

FOOTBALL

AS I REMEMBER IT

SPENCER HIGH SCHOOL

SPENCER, WEST VIRGINIA

1947

1948

1949

1950

BY

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Having been asked by Steve Cooper to give him some information on football as I remember it at Spencer High School from August 1947 through the last game on Friday, November 10, 1950, when Bob Brabham and I, David L. Boggs, served our last game as Co-Captains of the Spencer High School Yellow Jackets.

Steve explained that he had a scrap book on Richard Horton's career at Spencer and material from Joe Starcher and wanted to bring football history up a little bit further. So I will attempt to tell you what I remember although it has been about sixty years.

Football for me started on Monday, August 18, 1947. I had met Coach Simmons at the Reedy Grade School playground. He went to different places in the summer. I assume he was paid to do that. Anyway, that is where Bob Brabham and I first met him. We had to hitchhike from Reedy to Spencer the two weeks before school started. I didn't get a uniform the first day but Bob did. Coach Simmons would come out after those who had been out the year before were given uniforms and say "you, you, and you get a uniform." To the rest of us he said "come back tomorrow." I showed up the next day because I really wanted more than anything to play football. I suppose he felt anyone who showed up that second day deserved a chance. Anyway, I got a uniform. I would guess he gave out every uniform he had. In 1947 there were more people wanting to play than there were uniforms. I guess it wasn't always that way in later years. Coach didn't mess with you; if you missed two or three practices he would give that uniform to someone else. I have often wondered what if I hadn't been picked on that second day. You see, that Reedy connection of Brabham and Boggs became the Co-Captains of the 1950 squad, although in 1950 my family lived at Speed.

As Freshman we didn't even know how to put a uniform on. You just watched others put their uniform on and you learned that way. There was some hazing that went on but I was never one to get caught or to take part in that. I know some were caught and fed fishing worms. I also remember my Sophomore year we had one Freshman who wanted to know what the jockstrap was for and someone told him it was a nose guard and he came out onto the practice field carrying it in his hand.

I don't think I ever got to dress for a game my Freshman year unless it was the last home game of the season. I seem to remember Coach Simmons dressing everyone who was still out for football that last game of the season. I was a guard that Freshman year. Today, I think that was good, because I learned how to block.

From the end of the 1947 season to the beginning of the 1948 season I grew a good bit. I don't remember much about the first few weeks. About the second week of the season Coach Simmons said for me to learn the halfback plays. From then on until I graduated I was a halfback on offense and a middle linebacker on defense. We used to have foot races from one goal line to the other and of the Sophomores Bob Brabham, Jack Wine, Estus Barker, Clellan Burns and David Boggs were all pretty fast. I can still see Wilbur Watson running holding on to his shoulder pads with his right hand to keep them from flopping up and down. I don't know why they flopped unless he didn't tighten the straps under his arms.

I earned my varsity letter as a Sophomore. I think you had to have ten quarters to letter. I don't remember all the games I got in, probably because I didn't do much to help the cause. But I do remember getting in the Charleston Catholic game at Laidley Field in Charleston. They threw a pass for their extra point. Their player caught it and I took my left hand and pulled it away from him. The ball fell to the ground or that score would have been 14 to 6 instead of 13 to 6. Someone, I don't remember who said, "way to go, don't give them any more points than we have to." I remember going to St. Marys my Sophomore year. We got there early and Coach took us out to walk around the field. As we came around where their stands were, a group of boys, probably grade school age, wanted to know which one was Joe Starcher. We got beat 32 to 7 that night, but Joe did get our only touchdown in the fourth quarter on an eight yard run.

I remember being on the bench at the Elizabeth game my Sophomore year when G. B. Simmons hit Bob Snider and knocked Bob out. He had a concussion and didn't come to for a couple of days. Coach announced the next week of practice that he was going to be all right. In the years I played we had a 2 man sled, no 7 man sled for linemen like you see today. My Senior year Bob Brabham and I teamed up to hit the sled. We could move it pretty good with Coach Simmons riding it. As a Freshman I doubt if I moved it a foot. We also used a tackling dummy on a pulley with weights. You tackled the dummy and kept driving with your shoulder, get a good wrap about thigh high, and keep driving with your feet apart. We would also hit the dummy with a shoulder, no lock of arms around it, and see if you could swing it high enough that it didn't hit you on the way back. The best I ever saw at that was G. B. Simmons. He could make that dummy stand straight out at the pulley.

And speaking of the best, the best kick off player I saw in my four years was Junior Evans. He could put the ball in the end zone on kick off and sometimes through the uprights.

I also remember the Middlebourne game my Sophomore year. It had been postponed because of rain, and we played it on Monday, November 15, 1948 at 2 pm. with the students let out of school for it. It was a real nice day, sunny and rather warm for November. We won 49 to 7. Coach put me in the game. They were kicking off probably after they had scored, I don't think it was the start of second half. Anyway, I was in the middle of the second wave to block for someone who caught it deep. They kicked off and it was a short kick and I ran under it and took the ball in full stride. As I caught it I hit it with my knee and it became a juggling act for the next 5 to 10 yards. They recovered it. Why Coach didn't take me out I don't know. I was playing middle-linebacker and on the 2nd or 3rd play they threw a pass and it came right to me. I intercepted it and that made me feel a little better. I never fumbled again in my high school career. I only intercepted one more pass in my high school career. It was against Freddy Wyant of Weston in my Senior year. Freddy went on to have a great career at West Virginia University, and as an NFL Official.

I did knock a pass down my Junior year that I could have intercepted. It was fourth down Tanners Rock end of the Spencer Field. I would have had to run it about 40 yards to get back to the line of scrimmage so I elected to take the turnover on downs.

One other thing that happened my Sophomore year, I remember tackling Joe Starcher in a scrimmage game. It was a kick off and Joe was coming straight up the middle of the field. I hit him with my right shoulder and he went backwards. He didn't run over me, but when I got up my right shoulder hurt real bad. Coach had me go over and sit by the stone wall in front of the bleachers. The doctor said it was a partial separation of the shoulder. An examination of the shoulder pads showed that the managers had given me a pair of shoulder pads with two left sides laced together. That injury might not have happened if the shoulder pads had been right. I was given a sheep skin lined pad for my right shoulder (it reminded me of a small horse collar). It had a strap which buckled on my left side below the ribcage. I wore that for the rest of the season. It made your shoulder pad stick out farther, but with that pad you could hit someone or a crosstie on the practice field and never feel it. For the first two weeks or so after that injury, I couldn't carry books in my right arm and I couldn't throw a football more than 5 yards without a lot of pain.

The only other thing I remember my Sophomore year was initiation into Varsity Club. I remember we had to make and carry a paddle, and carry a soft egg in a woman's stocking. I remember knocking my paddle off my desk in French Jones World History class and he got upset at the noise. We went out to the 4-H camp that evening, and we had to roll the egg from one end of the wood floor to the other with our nose and then eat the raw egg. I thought mine was going to come up for a minute. That's about it as a Sophomore.

I think my best year of football was my Junior year. My Sophomore year I had a bad shoulder, my Senior year I had a bad knee. My Junior year I started playing first string starting with the Clendenin Game (3rd game of the season). I played both ways, halfback on offense and middle linebacker on defense. I was very seldom substituted for the rest of the season. I think I would have had to come out of the Elizabeth game if Elizabeth hadn't had to use a time out for a player who was knocked out. It was Bob Snider their best running back. He came back in the 4th quarter and beat us. I never really knew one player from another but he came through the middle of their line and I hit him. It knocked him out and my spine hurt from my head to my tailbone. I was down on my knees in the huddle while they worked on him, and by the time they took him off the field I was feeling a little better. Someone said, "do you know who you just knocked out?" I said "no." They said "that was Bob Snider." Bob went on to have a good career at West Virginia University. Elizabeth went on to be runner-up in the State that year in Class B ball.

Coach Simmons had a 1939 Chevrolet (I think), and he took the starting backfield in his car to the game and the rest of the team rode the bus. I don't remember if it was just for the Clendenin game or not, as I don't remember riding in his car any other game night. That car had a horn that made two different sounds by throwing a switch on the steering column. Coach stopped somewhere in town before we left Spencer, and while he was out

of the car whoever was in the front seat threw the switch, (probably Jack Wine or Eugene ("Mouse") Mace). After we started up again we saw someone along the street and Jack said "Coach, Coach, blow the horn," and Coach did. When that horn made that ooga, ooga sound Coaches face turned red. At least the rest of us thought it was funny.

I think my three best games my Junior year were Clendenin, Elizabeth and Ravenswood. As you read the newspaper article for Friday, September 23, 1949 you will see a line that says "Mace launched a pass to Tar Hall and as Hall caught it he fell down." That much is true but that isn't the whole story. A trench had been dug across the Clendenin field sometime before we played them. They had filled it in but the dirt had settled maybe half a foot. Tar fell because just as he caught the pass his foot hit in that trench. It was just like stepping off of a high curb into the street in the dark. Also in that same article it talks about David Boggs saying "His efforts probably prevented at least one Clendenin touchdown." There is also a story there. The scouting report we had showed they had a back by the name of Jobie Chandler who was real fast. I remember Coach Simmons saying "if he ever gets into the secondary on you, you might as well give him the checkered flag." I caught him from behind that night.

The Calhoun game was not a good game. As the clipping says, "we played dead the first half." The score at halftime was 26 to 0. The final score was 26 to 13. We played an entirely different game the second half. I'm sure they scouted us and they had two players hitting me on every play, an all-state tackle by the name of Richard Stump and I don't know who the second one was, probably the lead blocker out of the backfield. I remember in the locker room at halftime coach said "And Boggs I haven't seen you do anything." I was crying as I said "Coach, they have been hitting me with two men this whole half." What is it they say, "grown men don't cry." I don't know if we changed the defense the second half or not, all I know is the second half was a lot different.

The Weston game my Junior year was played at Spencer. I remember the sleeper play they mention in the write up. Coach Simmons set that up before we ever left the dressing room. Nelson Parsons was on the field close to the sideline and Weston didn't even notice him. No one on him and "Mouse" Mace hit him with a pass that Nelson caught and went to Weston's 14 yard line. Sometime early in the season Coach gave us a play that was just called "End Around" with Junior Wilmoth carrying the ball. We ran that play with great success all season.

The write-up of the Point Pleasant game 7-7 deadlock my Junior year doesn't tell the whole story. The worst situation we ever got into in my high school career was at Point Pleasant. I think it was more the fans fault than it was the ballplayers. Arthur Brannon got knocked out. I remember the State Police having to stand in the shower room just out of the spray of water while we showered. Then we were escorted to the bus with fans throwing rocks at the bus as we left. They cracked a window close to where I was sitting. There was another fight which happened while I was in high school, but that was a Ripley-Spencer basketball game which resulted in a ruling from the State that we were not to play each other for a few years. I wasn't there but I heard about it.

We went to Ravenswood to play my Junior year. The headlines read, "Spencer bumps Ravenswood from L-K Race." I had two aunts from Ripley in the crowd that night, probably the only game they ever saw me play. I had told them all season we were going to beat Ravenswood. I don't remember if I did anything on offense in that game or not, but I remember I had a lot of tackles on defense.

Our school day started with home room at 8:45a.m., then at 9:00 a.m. we had our first class. We had hour long periods. Then at 12 noon we had lunch until 1:00. Those who played sports had one more class in the afternoon, 1:00 to 2:00. At 2:00 p.m. we started practice and practiced until 4 p.m. If you rode a bus Coach let you go so you could catch the bus home. If you missed the bus you had to walk home or hitchhike. I remember walking home or hitchhiking several times. Many times I walked from Spencer to Speed without catching a ride. I was lucky, I only had maybe 6 miles to go. Some of those boys rode a bus 30 miles one way to get home. They took attendance on the school bus in the morning going to school. Some rode the bus to Spencer in the morning, then went over in to town and would catch the bus home in the evening. Taking attendance made it easier for the truant officer to know who came to town and who didn't. Practice didn't end at 4 for those who didn't catch a bus. You worked on special things like extra points, kick-offs and punting.

On game day you checked your shoes, made sure you didn't have any cleats missing, tightened cleats or changed to a mud cleat which was longer if it was wet weather, oiled your shoes to protect from water, and it also made them shine. We all wore high top shoes. They called them Blue Top Kangaroos. I tore the whole side out of one of my shoes in the Weston game my Senior year, and had to break in a new pair for the last game against Ravenswood. I still have those new shoes which I wore in my last high school football game. I asked Coach for them and he gave them to me. I never thought he would. I don't think he usually gave away equipment. After you checked your equipment the managers put your jersey and pants in our stalls. Players then went over to the Robey Theater to watch whatever was playing that day. We had a set time when we met at a restaurant for our meal. Then we reported to the dressing room to get dressed for the game or to get our equipment and board a bus for away games.

If you played for Coach Simmons at Spencer you were equipped as good as any team in the State. Nylon lined pads, nylon pants (dry cleaned every week). We didn't pay for anything out of our own pocket. Everything was furnished; soap, towels, socks, jocks, T-shirts, shoes, pads, including rib pads if you were backs or ends. We threw a lot of shoulder blocks and then slid off into cross body blocks. You usually skinned your elbows from blocking this way so elbow pads were also available. I think I kept my elbows skinned from pre-season through last game of the season. It was just one series of scabs after another. On game night the first two units usually got a pair of new socks, and new jocks. This way the managers could wash the ones you used the week before and throw away the socks with holes and torn jocks. It was a rotation system of sorts. I think we usually had at least four managers and they were kept busy running washing machines, seeing that balls, blocking dummies, and on game night capes and all other equipment was where it was supposed to be. I'm sure just seeing that the right game

pants and jersey numbers were in the right stall was not an easy task, but they always seemed to get it right.

I only remember one incident where a manager got in trouble with Coach Simmons. Granville Lance placed some water in a bucket down near the “Tanner Rock” for some of his friends one day in the two weeks before school started, which were the hardest and hottest practices. Coach found out about it and gave “Granny” 25 laps around the field with a bucket half full of water and a dipper in the bucket. Those practices before school started were tough in that hot afternoon sun. You could get to the point you spit cotton some days. To help this some of us just put a lemon in our helmet and could suck on it to get rid of the cotton. I think a lemon may have saved my life a few days.

In a game we usually got water during time outs. The managers brought it onto the field in a thing that looked like a pop case with a handle and in each opening a small paper cup filled with water. I usually took only one. The first drink you washed your mouth out (you spit it out), then you swallowed the second drink. I didn’t feel a lot of water was good for you. Another thing, in early practices at least, they used to give us salt tablets to eat. Today they say that isn’t good.

My most embarrassing moment in playing was in practice one afternoon and we were running plays with the upright crossties and blocking dummies (which all of you who played for Coach remember). The quarterback handed off to me on just a simple dive play, straight ahead. It was not a good exchange and I put my head down to gain control of the ball, and I hit one of those crossties head on. Coach was standing back of the one I hit. He didn’t say anything, but you could see it was all he could do to keep from laughing. I’m glad he didn’t make me a lineman after that. You know what they say, the way to decide whether your players are backs or linemen is to run them through the woods, and those who run around the trees are backs and those who try to run over the trees are linemen. That was very embarrassing.

I remember the “Serpentine” drill where you placed a ball player on each ten yard stripe and backs tried to run from one goal line to the other weaving in and out around the tacklers. You very seldom made it from one goal line to the other. I remember one player who didn’t understand the drill and instead of weaving in and out from one goal to the other took the ball, went straight to the right side line and ran all the way from one goal-post to the other. He really thought he had done great. I remember at one class reunion Charles Casto said Coach Butcher told him if he tackled me in one of those drills he would let him dress in the next game. Charles said, “I don’t know, maybe you let me get you.” I told Charles, “no, if you tackled me you got me fair and square.” I didn’t remember that but I’m glad Charles did get to make that trip.

The serpentine looked like this:

It is funny how you just remember certain things. I'm sure we played more "B" games than two but that is all I remember. One game at Walton we were dressed in the dark blue uniforms. They were wool and had built-in hip pads. It was a hot afternoon and those jerseys made you itch, and the hip pads were so high they cut you. The field had so many small rocks on it and very little or no grass. Those rocks were cutting inch holes in your jersey when you hit the ground. I don't know if we won or lost, all I remember were those uniforms. The other game was at Elizabeth, a hot afternoon, spitting cotton. We took a time-out and Coach Butcher said "no water until you score." John Britt called 44 on 4 several times in a row. I finally scored and we got our water. After we got back to Spencer that evening Coach Simmons said "I hear you scored a touchdown." I said, "Yes, I got lucky, I guess." I don't remember who else played that afternoon. I'm sure Bob Brabham didn't as he was playing first string fullback by that time.

At the end of each season we always played one last game, Seniors against next year's team. If there weren't enough graduating Seniors then Coach would play some under classmen on their team to make 11. Needless to say some Seniors were playing positions they didn't play all year. This game was probably the roughest game of the season. I remember hitting Nelson Parsons along the sideline on the home team side of the field somewhere between the bench and the Rubber Plant. The next thing I remember I was setting on the bench and Coach Simmons asking me if I was all right, I said "yes," and he put me back in the game. Later, I was told we got beat by the Seniors, after Donzil Hall kicked a field goal. I don't remember that at all. The funny thing was we never kicked field goals, nobody did. Donzil said "Coach wouldn't speak to me for weeks."

After games we would stop sometimes and get something to eat. I remember stopping in Ripley after the Ravenswood game my Junior year. Coach would give you a dollar or two to get something. Coach would also give some money to catch a cab home after away games. I remember Junior Wilmoth telling at the banquet when we honored Coach Simmons how he slept on the baseball bleachers some nights and how cold it was. After the St. Marys game my Senior year we stopped somewhere in Parkersburg or near by. Because of the distance to St. Marys we didn't eat before the game. Where we stopped was a nice place, white tablecloths and everything fancy. Coach asked Bob Brabham to say grace. Bob said, "There's the bread and there's the meat, good Lord let's eat." We then sat down, Bob picked up his knife to cut the meat and that knife came apart. The handle just fell off. We all got a laugh out of that. I think this was the same time that Bob got a pair of scissors and everyone thought he was just going to pretend to cut coach Simmon's tie off. He cut that tie off about 4 inches below the knot. Coach got red in the face but didn't say a word. It was a nice tie, and I don't know if Bob ever got Coach another one or not. Only Bob could get by with that.

The homeroom for that bunch of boys in my class had to be a challenge for the teacher. There was Glenn Batten, Estus Barker, Bob Brabham, Clellan Burns and David Boggs all in the same homeroom. As Freshman, Bob or Glenn would wink at Miss Elizabeth Boggs and she would grin. The worst was when we were Sophomores though. We had Creaver Dimmick. On Joyce Boards birthday we decided to paddle her and we didn't mean it as a prank, but Mr. Dimmick kicked us all out of homeroom. He said from now on just come

to the door and let me know you are here. That meant we had an extra 15 minutes. To this day I don't see how he thought that was a punishment.

My last season started on Monday, August 21, 1950. Only eight letterman from the 1949 team remained. The linemen were Aubrey Wright, James Miller and Bob Carpenter. The backs were Bob Brabham, Estus Barker, John Cottle, Cellan Burns and David Boggs. We the players thought we would also have Dean Wilson, Eugene "Mouse" Mace, Jack Wine and Harlan Burns with us only to learn we would be without them because of age limit.

We were given shoes to practice with during the summer and we would show up in the evenings to play on the high school field. Coach was not allowed on the field but could set in the stands. At one of those sessions Coach Simmons handed me a rule book and said I should read it and get familiar with the rules. Even then I didn't realize I was going to be his selection as Co-Captain. It never entered my mind. Only after his babysitter told me did I realize it. Bob Brabham, our fullback was named the other Co-Captain by the players. Being a Co-Captain was a great honor but I don't know that I ever did anything to make the team better. Bob and I took turns at coin tosses, making decisions on penalties, deciding which goal we would defend, and we also got to crown Miss Yellow Jacket at Homecoming. Barbara Ellis was the team's choice our Senior year.

I was never asked to nor did I ever remember getting on any player for his actions. I do remember we had one player, who was about to be ineligible on grades in typing class which meant he would not get to play. Coach Simmons suggested I go to his teacher and ask if there was anything we could do to help him get his grades up. I don't remember her answer, but I and others did go to the typing room on our noon hour and type work for him to hand in as his work. I don't know if the teacher knew we did that or not. I suspect that she did. Whether that player ever got through typing class, I don't know but he did stay eligible through football season at least. I had one man come to me one time and said he would like to talk to me. I thought, Oh no, now what have I done. He said there was one boy on the squad whose mother was having trouble getting him to go to church. He said that boy thinks the world of you. Would you just in some way say "see you in church Sunday." I did that quite often, but whether it ever did any good, I don't know. I do know today he sure turned out OK.

I don't think there was ever anyone on that 1950 team who didn't play as hard as they could. We got run over 3 games pretty bad, "real track meets" but we never quit.

Numbering systems hadn't started yet, at least we didn't use one. By this I mean 80's and 90's for ends, 70's for tackles, 60's for guards, 50's for centers, 20's and 40's for halfbacks, 30's for fullbacks, and 10 through 19 for quarterbacks. As you look at the picture of the Seniors playing their last game for Spencer in 1950 you will see 40's, 50's and 70's. Coach asked me what numbers I wanted and I said 50 in gold and 19 in blue, the year 1950. Bob Brabham's numbers were 48 in gold and 25 in blue.

Jarrett Tawney became the assistant coach to Coach Simmons in 1950. He had been the head coach at Walton. The new coach at Walton was E. Roy Lester. Our first game September 8, 1950 was against Walton. First game as Co-Captain and I couldn't understand the official who was giving me instructions or choices on penalty calls as he had to repeat them to me more than once. He had what today we would call a speech impediment. I don't remember how many coin tosses we won our Senior year. I think we lost more than we won. I don't ever remember looking up the opposing captains after a game and talking with them like they seem to today. I guess we still considered them the enemy and we were not to associate with our enemies. Today I wish I had been more friendly. Another reason we didn't do that I think was because to get on the field before the game, off at halftime, back on for second half and back off at end of game we had to go up the center section of the home side bleachers and if you stayed behind to talk to someone, you would have had to fight the crowd to get to the dressing room. As a Freshman when the team came onto the field they came down the back way and entered from the goalpost on the Tanners Rock side of the field. The first team came on the field, in formation, running a play. The second team doing the same and the third unit following them. Starting my Sophomore year you had to come onto the field by the bleachers because everything was torn up due to construction. Our old gym was gone and the front campus was just a big hole. They still didn't have a new gym and classrooms built when we graduated. Alright, back to the Walton game. The paper said "Boggs, Barker, Brabham shine," that "B" backfield. My "15 minutes of fame" probably came in the Walton game my Senior year. I scored our first touchdown of the season on a 65 yard run (26 play) on "Tanners Rock" end of the field. I scored our second touchdown on a 39 yard run (26 play) in the second quarter. This time on the "Rubber Plant" end of the field. Sometime in the third quarter was when I got hurt. I made a cut through the line, planted my left foot and started my cut to the right. A Walton player hit me on my left side just above my knee. Another player hit me on my right side above my rib cage. Cleats were planted on my left foot and my knee tried to bend from left to right instead of front to back. You could hear the knee pop. I came out on my own. Later in the third quarter I asked Coach to put me back in, and I scored on a two yard run on the right side of our line down by the "Rubber Plant. They had to help me off after that. My parents were there but my Dad didn't see me score the first two times. He locked the keys in his car and had taken a cab home to get a second set of keys.

The doctor said the injury was torn cartilage and stretched ligaments. I didn't practice all the next week in getting ready for Elkview. Larry Haught replaced me as halfback for the Elkview game. Oh, how I hated not being able to play.

Starting on Monday, September 18, 1950 I made an every day of practice and game night trip to Coach Simmon's office to get that knee wrapped. I also had a knee brace, but back then they didn't amount to much. A narrow metal hinge on right and left side and elastic. Also each night at home I would sit under a heat lamp trying to keep swelling and pain down. It did help. I don't think the injury hurt my performance much on defense, but on offense from that day on I would be used as a blocking back. I would clear a hole or take a fake like I had the ball and dive straight ahead and hope one or two tackle me thinking I

had the ball. I would like to think that I helped Bob Brabham and Clellan Burns score some of those touchdowns they got. Brabham had 16 touchdowns and 1 extra point and Burns had 5 touchdowns and one extra point in the 1950 season. I don't think anyone except the players on that team realized how injured we were in 1950. My injury in the first game, Estus Barker lost for the rest of the season in the fourth game against Calhoun (Grantsville), with a broken leg from a clip. I had scored 3 touchdowns, Estus had 3 against Elkview, and two more against Clendenin, then lost for the season. That was a lot of offense right there. Harry Adams who had been a starting end at the beginning of the season quit the team in the middle of the season. Clellan Burns was moved from end to halfback after Estus went down. Brabham had the other 2 touchdowns in the Walton game and James Miller added two extra points to make our first win 32 to 0 against Walton.

Second game was against Elkview at Elkview. I made the trip with the team but did not dress. I didn't practice all that week. Larry Haught took my place at halfback. I don't remember who played my position as middle linebacker on defense. I remember the fog, and the poor officiating. I think Estus Barker scored two or three times in a row on the same play and each time the officials called it back. We were not a dirty team. Coach didn't teach us to be dirty. Anyway, we won 31 to 0.

Third game was against Clendenin at home. Wet playing conditions and Larry Haught played the first half for me on offense. I played my usual position on defense though, middle-linebacker. The knee held up good enough that I went both ways the 2nd half. We won 19 to 12. Estus Barker scored 2 touchdowns and Bob Brabham one. John Cottle had our one extra point.

Fourth game of the season against Calhoun was also homecoming. Both teams were unbeaten. We were never in this one. Underwood and that single wing beat us 47 to 7. One of 3 "Real track meets" this season. I don't know why we didn't play better. Estus Barker suffered a broken leg. As I remember it was on Calhoun side of the field and somewhere between their bench and the Rubber Plant. He got clipped and is gone for the season. I don't think we were down because of that, at least it didn't seem that way to me. I know of all the backs I hit in high school, Blosser of Calhoun was the toughest. He ran so low coming through the line, just a battering ram. Snider of Elizabeth ran more upright. But Blosser, it was just helmet to helmet. In my four years in high school we never beat Calhoun.

Fifth game of the season, October 6, 1950 at Elizabeth. A lot of offense and not much defense. Bob Brabham outscored Bob Snider of Elizabeth. Brabham had 25 points and Snider had 19. That game was going to be won by which ever team scored last, and that was us. As I said earlier Bob Snider went to West Virginia University and had a great career. Bob Brabham could have done that too.

Sixth game, October 13, 1950, Charleston Catholic, another "Track meet". They beat us 50 to 13. At least Clellan Burns had a good game.

Seventh game of the season, October 20, 1950. We traveled to St. Marys, and all three backs, Brabham, Burns and Boggs have good nights. We won 33 to 18, but that win may have been due to the fact that a defensive tackle by the name of Lakin Greathouse spent most of the second half in their backfield. Coach Simmons would challenge us by saying he would give a steak dinner to anyone who blocked a punt or extra point. My Junior year I think I had two blocks. I remember blocking John Leeson's drop kick for Ravenswoods second touchdown my Junior year. I think I had seven blocks my Senior year. Coach did pay up. I remember taking Joe Craddock and Jim Ward and two others to steak dinners. I don't remember who the two others were or where we went, but somewhere in Spencer. Anyway, the way it worked was, Jim Ward and Joe Craddock would slap and pull the opposing players on their shoulder pads, thus creating a gap and I, as middle linebacker would shoot through the gap and try and block the punt or extra point. Keep in mind that we did not wear a face mask in those days, so when we hit that gap we were taught to cross our arms in front of our face for protection. I really don't know what happened. I either took the ball off his foot or it wedged between my arms. All I do know is I took a couple of steps and realized I had the ball. I scored from about 30 yards out. Jim Ward said years later, "I looked up and there goes this guy limping into the end zone". That was the only touchdown I had after the Walton game and the last touchdown I will ever score for Spencer High School.

Eighth game of the season, Point Pleasant at home. They scored first but we won 40 to 6. This was the weirdest game I ever played in. Seemed as if every thing we tried worked. We had a lot of fun in that one. Bob Brabham had an 85 yard punt return, and as we ran back down the field after he scored he looked over to me and grinning said "I always wanted to do that".

Ninth game of the season, Weston at Weston. The game was to be played on Friday, November 3, 1950. However the game is postponed until Saturday, November 4, due to rain, sleet and snow. Saturday night was no better, maybe worse. The only game I ever played in that I was glad to see it end was that Weston game. It felt like it should have been over at half time. We changed pants and jerseys at halftime. You couldn't tell the numbers or color of uniforms. That cold wind blowing when we came back out the second half went right through those dry jerseys and those wet pads made us colder than we would have been if we had our old wet and muddy jerseys. That was the night I intercepted Freddie Wyant. He probably couldn't tell their colors from ours. They sent us into showers after that game with all of our pads on to wash off some of the mud. Our shoestrings were frozen to the point we couldn't untie our shoes. We lost 38 to 0. The only game of the season in which we didn't score. One other thing I need to mention here. Bob Carpenter, "our gentle giant", weighed 290 his Senior year and he couldn't ride with any comfort on a school bus, so Coach let him drive his own car to games. The Weston game he forgot his shoulder pads, but Coach played him anyway. There wasn't any other player on the team who had a pair that would fit him.

Tenth game of the season, November 10, 1950 Ravenswood at Spencer. We had a chance to be 7 wins and 3 losses. That would have been the best record in the years I played, 1947, 1948, 1949 and 1950. In 1947 we were 6 and 4. In 1948 we were 6 wins 3 losses

and one tie. In 1949 we were 6 wins 3 losses and one tie. 7 wins and 3 losses would have been quite an accomplishment as beat up as we were, but it wasn't to be. We lost to Ravenswood 13 to 6 and thus ended up 6 and 4. This game was the only one I ever played in that I thought we should have won and didn't. The defense didn't lose that game, the offense did. Too many fumbles and intercepted passes. After the last game with Ravenswood I just sat in my stall. I remember Coach coming around and patting me on the shoulder. He had never done that in any other games. I don't know if it was because it was our last game or he could see I was taking that loss pretty hard. It had been a very hard season, playing and practicing with pain. I just sat there until everyone else had left the dressing room. I loved football. It was over. No next season to look forward to. Others still had sports to turn to, basketball and baseball. I didn't play those sports so my high school career was over. I remember being in the shower all alone and E. Roy Lester came through there on his way outside. He was one of only a few who was ever a three sport letterman at West Virginia University. I suppose he had been in Coach Simmons office talking. Anyway he said " young man, you could play for me anytime." I thanked him but didn't think much of it at the time. But looking back on that today after he went on to coach some great high school teams and at the University of Maryland, I consider that probably the greatest compliment I ever received.

Some other things I remember that were rather amusing. One day in practice Coach Butcher kind of put Coach Simmons on a spot. Here comes Coach Butcher with Quellen Coon. Now Quellen had an old helmet that had a metal top of some sort. According to Coach Butcher, Quellen had kicked his helmet. The top was caved in until you couldn't possibly have put it down on your head. It was almost V-shaped when looking at it from the top. Coach Butcher said "Look at what this kid did." Coach Simmons had to act stern and back up Coach Butcher. He asked Quellen why he did it. I don't remember the answer but you could just see by the expression on Coach Simmons' face that it was all he could do to keep from laughing. The rest of us were trying hard to keep from laughing too. I don't know how they resolved the problem, probably a few laps around the field.

If you got knocked out, wind knocked out of you, on hit in the testicles and were laying there in pain, here would come Coach with a vile of smelling salts. With a half grin he would say "What happened, did you get hit in the family jewels" ?

Every time I hear our national anthem played, I remember standing on that high school field with my helmet under my left arm and right hand over my heart listening as Doc Browns high school band played. At the banquet we had for coach Simmons a few years ago, I remember that he remarked as that anthem was playing he was offering a prayer to God asking him to keep his players safe.

The place where everyone seemed to gather after a game was the Dairy Bar. My Dad moved from Speed to Weston, WV at the beginning of my Sophomore year at Marshall, and I never got back to Spencer for several years. I don't know when the Dairy Bar went out of existence or why. I just know it is no longer there.

My grandparents on my Mother's side saw me play one high school game. I don't remember which one it was. My grandparents on my Dad's side never saw me play. As I said before I had two aunts who saw me play at Ravenswood my Junior year. I had another aunt who saw me play at St. Marys my Senior year. I was told when I blocked the punt and ran the ball into the end zone she threw her hat. I don't know why a woman would wear a hat to a football game. They certainly are not church services.

I remember the annual Lion Club banquets. Cambell's Inn had a nice banquet for us one year, The Little Kanawha conference banquets, and our Senior year when the parents of the players had a covered dish dinner for us at the Legion Hall. I have included two pictures of that event. Also, one night after a game, Coach Simmons announced we could get a free milk shake at the Dairy Bar. It was being given to us by Mr. Scott, just because he felt we had played a good game.

In August 1951 I had my knee operated on at the Depue Hospital in Spencer by a specialist from Charleston by the name of Dr. Smith. The high school or my football insurance through the school paid for it. I was on crutches for six weeks. I remember sitting in the stands at Parkersburg watching Estus Barker as he played in the third annual Little Kanawha Bowl. There may have been other players from Spencer in that Bowl Game, but I don't remember. I do remember that Estus had a good game. I had to sit on a table, tie weights to my foot and lift those weights. Maybe if the knee was fixed, I could play football again. I enrolled in Marshall College and started attending classes. The short of it was, the knee was never fixed. I would never play another game. I couldn't ski, roller skate, ice skate, and definitely couldn't run hurdles. If that knee slipped you better get your weight off of it. The doctors said my knee would be stiff by the time I was forty. They were wrong about that.

Coach Simmons was a wonderful coach to play for. He kept football a game, not a war or must win at any cost thing. You played the best you could and that I think was all he asked. You were young and you made mistakes. He knew that, and he didn't hold that against you. I never heard him swear at a player, I never saw him grab or shove any player around, or get mad. At the honor banquet we had for him his remark when I shook hands with him was, "I never had much trouble with this one". I really liked the guy. If he had said jump through a brick wall, I probably would have tried.

Today, looking back almost sixty years now, the game of football has changed. Some of it good and yet some of it I don't care for. We didn't have face masks, today they do. That is good. The only player we had that I ever remember wearing a face mask was Bob Carpenter, and that was because of a broken nose. I don't think back then there was a rule saying you couldn't grab it. You can't use the crack back block. I loved it, when you could go in motion and come back in and really unload on that defensive end. You can't block below the waist. There goes the cross body block. I loved throwing that shoulder into a defensive player and then sliding off into a cross body block. I also think that the offensive player today can use his hands way too much on the defensive player. We weren't the best teams Coach Simmons ever had, by record at least, but I know some of

the 47, 48, 49 and 50 team members would have been on his starting line up. Myself, I would be content if I could make his “traveling squad”.

Most of the time on defense we played a 5,3, 2,1 defense. Today I can't remember who played what positions. I know Bob Carpenter, Jim Ward, Ronald Donalson, and Joe Craddock played in that front wall but I don't remember who the fifth one was. I played middle linebacker but I don't remember who the other two were. The defensive backs I don't remember, but I think Bob Brabham played defensive safety, but I'm not sure on that.

When you look at the pictures of those who started in the 1950 season, notice that there were more than just eleven. Also notice, under their names, all the different positions they played during that season. Many played hurt, from week to week, but we played.

As I finish this I just want to say I have a special feeling for all of those fellow ball players. We went through many battles together. Would I do it all over again if I had the chance, you bet I would.