

# SPORTS

# Baseball — the game that links eras, families

## Old Sagle team recalls post-World War II run

By MARK NELKE  
Sports editor

Ray Chapman and Bob Turnbull were watching a baseball game the other day when Chapman, referring to a stat sheet from a previous baseball season, had an idea. "Bob," said Chapman, pointing to the third base dugout, "I'm going to take that paper over there that says you batted .458 and see if they'll let you pinch hit."

But that was in 1946. Bob is 72 years old now.

"You don't think I'm going to get out there again, do you?" Turnbull asked.

You never know. Once a hitter, always a hitter. Turnbull would still be qualified to play, since the game he was watching was a men's senior baseball league game in which the players had to be at least 30 years old. The oldest player in the league is 64.

But on this day, Turnbull and Chapman and four other members of the Sagle town baseball team of the late 1940s were guests of the Panhandle Yankees at a doubleheader at Memorial Field.

While they watched the Yankees take on the Spokane Pirates, they reminisced about a time, right after World War II, "it was the first five years after the war, in those days there was no TV, and all you had to do was play baseball on weekends," Chapman says.

Back then, Sagle's team was the cream of area town team baseball. Sandpoint also fielded a team or two in the area summer league, and Clark Fork had a club.

After the war, Chapman wrote a letter to the community seeking members for a town baseball team, and he and Frank Jacobson drove around Sagle and put copies in everyone's mailbox.

The team began play in 1946. In the first five years, Sagle totaled 79 wins against only 16 defeats for an impressive .832 winning percentage. Sagle was league champions in four of those five seasons.

In 1946, Sagle posted a 16-1 record and won the Idaho-Montana League. The next year, Sagle was runnerup in the Idaho-British Columbia League with a 17-5 record.

The next three years, Sagle went 15-3, 14-4 and 17-3, winning the Idaho-Montana-British Columbia League each season.

The team played at Turnbull Field next to Sagle School, on land donated by the Turnbull family and developed by baseball

enthusiasts around 1908.

The Turnbull tie to area baseball spans the entire century. The Turnbolls moved into the area in the 1880s, some Turnbolls played on the Sagle Yankees team in the early 1980s, and a Turnbull (Rich), plays on the Panhandle Yankees.

On the post-war Sagle team, Bob and Harp were cousins, and Rich, who plays for Panhandle, is Bob's son. Jim Turnbull is Bob's younger brother. Wayne, Pershing and Bob Hawkins are all brothers. Vern and Don Verhei are brothers.

The team was home-grown; all were educated in Sagle and Sandpoint.

In 1946, Harp Turnbull posted an 8-0 record. He struck out 104 and walked just 12 in 73 1/3 innings. The next year he was 4-3, with 77 strikeouts and 10 walks in 64 2/3 innings. In 1948, he was 6-2 with 89 strikeouts and just five walks in 82 innings.

"Harp was fantastic," said Chapman, who doubled as the team's business manager. "He could throw an out-and-down drop ball."

"It was like a ball rolling off a table," said his catcher, Wayne Hawkins, now 74. "They knew what was coming and they still couldn't hit it. When we had two strikes on them, we knew we had them."

"Harp was about 32 then, and we thought he was an old man," Chapman recalls. "He just farmed, and came out on Sunday and struck the guys out like crazy."

"I spent years and years learning that pitch," says Turnbull, now 84. "I wore out my (catching) partner developing that pitch."

He then pointed to Wayne Hawkins, seated nearby, and said, "If he had the opportunity, he could have played professional baseball as a catcher."

Harp Turnbull also hit .368 in 1946, a team-high .405 in 1947 and .342 in 1948. He also drew 47 walks in 57 games over those three years. Hawkins hit .337, .276 and .366 in those three years.

Vernon Verhei posted an 8-1 pitching record in 1946, 13-2 in '47 and 7-0 in '48.

Harp Turnbull also had praise for Chapman. "He took care of everything. Everything was organized and well taken care of."

Chapman, now 75, returned to Kellogg and the service in 1952. The team continued until its final season in 1954.

"It was the pitching that made us good," recalls Chapman, who jokingly described his own play as "no field, no hit."

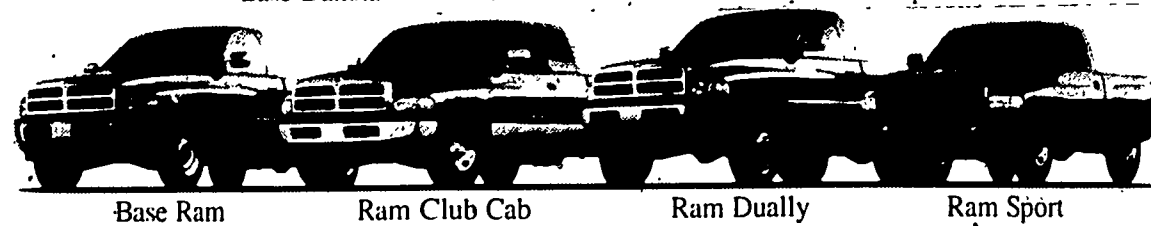


—Courtesy photo

Members of the 1948 Sagle town baseball team included, back row from left, Wayne Hawkins, Delbert Sheffler, Pershing Hawkins, Ray Chapman, Harley Gunter, Jim Turnbull and Harley Turnbull, middle row from left, Don Verhei, Bob Hawkins, Grampa Hawkins, Vernon Verhei and Bob Turnbull; and front row from left, batboys Les Turnbull, Ralph Hawkins and Rich Turnbull. Chapman, also the team's business manager, said he purchased the bats for \$1.80 apiece.

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—Photo by MARK NELKE

Six members of the 1948 Sagle team were guests of the Panhandle Yankees at a men's senior baseball league doubleheader at Memorial Field. In the front row, from left, is Don Verhei, Bob Turnbull and Delbert Sheffler; and in the back row from left, Wayne Hawkins, Ray Chapman and Harp Turnbull.





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