



LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

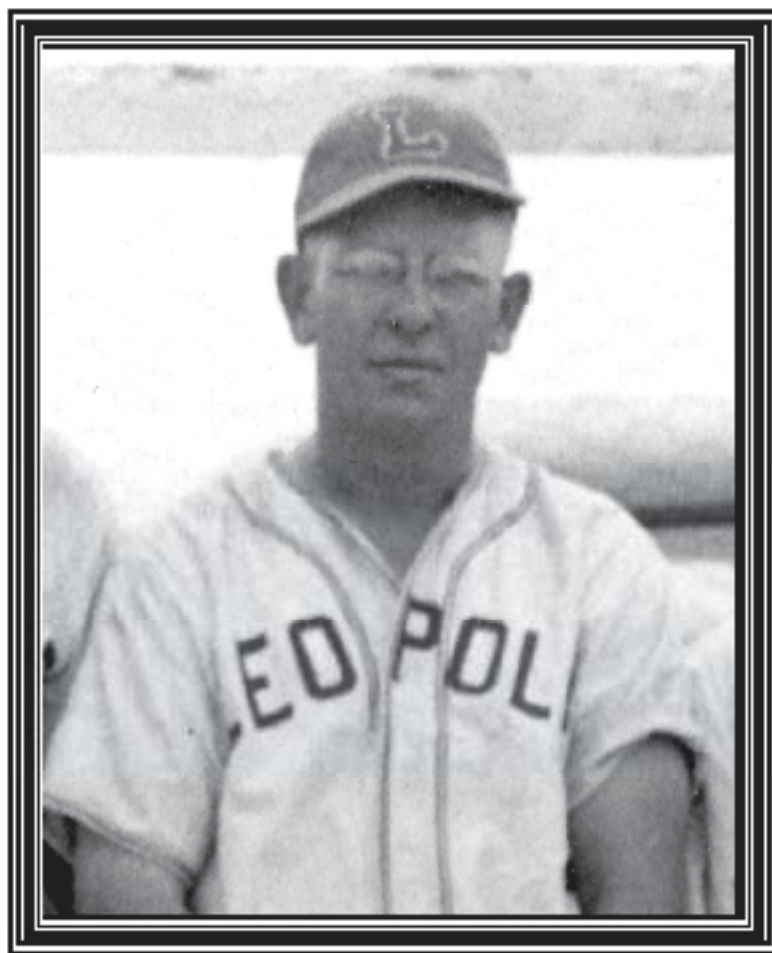


AUGUST 1, 2004



Hall of Fame Committee Members
Orlin Pederson-Chairman, Joe DeBaker-Secretary, Steve Conradt,
Tom Kristof, Pete Kucksdorf, Rick Otto and Tyler Schmidt.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



ALLEN KRISTOF
AUGUST 1, 2004

ALLEN KRISTOF

Allen Kristof was born in 1920. One of many Kristofs that played for the Leopolis team. Records indicate Allen started his playing days with Leopolis in 1938. But some other players tell of him playing at the age of 15. Either way, Allen Kristof contributed many years as a player with the Leopolis team.

Allen, also called "Doc" and "Krizzy," played several positions including centerfield and pitching. An article in the May 1942 Shawano Evening Leader calls Allen Kristof "The strong arm defender of the Leopolis team." Allen was a member of the 1946 championship Leopolis team. A left-handed batter many of his teammates recall his bat as being one of the best around. A steady in the line-up for two decades, records (although not complete) indicate over 600 at bats.

Allen continued to help the team after his retirement. He would often be seen around the park fixing what needed to be fixed. He also played a major role in building the grandstand most of you are seated in today. For those who have managed a team, having someone like that around is invaluable.

Allen had four sons who followed in his footsteps and played baseball with Leopolis from the late 1960s through the early 1980s. After baseball, Allen kept very active in his community. He was a member of the Leopolis Fish and Game Club and was also very active in his church, St. Mary's Catholic Church. Allen died in 1983.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



BERT THIEL
AUGUST 1, 2004

BERT THIEL

When one talks about baseball in this area, one of the first individuals that comes to mind is Bert Thiel. For those who have had the honor to watch him play, or later have him as their coach, one thing is clear. He was a competitor. Once inside the confines of a baseball field, Bert had one thing on his mind, winning.

Born in May 1926, the Thiel family at that time was no stranger to baseball. His father Art had already launched an impressive career that would eventually land him in the Leopolis Baseball Hall of Fame as one of its first inductees in 2003. Bert was one of six boys born to Art and Ann Thiel. One sister would join the pack for their family. Bert said that early on in life he would be playing baseball every night. At that time, there wasn't much of anything to do in this area. His father and mother had allowed others to stay with the family as times were tough.

Bert started his organized baseball career in Leopolis at the age of 16 in 1942. At that time, Leopolis had strong pitchers in Floyd Kristof and Joe Stezenski. Bert wanted to pitch, so in 1943, Bert went to pitch for Caroline and later for the Clintonville Truckers. Three professional scouts had their eye on him in 1944. In 1944, Bert entered the Service. Though in the Service, he hooked up with some very good players and played in Europe. While in the Service, Bert pitched a nine inning no-hitter. Discharged in 1947, Bert played one game for Leopolis. He struck out twenty batters. Bert then went to Borchert Field in Milwaukee for a tryout and was signed to play professional baseball for the Boston Braves.

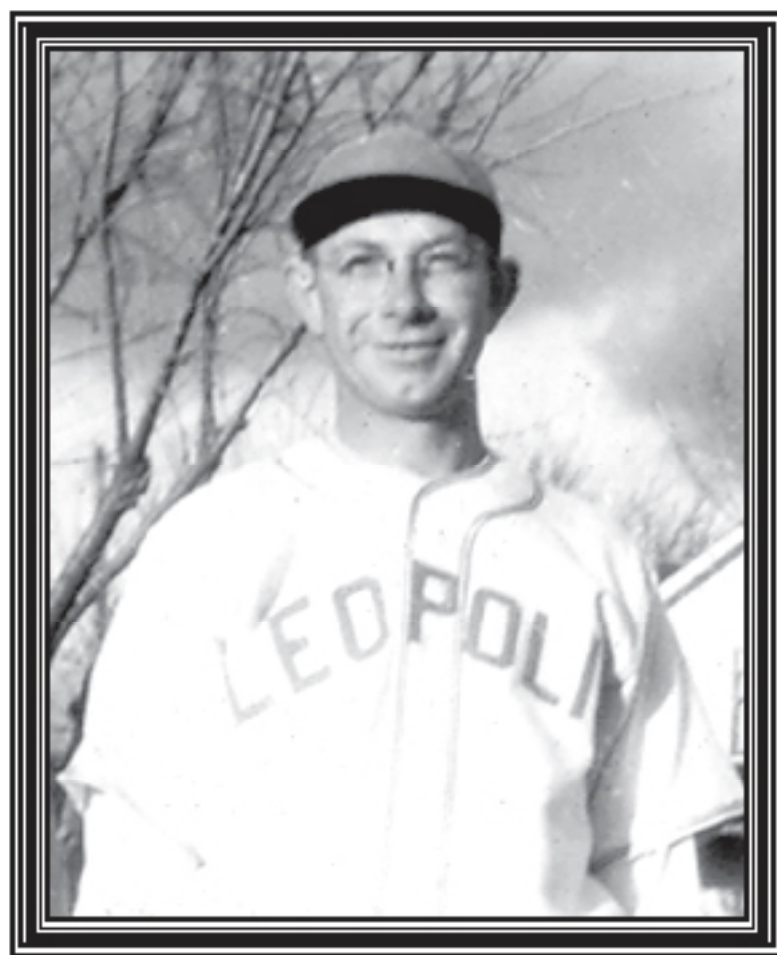
His professional career started in Eau Claire, Wis. in 1947. Eau Claire was a farm club of the Boston Braves. In 1948, Bert went to Jackson, Mississippi. At Jackson, he compiled a 20 game winning season. While at Jackson he met his bride to be Jean. In 1949, Bert moved on to Hartford, Connecticut where he had a 9-10 season. Although pitching a no hitter that year, he started to develop some arm trouble. He was sent to Boston where some chips were taken out of his elbow. He continued pitching in Hartford in 1950 and won 15 games. In 1951, Bert got closer to home being with Milwaukee. At that time, Milwaukee was the "Triple A" team of the Boston Braves. While in Milwaukee in 1951, Bert won 15 games including another no-hitter. In 1952, Bert had an 8-6 record. Bert also did get called up to the Boston Braves and did some pitching out of the bullpen for the major league team. Also in 1952, he pitched some winter ball in Puerto Rico. Winning 15 games and 7 of those were shutouts. In 1953, the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee and the "Triple A" farm club was moved to Toledo, Ohio. That year, Toledo won the pennant. Bert continued pitching with Toledo in 1954. Posting a 16-12 record despite the fact that Toledo finished the season in seventh place. In 1955, Bert continued with Toledo as a starter and was then moved to the bullpen compiling a 7-6 record. In 1956, Bert played for Jacksonville, Florida. In 1956, Bert played in Dallas, Texas and compiled an 18-11 record and was named "Texas League Player of the Year." In 1957, he went to San Francisco and compiled a 4-3 record. Bert remembers pitching (and winning) the last game played at old Seals Stadium. In 1958, Bert went to Minneapolis compiling a 7-6 record. Bert said he had a 5-2 record as a starter, but was sent to the bullpen so the young guys could pitch. In 1959, Bert started the season with Minneapolis but was released. He thought his career was done. But he got called to pitch in Corpus Christie, Texas and New Orleans compiling an 11-10 record. In 1960, Bert managed for Kansas City in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 1961, he managed in Pocatello, Idaho which was also associated with Kansas City. In 1962, Bert started his scouting career for Kansas City. At this time, he had 8 states to cover. (Also in 1962, Bert was scouting in Billings, Montana. It was Saturday and he drove through the night so he could pitch at Leopolis the next day.) 1963-1969 he scouted for the Washington Senators and was a minor league pitching coach. 1970-1971 Bert scouted eight states for the Atlanta Braves. 1972-1973 Bert managed the Appleton Foxes. Finishing his career in 1974, he managed for an independent club in Dubuque, Iowa. Bert continued his association with the Leopolis team spending several more years as manager.

Bert pitched behind some of the greatest pitchers in history. That is one reason he pitched so many games in the minor leagues. He had pitchers Warren Spahn, Lou Burdette and Bob Buhl ahead of him. That was a hard bunch to crack. Bert also remembers Ted Williams asking him several times to come and throw him some pitches to hit. For that Ted would slip him \$20.00. Bert also laughed about the year he roomed with Jimmy Piersall. It's a long story, so ask Bert.

His professional career spanned 28 years. Bert said "Baseball gave me everything. It doesn't owe me anything." Though on the road for 28 years, Bert and his wife Jean had nine children ... enough to start their own team. I'll bet Jean is happy there was no such thing as the designated hitter back then or they may have had a family of 10. One could go on and write a book on this person's life. One thing that hasn't been mentioned is his love for his family. Although Bert spent many days away from his home, his family was never off his mind. His wife Jean could very well go into the Hall of Fame as a wife and mother.

This isn't Cooperstown, but this community couldn't be prouder to have you in the Leopolis Baseball Hall of Fame.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



MELVIN "BUTCH" STEINKE
AUGUST 1, 2004

MELVIN “BUTCH” STEINKE

Born in August 1915, Melvin “Butch” Steinke appears to have joined the Leopolis team in about 1935. Early records are sketchy, but one thing is clear, Butch Steinke swung a mean bat.

Floyd Kristof tells about how Butch used to have his bats made by a local person. Floyd said the bat Butch swung was so heavy, nobody else on the team could get it around.

Melvin anchored the short stop position for many years. It appears he hung up the spikes in about 1952. Butch appears to have had a lifetime batting average of about .310. He has amassed over 800 career at bats. Those who played with him all say that his arm was very strong and he was a good fit at shortstop. Many old timers talk about how Butch could hit a baseball and how hard and far it would go.

Butch also coached the team for several years. Including coaching the 1946 Leopolis team to it's first B.A.B.A. Championship. Butch batted .391 to lead the team to the championship. During the playoff run to the title, Butch led the way with his bat. In the first round vs. Marion, Butch belted a home run. In the second game against Shawano, Butch had two triples. Later the team traveled to New London. At this game, Butch had 4 hits.

Butch was a brother to Hall of Fame member Allen “Swampy” Steinke. Butch, and his wife Virginia, had five children. Three boys and two girls. Butch died in 1992.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



DUANE "BUCKSHOT" ASHENBRENNER
AUGUST 1, 2004

DUANE “BUCKSHOT” ASHENBRENNER

Duane “Buckshot” Ashenbrenner’s contributions to Leopolis baseball go well beyond what he all did as a player and manager. Buckshot had the responsibility for many years of keeping this team going. He knew what it was like to “have it all.” By that we mean, having the responsibility of making sure the field is ready to play on, filling the beer cooler, attending the meetings, getting ticket takers, bartenders and all the other responsibilities associated with managing. One year, Duane oversaw and worked on re-doing the entire baseball diamond. Duane was also the Secretary/Treasurer for the club from 1962-1984.

Duane was born in 1942. One of five children. He played high school ball in Marion from 1956-1960. In 1956 at the age of 14, Duane started playing for Leopolis. He played there through 1957. In 1958, Leopolis didn’t have a team, so he went to play with Tilleda for three years. From 1960 through 1961, he got a release from Tilleda and played for Big Falls. In 1962, A.N. Brunner got the Leopolis team back together and that’s where Duane played and managed through 1984.

When Duane came back to Leopolis in 1962, he finished the season batting .340. He was a person who could play every position (and did). Most of us remember his side arm style of pitching. Many times he would fool opposing batters with his unique style.

Duane’s fondest memory of his playing days was when Leopolis beat Shawano in the playoffs to advance to the semi-final game against Waupaca. Duane got a hit to tie the game in the later innings and Leopolis ended up winning the game. The subsequent game against Waupaca was lost by a score of 1-0.

Duane and Kathy had one son, who was tragically killed in a car accident. Our hearts and prayers go out to the two of you as that event weighs heavy on your hearts.

Through the history of this organization, there aren’t too many players or managers who have made the contributions to this team as you have. An unselfish player and coach who knew what it took to keep this organization running. Please accept entry into the Leopolis Baseball Hall of Fame as token of our appreciation.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



JOE STEZENSKI
AUGUST 1, 2004

JOE STEZENSKI

Born in 1921, Joe played his high school ball in Gresham. Joe thought he was the only pitcher on the high school team. Graduating in 1939, Joe moved to the Leopolis area to work on a farm.

In 1940, he began his career with the Leopolis baseball team. Joe later paired with Floyd Kristof to become quite a pitching duo for the team. Floyd later became his brother-in-law. The Shawano Evening Leader reported in August 1944, after beating Bowler that "It was a case of too much Stezenski and Melvin Steinke."

The most memorable year was the 1946 season when Leopolis would win the first ever B.A.B.A. Championship. The first playoff game on the way to the 1946 championship was against Shawano. Joe was the winning pitcher and Leopolis won 9-6. In a 15 inning game against New London, Joe relieved starter Floyd Kristof and went 10 and 2/3 innings until the game was finally called because of darkness. The championship game was later played the next Sunday, where Leopolis won 3-2.

According to his team mates Joe had one of the most wicked curve balls around. Joe continued to play in Leopolis through 1947. An avid fan of local baseball, Joe can still be seen at many games proudly wearing his Leopolis hat.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



ART MESSERSCHMIDT
AUGUST 1, 2004

ART MESSERSCHMIDT

When the seven member Leopolis Baseball Hall of Fame Committee started to solicit names for fans to go in to the Hall of Fame, one name surfaced immediately, Art Messerschmidt. Although some on the committee had never met Art, his name was always associated with his love for baseball.

Art lived in the Pella area most of his life. Art worked in the shipyards during WWII, but was soon back to Pella, where he loved to work in the woods. Bert Thiel said "Art was part of our family."

Art never married, but his love was baseball. Art tried his hand at managing the Leopolis team in the 1940s. After managing, Art continued to be one of the best supporters of Leopolis Baseball one can remember. Art very seldom missed a game. He would normally sit up in the old grandstand, with then Commissioner A.N. Brunner, and many times would have his portable radio with him so he could listen to the Milwaukee Brewers.

Art's health deteriorated in his later years and he lost his eyesight. That did not stop him from attending the games. Art lived a very modest life and never complained. Visiting him in later years, one can always remember him sitting in his trailer with a game on the radio. Art died in 1983, at the age of 84.

LEOPOLIS BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



ORLIN & SHIRLEY PEDERSON
AUGUST 1, 2004

ORLIN & SHIRLEY PEDERSON

Orlin was born in 1919 and Shirley was born in 1930. The two of them later married, and in 1949, moved to Leopolis. They bought a bar and named it "Pederson's." The two had moved to Leopolis from the Little Suamico area.

Orlin played some baseball there and was quite familiar with the game. Once in Leopolis, Orlin and Shirley both became great fans of the local team. Very seldom would the two of them miss a game. Shirley said that one of them had to be at the bar, but the other one would always be at the game. For those of you that knew Orlin his rumbling laugh could be heard at the corner of the beer stand during the game. After the game, the teams would stop at the bar and dissect the game. Shirley said they followed the team through some lean years but always stuck with the team. Shirley said that one year Orlin decided to try his hand at umpiring. It was a game at Almon, and Shirley said they almost had to carry him off the field after the game, as there were so many upset people at his umpiring. She said that was the end of his umpiring career. Orlin died in 1989.

Shirley continues to support the team. Orlin had two children Duane and Orlin Jr. Both of them played with the Leopolis team. Duane passed away at a young age. We honor Orlin and Shirley Pederson for their support of Leopolis baseball.

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TY STEFL
AUGUST 1, 2004

TY STEFL

Born in August 1919, Ty Stefl was soon to be coached in the game of baseball by his father Frank. Ty grew up in the Leopolis area between Tilleda and Leopolis.

Early records indicate, at the age of 15 Ty started playing for the Leopolis team in 1935. In 1936, Ty's batting average was a remarkable .329. Not bad for a kid 17 years old. In 1937, Ty batted .388. Ty was also part of the Leopolis team that won the Shawano County League Championship in 1937. Leopolis beat Morris 7-1 to win the title. Ty was also part of the 1946 Championship Team. Ty continued to play for Leopolis through about 1951.

From the records we have it appears that his life time batting average was about .350. In 1943, Ty batted an even .500. Many of the individuals who played with him, and fans who watched him play, title him as the best second baseman to play the game.

Ty would also try out for several professional baseball teams. One picture of Ty provided by his wife Betsy, shows Ty sitting on a bench (in uniform) with Dizzy Dean and Rogers Hornsby. Betsy thought this picture was taken at one of those tryouts. Ty was a very dedicated athlete. Floyd Kristof states that Ty could really hit the line drive. So much that Kristof hated pitching batting practice to him for fear of getting hit with a liner. Even Alex Sousek at 94 years old stated that Ty Stefl was one of the best players to ever play in Leopolis. That is quite a compliment. Ty died in 1994.

