

CHARLESTOWN PIRATES HOOPS-HYSTERIA, Treasure Chest...

by Chuck E. Ledbetter, Sr.

-Forrest F. Coots In the 1930's, Coots was a leading athlete on the basketball hardwood, but turning the pages back in search of accurate information on coaches, players, and teams is not an easy task. Such is the case with Forrest F. Coots. Even close relatives of his could not provide any data.

When Forrest was playing basketball, the games were typically low scoring and they would have to have a center jump after each and every basket scored! It's almost mind-boggling to think there was such a rule, but of course, there were other regulations that were as incredible as that one. But one has to remember the sport was still in its early stages of development and as interest in the sport increased throughout the state calling for faster action on the floor new guidelines from the Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. (IHSAA) were adopted. The IHSAA has done a remarkable job of making high school basketball more exciting to watch through the years.

Even though the family could not provide any statistics on him during those nostalgic days at Charlestown High School, they did have this remarkable pose of him on the playground at the Jonathan Jennings School on the public square taken by an unknown photographer, possibly in 1933.

He played for Coach Robert Reed on the 1934 and 1935 teams. There is an impressive framed portrait of him with the team mounted on a wall at a local business in the community, but the owners cannot recall how they obtained possession of the print. It's a great print of the team with their names embossed on the frame.

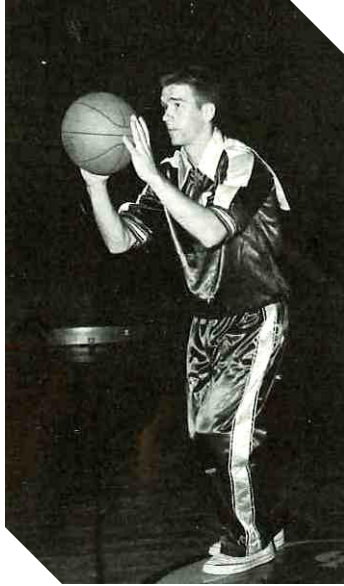
It's apparent that he had a successful basketball career while he was playing on the hardwood. In 1934, he was the first recipient of the Sportsmanship Award to be presented by the Charlestown Lions Club. The organization was formed in 1934 and started their annual Free Throw and Sportsmanship Awards at their basketball dinners. In 1949, Coots would become the president of the group succeeding the late George G. Spriestersbach, who was well-known in the local business community, and present the awards to other excellent players through the years.

Even though we don't know what type of offensive and defensive player he was on the floor his receiving of the sportsmanship award tells us he had tremendous respect for fair play of others and was gracious in losing on and off the basketball court and was an excellent ambassador for Charlestown High School and it's sports program.

C. R. Lutz, father of Denny Lutz was on that team with Coots. Here are some of the other great athletes from those bygone days: Jim Bagby, John Blackaby, Bill Bruner, Carl Davis, Melvin Davis, Bruce Ross, Clay Pace. Kynard Taff was the student manager.

Later, Coots and classmate Kynard Taff would hold the office of the Charlestown Township Trustee in the '40s and '50s. Forrest served as trustee from 1959 to 1963. Taff held the office for eight years, 1947-to-1954, and was in office when the new Charlestown High School and gymnasium was built. Both gentlemen were very successful in their lives. They were remarkable people who served their community with great dedication. In 2004, Forrest F. Coots passed away at the age of 88, and in 2009, Kynard Taff died at the

age of 94. - [If you want to know more about the IHSAA and its history and the rules of basketball go to www.ihsaa.org]



In 1954-55, **Norman Lilly** played varsity basketball for Letcher B. Norton in his junior year, and for John E. Wood, in his senior year, 1955-56 seasons. As Lilly would put it, “Mr. Norton directed basketball in his life the same way as any tough Marine would---and, you followed orders!”

But, he quickly countered, “I learned a lot about basketball from him.” That he did! What Lilly turned out to be on the hardwood was one of the best sixth man basketball cager’s to wear the blue and white during his playing career at Charlestown.

The 5-11 Pirate guard had one of his finest games against the North Central Tigers of Coach Howard Key, when he pumped in 15 points in his fourth appearance on the hardwood at Charlestown. He netted 5 field goals and 5 tosses from the charity stripe to make his marksmanship known on the floor as the Pirates posted an 11 point victory, 52 to 41.

“Norman Lilly played sixth man,” said Coach Wood, “The sixth man is so important on every team, and I know that player’s want to be starters, and only 5 get to start,” he explained. “So, you have to determine whose going to be the sixth man, and when you put them in things go on as they did before, you need that,” Wood stated. “Norman, played that well,” Wood said with a smile and affirming his admiration for his former star ace on the basketball court.

In 1955, Lilly recalls when the new Charlestown High School Gym was dedicated and his former mentor came to celebrate their first game in the arena bringing his hot shooting Clark County High School Cardinals with their all-around basketball star 6-2 center, James Hall. The Pirates won the thrilling contest before a jam-packed crowd, but Lilly says, “I truly believe to this day that he let us win.”

It was a real barn-burner, but Coach Norton was quoted in the Charlestown Courier confiding to assistant principal, Glenn Ross, that he had piloted teams in two previous dedication games, losing both. The Pirates became his third loss in such a game, 59-56. Norton had hoped the jinx would be broken with the Charlestown game. - [Source: “Charlestown Courier” microfilms, November 1955; at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]

When the Pirates traveled to Winchester, Kentucky, later in the season, they did lose considerably to Norton’s five, 58 to 36. - [Source: “Charlestown Courier” microfilms, February, 1956; at the Charlestown-Clark County Public Library]

He joined his teammate, Stanley “Bart” Bartholomai at Vincennes University, where both played basketball for the college. He was head basketball coach for Saint Michael Catholic Elementary School for ten years and had a number of outstanding athletes that went on from St. Michael’s to play for the Pirates. Among them were Tim Clark, Anthony “Tony” Glotzbach, Norman Kalkhoff, the Ledbetter brothers, Ben, Joe, and Jim, and Tim Wessel.

Tim Wessel was a high intensity basketball player for Coach Dale Crafton in the 1977-78 and 1978-79 seasons. He played in the middle and his strong suit on the court was rebounds. He was quite proficient and effective underneath both the offensive and defensive boards. Had it not been for an emergency appendectomy in his senior year causing him to set out four games at the beginning of the season, Tim more than likely would have added to his remarkable stats that year.

Even so, that certainly didn't keep this young 6-4 center from producing on the hardwood. In one of his best games his junior year against the New Albany Bulldogs, he scored four consecutive clutch baskets to bring the Pirates back to one point in the third stanza even though his team lost to the Bulldogs. In the rematch his senior year, the Pirates won in an upset over first year Coach Jack Ford's much taller New Albany Bulldogs, 61-to-57. He had 13 huge rebounds off the glass in the Pirate victory.

In his final year, even with the appendectomy, he grabbed 103 rebounds and scored 113 points, for an average of 6.3 points per game. He had 15 boards against Crawford County and netted 18 points and 10 rebounds versus the Silver Creek Dragons. He followed that with a 14 point and 13 board game victory over Paoli, and posted a double-double (11 points and 11 rebounds) against Southwestern. One of his most memorable games was at New Washington. He scored 11 points, grabbed 10 rebounds against the Mustangs and made 5 of 6 free throws during the waning minutes of the game to help secure the win.

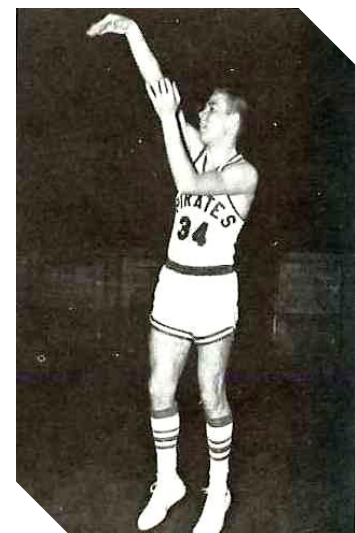
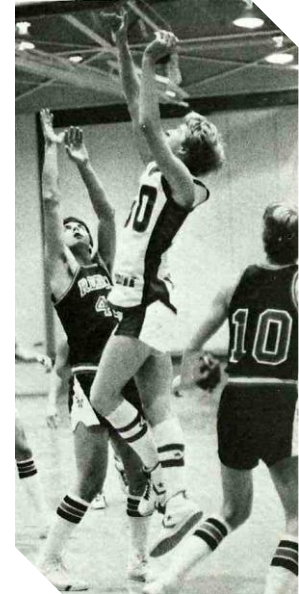
At the end of the 1978-79 seasons, he won the trophy for the Most Valuable Rebounder for his efforts on the court. Tim is the protégé of his father, Bernard Wessel, who starred on the 1946 Pirates for Coach Cecil B. Sonner.

Tom Allen became acquainted with his favorite past time from his camaraderie Pirate standout Norman Lilly. Lilly's family lived in the housing projects and had a whole backyard without grass. The backyard had a basketball goal that was regulation size. As 6-1 Tom Allen was growing up he became skillful in playing lots of roundball. It was put to good use later.

When he entered Jonathan Jennings School he started for the basketball team. At the end of his junior high school year he broke his foot. During the summer, he did what most basketball players actually dream of, he grew 7 inches! His new found growth caused him to be somewhat clumsy. When he went back to play for the 8th grade basketball squad his coach, Robert "Bob" Myers went to his father and sought permission to keep him after basketball drills to workout, what Allen described as "getting the clumsy-ness out of my system!"

Allen tells us what Myers had him to do afterwards to rid himself of being such a tall lumbering basketball athlete. "You would have thought I was a football player," he grinned, "because after practice, Coach Myers would get a bunch of tires out on that hardwood floor and make me run through them!" Allen laughed. "I would fall half of the time," he sniggered, and if that wasn't enough, "he would run me around the gym with a whistle strap!"

The personable Allen played at the forward post three years of his varsity basketball career for Coach Wood. In his senior year, he had an



extraordinary season as a player. In the opening game with the Silver Creek Dragons, he bombarded the nets from the sides for 20 points hitting 8 from the outside and 4 at the charity stripe. His defensive hawking of 6-3 star, Tommy Lund, one of Coach Ray Green's key shooting arms in the middle, was held to only one field goal underneath. Lund ended the game with only 6 points getting the rest of his points from the free throw line. The Pirates finished strong beating the Dragons, 56 to 39, as a result of Allen's shooting blitz that game.

Allen's prolific plays on the floor brought him to a moment of history in Charlestown's new high school gymnasium. He's noted for the longest shot to be made in the history of the sports hall. He tells us about the occasion when he was a freshman on the junior varsity and there were only a few seconds left in the ballgame.

"It did not win the game, but it was at the end of the game," he said. "A pick was set for me and I cut by the foul line at the other end of the floor. I was actually, one foot below that foul line. Larry Belcher threw the ball into me and I turned and faced the basket at the other end. I threw the ball from one end of the floor to the other."

Allen continued...

"I thought the ball was going to hit the flag, which at the time was hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the gym, and the ball stripped the net at the other end!" he exclaimed. "One referee had already turned to go into the dressing room and did not see the ball go through the net, but the other referee did see it. The other referee that turned and left to go to the dressing room whistled the shot no good, but the other one said he seen it and that the buzzer actually went off when the ball was right by the flag and counted it!" Allen declared.

Allen could not remember how many feet it was, but he knew that it was 6 steps toward the visitor's bleachers and one foot below the foul line. He said the only reason he knew that was "because Harold Dutch" Reis wanted to put a nail in the floor to mark the spot and Louie Kleopfer, coach of the freshman basketball team had walked in from one of his games and seen where I was standing plus they also had a film of it."

He indicated that come Monday morning classes, he did it again in the Physical Ed Class, after someone had commented that he could never ever make that shot again in a million years. But, he did and yes, there are several witnesses from that class to vouch for his second phenomenal feat of shooting and hitting the extraordinary shot a second time!

Coach John E. Wood said, "Tom was an outstanding defensive player. He played hard at all times." Allen finished out his three year varsity scoring career with 361 points and 7.4 points per game average in his senior year. He had several other great offensive games for the Pirates where he scored in double-figures, but his specialty on the hardwood was his dynamic defensive attack against his opponents. That was his trademark. At the end of the 1961 basketball season, he was the recipient of the highly coveted Sportsmanship Award from the Charlestown Lions Club. The award dates back to 1934.

Kelly Reis - In his senior year, 6-3 Kelly Reis and his Pirate teammates opened with arch-rival Jeffersonville at home. "Jeffersonville had not been on our schedule for quite a long time," Reis commented, "and they were one of the top teams in the state that year. It was great to have the entire pre-season to focus on such a great challenge."

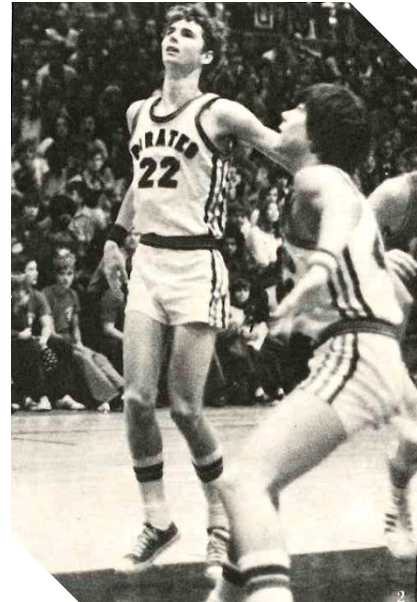
Charlestown lost in the opener with the Demons but Reis believed, "it very much felt like a win. I remember Coach Dunn giving us a great pep talk after the game and writing 18-1 on the board, indicating his confidence that we could win all the rest of our games if we played that well the rest of the year. The next night we beat Henryville 51 points!" Kelly, who was the recipient of the Scholastic and Free Throw awards that year, pumped in 18 points against the Red Devils.

In trouncing the Henryville Hornets, the ace forward sizzled the nets for 15 points, and the tough defense deployed by Coach Bill Dunn against their next door neighbor was also given credit for the Pirates, 108 to 57, outcome!

"We won the holiday tourney that year, beating the Providence Pioneers by one point after losing to them by ten in an earlier meeting. We then beat Silver Creek on their home floor, in a very close game that came down to free throws at the end," Reis proudly said of his Pirate teammates. "The final highlight of my senior season was defeating the host team Madison Cubs, in the first round of the sectional," he said.

Before Reis ended his basketball career at Charlestown in true classic style, he had a career high of 31 points against the Scottsburg Warriors which could only be called your classic barn-burner in Hoosierdom! It was a tight 32 minute high-scoring clash, 84 to 83 with our visiting Pirates losing by one point. Coach Dunn was quoted in the Jeffersonville Evening News afterwards saying, "Reis was something else...we had a real good game, one which you just hate to lose, but I think ...will have made us a better ball club." - [The Jeffersonville Evening News microfilms, the Jeffersonville-Township Library; December 8, 1973]

In three years on the hardwood Reis scored a total career of 398 points and ended with 11.7 ppga for his brilliant performances. He is the son of former Charlestown High School Basketball Coach Harold "Dutch" Reis who was a 'Super Star' on the hardwood back in the late '30s and '40s.



Anthony “Tony” Glotzbach This 6-3, 178 lbs, towering player played for Coach Richard “Dick” Longo in the middle ‘60s. He was known as Tony or “Glotz” by his teammates and was the second leading boardsman on the glass with an average of 8.8 boards per game.

He had a series of injuries that hampered him in the early going, but never fretted for one moment of ever giving up. He worked hard and diligently. He ended up displaying some great dazzling movements on the offensive attack underneath the glass and from the outside with his soft touch with jumper. His keenness in using the glass for the bank shot, he developed a good ‘back pivot’ to get his jump shot off without it being blocked!

Tony possessed an aggressiveness that bid him well in battling the boards for rebounds. He had 7 clean tip-ins on the offensive board his junior year with the ‘66 Pirates.

“There were many fine moments and fond memories to say the least,” Tony said. “The most memorable victory was the night that we beat one of the strongest teams at that time [1965-66] in the Mid-Southern Conference.”

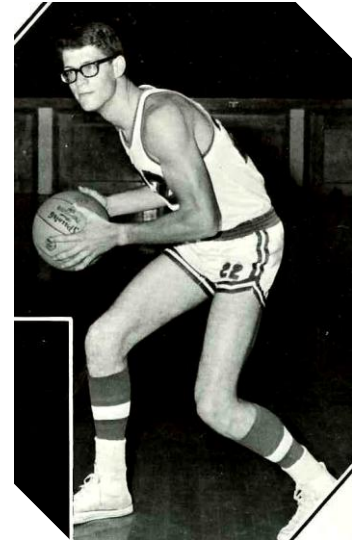
“We were totally outmanned by size and experience against the Dragons of Silver Creek. Coach Longo introduced us to the great equalizer; ‘The Deliberate Offense,’ stated Tony, “We practiced for weeks before the game holding the ball for 2 or 3 minutes at a time managing not to turn the ball over. Faithful Junior Varsity players joined in our practices to ‘double up’ the defense against us while we practiced our shuffle offense but with the clear purpose of holding the ball as long as possible and shooting only when we had a high percentage shot near and around the basket,” he declared.

An interesting thing about this strategy used by Longo brought something from the defensive team, which Coach Longo predicted. “An additional strategy was that the Dragons may fall into the trap of adapting to the slow down offense and try to hold the ball against us.” Tony affirmed, “They did so and we dominated throughout the game on their turnover and our discipline to wait for the good shot,” he concluded. The final score was 38 to 37 in favor of the Pirates!

Tony ended by saying, “All of the Varsity players saw their names painted on the gym floor at center court soon after the game. That was one of the motivating factors used by Longo to inspire us to raise the bar of our expectations and do the extra work in preparation for the big game,” he said.

In two seasons, Tony had a total of 322 points and 9.0 points per game average for his exceptional play on the hardwood for Coach Dick Longo. Unfortunately, his total number of rebounds was incomplete. He had extraordinary moments on the court where he pulled down double-digits off the boards.

In 1965 for instance, in the Corydon Panthers game, he hauled down 11 rebounds and was high scorer for the game with 19 points. Many of his 7 field goals came on offensive rebounds as he dominated the boards and dropped 5 at the charity stripe in his hot shooting performance. He had other high scoring games and high rebounding swipes off the boards, too.





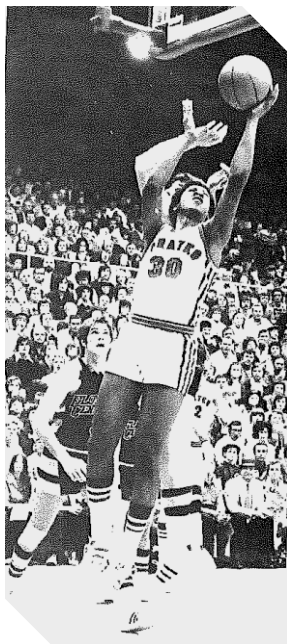
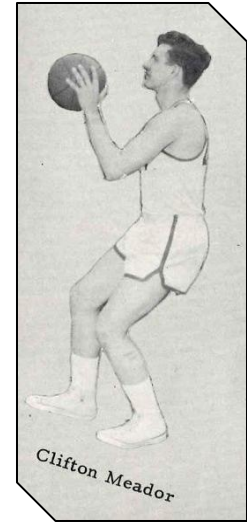
Clifton Meador played for coaches Letcher Norton and John Wood in the 1950's. He was a rugged athlete who settled in the middle and was a hard worker underneath the boards. You did not want to get in his way.

Clifton was affectionately nicknamed 'Big Mate' by his cohorts on the hardwood and was an impressive rebounder as well as a shooter. The wiry cager, who stood in at 6-2 with his 158 lbs muscular lean frame, was never to be denied with tossing the ball down the hoop to score points. He knew exactly what was needed to bring home the victory and had an almost ironclad shield around him when he grabbed the ball off the offensive and defensive glass.

In 1956, 'Big Mate's' extraordinary rebounding ability against Coach Bill Johnson's Red Devils in the sectional at the old Jeffersonville Fieldhouse was partly responsible for the Buccaneer's edging out the arch-rivals between the two schools for the first time in the schools' history. As a result he was selected on the "Evening News All-Sectional Team" that year with honors in the "Best Rebounders" category. - [The Jeffersonville Evening News, February 27, 1956]

In his two seasons of varsity competition "Big Mate" proved he was one of the most important athletes to play for the Pirates during the 1950 era on the basketball floor with his rock-solid rebounding and shooting talents.

Unfortunately, his total point production is still incomplete. Several games he participated in 1953-54 and 1954-55 are unavailable at this time. What we do know about his scoring is that he finished his varsity basketball career at Charlestown High School totaling over 300 points. But, even without the complete stats, he was an outstanding Pirate for coaches Norton and Wood.



Jerry Johnson was conceivably one of the most dynamic scorers that ever played for the Charlestown Pirates, bar none! The 6-3 shooting machine set several records that have yet to be broken. In 1975 and 1976, Jerry led the Pirates to two back to back IHSAA Sectional Tournaments at Madison for the vanguard of Pirate coaches, John E. Wood.

On December 10, 1976, he set an all-time single scoring record, lobbing in 49 points against the Corydon Panthers at home! After 36 years, he still has ownership of the single-scoring outburst. In the same season, he ended up with an incredible scoring total of 607 points on his way to setting an all-time career single scoring mark of 1,497 points that still tops the record books in the saga of the Charlestown High School varsity boys' basketball history.

In 1977, he led Clark County in scoring with 24.5 points per game average in 19 games with 465 points and had several games where he netted over 30 points during his varsity career. The venerable Coach Wood remarked that his talented star "was a good offensive and defensive player. We always wanted him to go to his right a little more, he was a left-hander and preferred everything left but he was a good scorer of the ball and a good defender."