he used to bring New York teams to play the local team in Davis each July 4. He described, just as he was told, how everyone in the community rallied behind their local team.

He told me a story about how exciting it was to see, right in his backyard in Davis, Bob Porterfield, who knew Elvin Davis in the minors, pitched for Davis against Carteret County's own Ben Wade, and Ben beat him. Both of these pitchers went on to the Majors, and both were 20-Game Winners.

He told about the time, in the 1930s, when Claude Brown and Lester Babbitt went to play in the Pittsburgh Pirates minor league team in Mt. Airy, and how on the first the coach asked Lester to run laps, and Lester said, "I came here to hit, not run." Claude had to give Lester \$10 so he could take the bus home.

Braxton Piner told me a story about how he and Chuck Lewis used to wait on the porch for Alton Paul to get out of bed, after a late night of shrimping, so they could get him to play ball with them. He said Alton would carry ten players in his 1949 Chevy to play baseball.

Many of Alton Players went on to play baseball. As an example Braxton Piner was a dominant pitcher and player at Smyrna High School, East Coast League in the early 1960s and with the Eastern Blues in the Seashore League from 1974-1977.

Alton loved to coach Baseball; however, he loved to play as well. He played at Smyrna High School and with several semi-pro teams - Smyrna in the East Coast League, early 1960s, and the Grays in the Eastern League in the 1970s.

Alton was instrumental in starting the Little League in 1975 at Eastern Park. He still maintains the check book as of my visit, more than 30 years.

Alton talked a lot about a lot of player; however, it was very difficult to get him to talk about his accomplishments. It is fortunate that we know him, and because we know what he's accomplished, we want to thank him for devoting the time to help others enjoy the game of baseball.

During my interview, Alton makes you understand that Baseball is not just a game, a field or a coach. Baseball is the union of our hearts and minds of anyone that ever seen a game or played in a game or have coached. It is friendship developed, fun we had and the lessons learned. Alton, thanks for doing all that you have accomplished and for being part of the "Carteret County Baseball League of Honor."

May 28, 1957 Alton Paul Coaches Davis Baseball Team

Davis Takes Straits For 19-1 Victory

Davis hurler Braxton Piner pitched a three-hit 19-1 victory over Straits Saturday afternoon. Straits manager Gerald Whitehurst used three pitchers in a vain attempt to stop the Davis stickmen.

The boys (age limit is 15) from Davis were red hot in gaining their second victory of the season against one loss. Marvin Murphy got two triples and two doubles in five times at bat. Piner collected four singles in five at bats. Catcher Grady Davis got three for five.

Davis manager Alton Paul announces that his boys will meet Stacy at Davis 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

Note: There are many people in Carteret County that needs to be thanked as being part of this "Carteret County Baseball League of Honor." We have documented many of the people from the games played from 1940s through 1070s in five Baseball Books that are located at Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center. This documentation represents those stories that were recorded in the Newspaper. We need you help in getting your stories of your family members and friends,