

#2C James Webb - 1940s Morehead Town Baseball Hero

Played for the Morehead Tidewater and Carteret County Leagues – 1947- 55

by Joe “Boy” Willis

1948



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He began his love for baseball at CS Wallace High School in Morehead, under Coach Gannon Talbert. He would continue that love of playing for other fine coaches like Bunn Hearn, Carolina, Moose Tenney, Jack Gardner, Lt. Carlton Green, Cherry Point, all from the Tidewater League.

Although he was limited playing college baseball, due to losing sight in one eye which was caused by a high school basketball injury. However, he would go on to Carolina where a good friend, Albert Chappell of Beaufort, would help him get on the Carolina Baseball team under Coach Bunn Hearn in 1946. He earned a Letter and continued his desire to be all he could be in baseball.

During that time, interest in baseball was growing in Morehead, Beaufort and the County. In 1946 he had finished college and moved back to Morehead, where he was asked to play for the Town team in 1947. With the help of Harry Salter, who would become a life long friend, they would practice every evening until dark, helping fine tune his pitching skills.

Working together with Harry, James would learn to throw the baseball with pin point control. He said, “Since my fastball wouldn’t break a window pane, I had to have control, keep the batters off balance and know what pitch to throw. I learned how to throw a curveball from every angle – over hand, three quarters, side arm and round house. I got so I could throw it through a six inch opening. AND I tried never to throw the same pitch to the batter.”

Even though he was just 5’ 9” and weighed just 130 pounds, you would have thought he would have been your typical 6’3’ – 200 pound-power pitcher, based on the distinguish pitching record that he achieved from 1947-1951 playing, along with his friend Harry Salter, who caught about every game for their Town Team in one of the strongest leagues ever to play in Carteret County.

During his five years pitching, Morehead’s record was 117-41, with a winning percentage of 74% of their games played. The next team to Morehead was Beaufort with a 54% winning record. Morehead was second in the League in 1948, and won the regular seasons and season tournaments for 1949, 1950 and 1951.

#2C Continued - James Webb - 1940s Morehead Town Baseball Hero

James achieved what no other pitcher did for Morehead, or for that fact, what any other pitcher did for any team during that period of time. Keep in mind that during this period of time, Morehead paid pitchers from outside of the County to pitch for them, such as Roger Craig (1948-1949), from State College and a future Major Leaguer; Julius Moore (1948-1949) headed for the majors before an auto accident; Lefty Clifford Sharpe (1948-50), from Burlington with his “mean, mean” curve ball; Odell Morton, Morehead local pitcher and a few other pitchers as well.

❖ Some of the achievements of this local Town player, from 1947 -1951, as Pitcher with the Morehead Tidewater League Team are as follows:

1. Won 44 games in Five years or 38% of the 117 games Morehead won
(NOTE: Could have been more wins, not all games were reported)
2. In 1947, won at least 4 of the 18 games won by Morehead
3. In 1948, won 9 of the 26 games won by Morehead, and sat a 17 Game Strike-out Record
4. In 1949 won 13 of the 27 games won by Morehead and batted .187
5. In 1950, went 14-1 with Morehead winning 30 games, and he had 128 strikeouts

James said, “He would not have been able to accomplish any of the things he did without his friend Harry Salter and the great defensive team behind him. Today, if I could physically pitch, I would run to the field to play anyone if I could get the likes of Harry Salter, Lefty Sharpe, Julius Moore and the defensive players we had in 1949.”

He likes to talk about the quality of players that came through the league. Big leaguers like Jake Wade, Ben Wade, Roger Craig, Bob Porterfield and Bunky Stewart. He remembers some of the great local hitters, such as, Jack Gardner, Elvin Davis, Wayne Benton, John Hamilton and Buddy Willis. He remembers many of the great local pitchers, such as, Don Willis, Moe Willis (“Who could throw as hard as a major leaguer”), Odell Morton, West Taylor, Joe Hill and Jimmy Piner. With all of the names he mentions, and all had distinguished records, I could not find any with a better record, or more deserving of being called the ‘Morehead Town Baseball Hero’.

The friendship that Harry and James established would last for a lifetime. James said, “Harry was a great defensive player, a great strategist and a great friend, and for that, I am forever grateful.” To me, by working hard to become all they could be, James Webb and Harry Salter – were two local Morehead boys doing what they loved, playing ball for their 1940s Town Baseball Team, and in the process, became ‘Morehead Town Heroes’.

Harry Salter – 1948 Picture

James Webb – 1948 Picture

