

CHARLESTOWN PIRATES HOOPS-HYSTERIA, TREASURE CHEST...

by Chuck E. Ledbetter, Sr.

Don Lewis was an incredible Pirate basketball star during the start of the '50s. Following in the footsteps of his older brothers, Jim and Russell, he was guided by coach's Billy Abel and the celebrated Kentuckian Letcher Norton. Norton was considered one of the toughest drillmaster's to set foot on the Jonathan Jennings hardwood during that rein of round ball at Charlestown.

Lewis, who was a clever offensive and defensive athlete for the Pirates, played three solid years of varsity basketball. In 1951, as a freshman, Coach Harold "Dutch" Reis had him dress for the varsity squad on several occasions.

He had several ballgames where his aggressive style and his impressive shooting from the outside with his gratis tosses at the charity line netted him over 20 points. He paired up with two other Pirate standouts, Steve Hamilton and Henry Parker, giving both coaches some real offensive punch.

Lewis had one of his best games November 24, 1954 in a thriller with highly touted Silver Creek on their home court. He poured in 26 points on 5 field goals and 16 free throws to lead all scorers against the taller and rugged Dragons, who won 71 to 62.

In a game against Henryville coach Merrill Scott's quintet, Lewis tied for scoring honors with their scoring ace, Ralph Guthrie. Both stars of the basketball court had 15 apiece in the nip and tuck battle which saw the Pirates prevail and erase a six game winning streak for the Hornets. As Lewis became the hero by driving for the basket with less than ten seconds remaining, he stuffed the winning shot, 45 to 43.

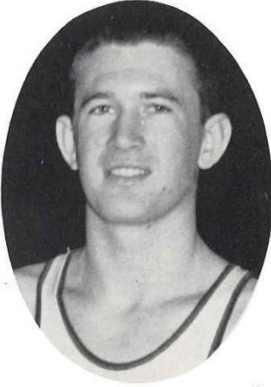
He burned the nets with 24 against the Corydon Panthers December 14, 1954 in another one of his brilliant moments on the hardwood for the Pirates. Again, Lewis had another one of his fantastic shooting salvos at the free throw lane shoving down 16 baskets and 3 from the outside in his performance at Jonathan Jennings Gym.

Before the season was over, a scout from the University of Louisville came and watched him exhibit his exceptional aggressive style of basketball in front of the Charlestown fans. - *[From the sports edition of The Evening News, February 8, 1955; microfilms at the Jeffersonville-Township Public Library, Jeffersonville, Indiana.]*

He was both an offensive and defensive threat to his opponents. He could switch rolls when needed. Sometimes, he would replace Hamilton and Parker underneath when one or the other would get into foul trouble. He was a valuable asset to the Pirate team.

In 1954, he was the winner of the annual coveted Free Throw Award from the Charlestown Lions Club. After graduation in 1955, he played at Rio Grande College in Ohio where he had a successful college basketball career.

He got into high school coaching at University High School of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he directed his 1963 ball club to the District and State finals. His team had a 20-5 record for the season and won its last 11 games in a row. They lost in the final game to Newman High School of New Orleans.



Boyd Henry In the 1950's, during the Korean War, Boyd Henry's parents moved to Charlestown from the Germantown area of Louisville, Kentucky. The main reason the family relocated to Charlestown was his father had a job at the Powder Plant.

Prior to that, the Henry's lived in California, where young Boyd attended his first year of schooling. When the Henry's moved to Kentucky, he entered second grade at St. Elizabeth of Hungary in the Germantown parish.

The rest of his elementary education was spent at the old Pleasant Ridge School in the third grade and fourth through eighth grade levels at St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in Charlestown.

In his high school years of 1959 and 1960 Boyd launched his varsity basketball career playing for Coach John E. Wood. He was a real tough competitor that could play either the forward or center positions. He shot with his left hand and had a nice fake with his jumper that easily perplexed his competitor's on the basketball floor.

He was an uncompromising player that never was concerned about how many points he put on the scoreboard. "I wanted to win more than anything. I played forward and center in high school. I thought I was a fairly decent rebounder, but I never ever thought about how many points I scored or anything like that. I know a lot of kids today probably don't believe it now, but back then you didn't think a whole lot about those things," Henry said.

In his junior year as a varsity Pirate, he had a significant basketball game which built up his confidence as a player. It was a game against Rising Sun at home. "They had 6-7 sophomore center, John Adams. He was considered to be the best in the state of Indiana. In his senior year, he ended up on the Indiana All-Stars." Boyd declared, "I remember scoring 8 points. I think I scored them in the first quarter against him under the basket. That's when I realized I thought I could play basketball. That was the turning point for me as for as ability and confidence." The Pirates beat Rising Sun, 69 to 60.

On December 4, 1959, he was in excellent form on the hardwood against Henryville. He led the scoring for the Pirates in their win over the Hornets, 61 to 52. He cashed in on 5 field goals and 4 free throws, for 14 points. - [Resource: *The Charlestown Courier*, December 10, 1959, from microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]

In a real barn burner with Orleans of Orange County, Indiana, on their home court, Henry played his heart out in an exasperating sudden death overtime loss to the Bulldogs. In the final stanza of the first overtime with the Pirates down by two points in the closing seconds, Henry worked his way underneath to lay the ball in the basket as the buzzer sounded to knot the game at 54-54.

A decision was made by the coaches to play the overtime period as sudden death. The Pirates worked the ball methodically in hopes of getting a good shot. But a turnover by a pass that went out of bounds turned the game back to the Bulldogs and one of their leading players connected from the corner to end the game. - [Resource: *The Charlestown Courier*, January 14, 1960, from microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]

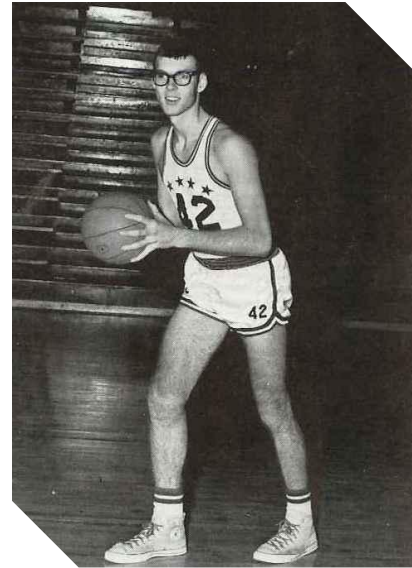
In the annals of Pirate basketball history, Boyd Henry was another one of the talented Pirates who made their round ball forte known on the hardwood with his solid performances at Charlestown High School in the 50's and 60's.

Roger McCubbins In his senior year playing for Coach Scotty Daugherty, he lifted the Pirates to an astonishing come from behind win over the Clarksville Generals.

The Pirates were downed by 8 points when Scotty called on Roger to bail out the team with his shooting. The 6-3 senior forward obliged with his hot hand quickly connecting on three successive pops from the floor.

The aggressive play on the floor by McCubbins changed the whole scenario of the ballgame. "Everything I threw up there went in the hole and I remember Scotty in a timeout telling my teammates I had the hot hand and try to get me the ball---which they did," Roger said.

He hit 6 from the outside and tossed in one point at the charity stripe ending with 13 points for his heroic play as the Pirates won, 65-62. The game was played on December 7, 1963 at home. - [Resource: *The Charlestown Courier*, December 12, 1963, microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]

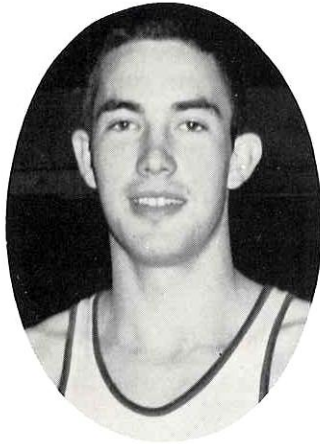


After graduation, Coach Daugherty helped McCubbins get a scholarship to a junior college. "Scotty helped me to continue playing basketball at Bethany Junior College in Mankato, Minnesota. I was on vacation at the time and this coach from Minnesota drove through Indiana, mostly southern Indiana, looking for players for his college team. He would talk to coaches to see if guys had made any commitments to any colleges. He talked with Coach Daugherty and the Minnesota coach recruited me sight unseen. I played for Bethany where we were ranked as high as sixth in the nation. Later, we ended up 18th in the nation. If it hadn't been for Scotty, I probably wouldn't have been playing any basketball," he stated.

Roger had an extraordinary two years playing for the Bethany Vikings of Coach Bruno Wilinski. He average 16 points a game. In 1965, he had 18 points in helping the Vikings set a new school team record of 135 points against Dr. Martin Luther King College.

In other action with the Vikings, he had 28 points against Austin Junior College as his team clinched a tie for the Southern Minnesota Junior College conference. He had 22 points to lead all scorers in a losing effort against powerful Webster City (Iowa) Junior College. The Vikings lost by one point, 81 to 80. Bethany at the time was ranked ninth in National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) polls nationwide.

In 1966, during the NJCAA basketball tournament season, he was brought to the attention of the coaching staff at the University of Minnesota. The assistant coach of the University of Minnesota sent him a letter expressing their sincere interest in having him as a student athlete. The coaching staff believed Roger was a fine college prospect. But before he could savor the opportunity of attending the University of Minnesota, he injured his left knee tearing the ligaments and being forced to set out a year. "I tried to rehabilitate it, but it never did get right," he said. The knee injury ended his basketball career and hopes of playing in NCAA Division I competition.



Steve Crace was raised in Letcher County, Kentucky, in the far eastern part of the state close to Virginia. Whitesburg is its county seat. He walked about a mile and a half every day to a one room school house. He said, "I would say at the time we were at least probably 20 years behind in this part of the country. We didn't have electricity." All the modern conveniences at the time were missing in his family's life.

When Steve's family moved to Charlestown, he found the area totally foreign to him. "It was so different here than what I was used to," he said. "I know I was backwards. In school I talked different. I had that hillbilly language and we lived out of town. In the summer months, I very seldom came to town."

Basketball was to some extent foreign to Crace. He went through elementary and junior high school not participating in any kind of sports until he arrived at Charlestown High School. "Then, my biggest hobby I guess was fishing. I was a freshman in high school and John Wood and Harold "Dutch" Reis approached me. They wanted me to come out for the basketball team and I did. I was about 6-1 or 6-2, a decent size for a player back in those days in the 1950's and 1960's. With their help and coaching, it really changed my whole life," Crace said.

He continued, "I stopped being as backwards and was more outgoing. I did things probably I would never had done if I hadn't been on the basketball team. I really enjoyed it. I played 110 percent and tried to do my best."

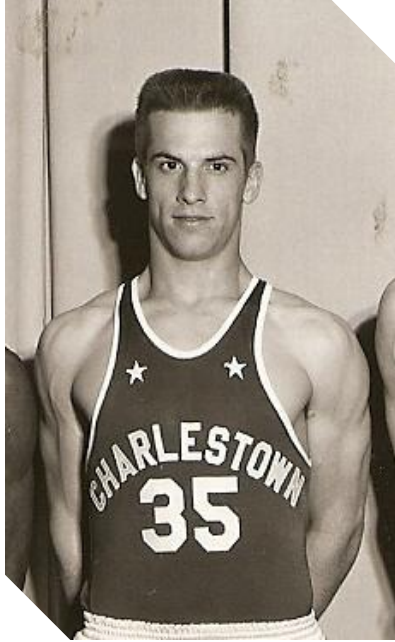
There were a couple of games he highlighted that were memorable moments for him on the hardwood. In 1959, in one of his best outputs as a one year varsity player, he had a tremendous game against the highly touted Silver Creek Dragons in the Jeffersonville Holiday Tournament. The game was a thrilling battle between the two arch rivals going down to the wire with the Dragons winning 65-64. He sank 7 field goals and 2 free throws to score 16 points. - *[Resource: The Charlestown Courier, December 24, 1959, from microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]*

It was a night for Steve Crace to shine on the basketball court as he led all scorers with 16 points in a game against the Crothersville Tigers. The Pirates would hit 30 of 75 shots for 40 percent from the field. He scorched the nets for 8 baskets from the field with his hot shooting hand and great moves on the floor. - *[Resource: The Charlestown Courier, February 4, 1960, from microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]*

Were there any regrets to having started late as a basketball cager? "The only thing I regret is I didn't start playing basketball maybe when I was in junior high where I could develop some skills," Crace declared. "I credit John Wood for helping me probably more than anybody in playing basketball. In the summertime, he would come out once in a while to my house to see how I was doing. He even brought me a net for my rim I had hanging out back on my old goal post," he said smiling.

In 1961, he won the Charlestown Lions Club Sportsmanship Award and was grateful. "That was a big honor for me. I had never won anything before. Never been in sports that much and to win that especially with my dad there that night was a special moment."

During his varsity years Steve Crace had eleven ballgames where he was in double figures. During the 1959 and 1960 seasons with the Pirates, he scored a total of 250 points. In his senior year with the Buccaneers, he averaged 8.9 points per game.



Roger Case was a muscular giant to many who came up against him on the playing floor for the Charlestown Pirates of Coaches Dale McNeely and Scotty Daugherty. Frankly, you didn't need too much convincing that he would dominate around the perimeter that's how big and strong he was in physical appearance.

A product of the Scottsburg Warriors, he along with his brother, Robert, transferred to Charlestown late in the basketball season of 1961 when Coach John Wood was at the helm. Both saw limited action because of the shortness of the season.

The following year with incoming new coach McNeely, Roger saw lots of action on the basketball court. Anybody familiar with Roger Case's career at Charlestown will know he gave maximum effort on the hardwood.

Fine tuning his shooting eye, he had a sterling game against the Madison Shaw Hilltoppers. He pumped in 9 baskets and 2 charity tosses for 20 points as he helped McNeely's Pirate crew sink the Madison ball club, 72 to 66. His hot hand along with teammate

Donnie Bush, gave the Hilltoppers their first defeat of the basketball campaign. - *[Resource: The Charlestown Courier, November 23, 1961, from microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]*

In a game with the Seymour Owls, Roger scored 20 points in the losing endeavor. The brawny cager had an excellent shooting game from the floor hitting 5 field goals and downing 10 buckets at the free throw line. As a team, the Pirates canned 22 of 28 tosses at the charity lane and shot 23 of 46 from the field, but were beaten on the boards by a 50 to 30 margin by Seymour. Even though the Pirates shot 50 percent from the field, floor errors contributed to the loss. The Pirates committed 10 more floor errors than Seymour's 20. - *[Resource: The Charlestown Courier, January 18, 1962, from microfilms at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]*

In the 1962 Jeffersonville Sectional, he provided the needed toughness to help the Pirates win their first ever Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. (IHSAA) sectional tournament in the history of the school. The 5-11 junior guard/forward poured in 19 points to lead all scorers in capturing the championship crown against the Clarksville Generals, 67 to 54. He ripped the nets with 6 buckets and lobbed in 7 free throws before departing the game on personal fouls. In the four winning game spree by the Pirates, he had 37 points for an average of 9.2 points per game in tournament action.

Roger had several key games during the season as well as in tourney play. He had back to back double figures against the New Washington Mustangs and the Vevay Warriors. He scored 16 points in both clashes with his strong shooting hand. In the Mustang encounter, he hit seven from the field and tossed in two free throws. Against Vevay, Roger connected on 6 baskets from outside and had four points at the charity stripe.

In his junior year, his scoring output for the season was 268 points with an average of eleven points per game. In 1963 and his final year at Charlestown, he averaged fifteen points per game. Roger scored 568 points while playing two years on the varsity basketball team.

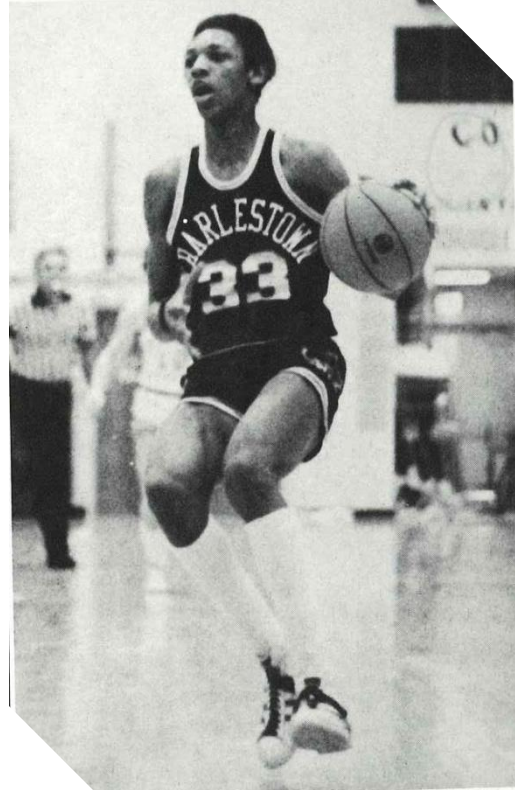
In the 1960's, Roger Case was one of the impressive basketball stars for Charlestown High School and can lay claim to being on the Pirates' first ever single-class 1962 Jeffersonville Sectional Championship teams!

Johnny Jones was one of the salient sharp shooters for the Pirates in the 1979-80 seasons. He was tall, thin and stood at 6-3 and was the lone veteran player in his junior year for returning Coach Bill Dunn, who had been at Salem for three years.

He would be the scoring ace for the Pirates in the new basketball campaign. As a sophomore, he scored 195 points and an average of 8.9 points per game under Coach Dale Crafton, who posted a 12-10 record in the 1978-79 seasons.

His biggest output in his sophomore year displaying he was no softy when it came to his shooting arm was against Austin. Johnny punctuated the nylon for 19 points in a winning cause against the formidable Eagles, 62-56. The week before that game, he had double-doubles. Scoring with an ironclad shooting spree, he pumped in 17 big baskets and snarled off 16 huge rebounds in trouncing Mid Southern Conference rival the Brownstown Braves, 71-49.

The jumping jack star on the hardwood for the Pirates continued to have brilliant performances in his junior year. The spark from Johnny on the basketball court provided a new spirit of confidence for the Pirates.



In 1980, he had another incredible game against the Austin Eagles. This time he popped in 28 points! He was nine points better in his point production on the Pirate home floor than previously with the Austin ball club of Coach Dave Lueking. The Pirates in winning the clash, 69 to 56 shot 19 of 26 shots from the charity stripe for 73 percent. - *[The Evening News, Jeffersonville, Indiana, Monday, February 4, 1980, from microfilms at the Jeffersonville-Township Public Library]*

In a game with arch rival Silver Creek, he plugged the nets with 25 points in a losing effort. The talented junior forward connected on 12 of 20 from the outside and one of three free throws for his shooting efforts against the Dragons of Coach John Heaton.

In a win over the Corydon Panthers later in the season, Johnny had an outstanding game against the Harrison County ball team. He had double-doubles. His offensive workout on the hardwood garnered him 20 points and his powerful rebounding on the boards saw him pull off 13 from the glass. He was high scorer for the game as Charlestown won, 60 to 50. - *[The Evening News, Jeffersonville, Indiana, Monday, February 23, 1980, from microfilms at the Jeffersonville-Township Public Library]*

The victory gave the Pirates a tie for second place in the Mid Southern Conference race that year. This was an important win for the Pirates because it had been eleven years since the team had placed second or better in the Mid Southern Conference competition.

In other matches, Jones had 25 points against the Providence Pioneers and 21 in the Jeffersonville and Henryville ballgames. His stats for rebounds are incomplete at this time. He ended his first two seasons with 499 points for 12.0 points scoring average. This vignette focuses only on his sophomore and junior years. In 1981, he had a tremendous senior year when the Pirates won the Madison Sectional Crown and that short story will be forthcoming in the near future.