

Mrs. George H. Hart, Jr., President

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Wildcat Grid Team To Face Fitzgerald To-Night



Here are the fighting Valdosta High School Wildcats, who will meet their second South Georgia Football Association test tonight, in a game with Fitzgerald, another of the leading teams of the conference. Beginning with the bottom row, and left to right, they are: Bottom row: Patillo, Rogers, Stalvey, Phillips, Ratliff (captain), J. Davis, Powell, Love, McEachren. Second row: Coach Wright Bazemore, Corbett, Colson, D. Davis, Condurellis, Coach Bobby Hooks, Hanley, Bagley, Passmore, Bullock, Howell, Coach Bernard Stone. Third row: Oliver, Nicholson, Hardy, Sims, Shannon, Shiver, McCrary, Blanton, Stewart, Youles. Fourth row: Dasher, McDonald, Gibson, Abood, Ross, Porter, Manager Paine, Manager Southwell, George, Manager Bassford. Fifth row: Blanton, Herndon, Edwards, Hallman, Stone, Wetherington, Hall, Moore, Godwin, Lilly, Lee.

This picture was reproduced from the October 18, 1940, Dosta Outlook, publication of Valdosta High School, Valdosta, Georgia, the football town. In the middle of the picture with his boys is the late Coach Bobby Hooks who was with VHS 1932-1940. That year, 1940, VHS had beat Americus 32-2, Cross City 39-0, Nashville 62-0, and with the rest of the season ready to play, they complained of injuries of our players. An article in the Outlook mentions Clarence Paine, Big Lou Blanton, (the late) "Knucklehead" McCrary (who after WWII coached the Moultrie team and gave us tough competition), and Captain of the football team, Glen Ratliff and more.

Many thanks to Mrs. Bobby Hooks of Macon for sharing with us the story we have in this issue. It was written by Bobby Hooks in the 1950's. Mrs. Hooks came across the article and a copy was given to J. G. Joiner of Macon, who sent a copy to J. W. Martin in Valdosta. A few corrections were made, places filled in by Big Lou Blanton who also had it retyped. Clarence Paine called me about it and we went from there. It is a real find.

The first installment of the story follows, but first, some words about the coach himself, Bobby Hooks.

ROBERT G. HOOKS 1907-1969

Bobby Hooks was born March 13, 1907, in Americus, Georgia. He began his athletic career there playing football in 1921, 1922, and 1923, also participating in baseball and track. In 1924 and 1925, Hooks attended Riverside Academy where he played football and captained the swimming, track, boxing and wrestling teams.

At the University of Georgia, he was one of Georgia's four horsemen of the 1927 "Dream & Wonder" team. He was again in all sports, and never lost a boxing match there. In 1928, he was the Southern Conference light heavyweight boxing champion; the Southern Amateur light heavyweight and the Southern Amateur heavyweight champs, and won many other boxing matches, including the six professional fights in 1930 when he won all six matches. He then made the decision to become an athletic coach.

This was a man whose life as a coach touched the lives of hundreds of Georgia boys and girls in all sports. In 1930 and 1931, he began coaching at Georgia Military College of Milledgeville. Then, this magnificent, handsome athlete came to Valdosta to be athletic director and head coach for Valdosta High School, a job that lasted from 1932 to 1940. Our picture is of his last team here. He accepted a position of coach at Mercer University in 1941 and moved there, served in WWII as a Lieutenant Colonel, returned to Mercer, and later retired in Macon.

Coach Bobby Hooks died April 7, 1969. He had been inducted into the State of Georgia Athletic Hall of Fame in December 1964.

Mrs. Hooks lives in Macon and we thank her for sharing this "memoir" with us. Greetings from everyone in Valdosta, Mrs. Hooks. We wish you'd come to see us.

Their daughter Beth lives in Athens with her husband and two children. Son Bobby, Jr., and his wife have three children and live in Texas.

Here is the first part of the article by Coach Hooks about his boys.

THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF OUTSTANDING FOOTBALL PLAYERS ON VALDOSTA'S TEAMS

FROM 1932 THROUGH 1940

BY COACH BOBBY HOOKS

(1932, 1933) Guy Reid Parker the cockiest quarterback and the best signal caller. This was when signals were called from a set formation (no huddle). He had supreme confidence in himself and possessed the 3 p's; Poise, Polish, and Precision above all others.

(1932, 1933) Bernard "Step" Strom (Co-Capt. 1933) was the greatest broken field runner I ever coached (or saw in 15 years' coaching). He was always good for a 65 or 70 yard touchdown run. He was the most dangerous punt receiver and was never tackled head on. He could bust a game wide open with his breakaway speed.

(1932) Robert "Certainly" Shannon - the shortest and smallest center - he was on my first team at Valdosta and when I asked who is my center, in lining them up - Shannon said, "I am Coach," and certainly he was - however - he got his nickname when against Albany, they were lagging, and on a time out Shannon said, "We certainly do need a touchdown" - time in we got the touchdown and went on to win the game. I tried my best to play a tall, big, fine-looking boy at center because potentially he looked the part, but Robert "Certainly" Shannon had other ideas. He was the best at his position for his build and size. (Senior, coached him only one year.)

(1932) John "Stooge" Davis - the best equipped tackle I ever had - big, strong and powerful. He went on to play tackle for the University of Georgia and was one of the most underrated players on a good Georgia team. (Senior, had him one year.) He now coaches at Jefferson, Georgia. (This article written in 1950's -- Ed.)

(1932) Lonnie O'Neal (Capt.) A very fine guard - probably the strongest and most rugged of all time. A fine leader by example. Quiet and timid only off the gridiron.

(1932, 1933) Tommie Giddens (Co-Capt. 1933) - the best defensive fullback and one with great courage as he played with a great handicap - his right shoulder would come out of joint and was very painful when it slipped out. He played with a leather strap around his waist and arm to keep the shoulder in place. He played it hard and dangerous as reckless as they come.

(1933, 1934) Fred Nijem, Co-Capt. 1934 - the best allround guard I ever coached in high school, prep school, junior college and college coaching. He was quick as a panther, tough and tireless. On defense, he stayed in the opposing backfield so much he was often mistaken for the 5th man in their backfield. On offense, he pulled out to run interference and was a great open field blocker - fast, rugged and a very highly spirited leader and captain. He could do it all and loved it.

(1933, 1934) Buck Murphy Co-Capt. 1934 - the best offensive and defensive tackle - very active and rugged, went on to captain a Georgia Tech Orange Bowl team. He played fullback at Tech and is considered one of the best blockers and linebackers Tech has ever had.

(1933, 1934, 1935) Jack Gornto - the best allround end. Red-headed, tall, rawboned and fast as a deer. Went on to play end at Alabama - the Alabama coaches said if he hadn't dropped out after his sophomore year on the team he would have been an All-American end in a walk. (This was in the Rose Bowl era at Alabama under Frank Thomas.)

(1933, 1934, 1935, 1936) Noah Langdale - smartest tackle, one year against our greatest rival, Albany, the guard and qb were tipping off their plays. We told Noah about it and he called the defensive plays so effectively, Albany was stopped cold and Dosta won an easy victory. Noah Langdale was one of the few freshmen to make the team, weighing 250 lbs. He played tackle for Alabama, right tackle on defense and left tackle on defense. He was that good a college tackle.

(1934, 1935, 1936) Tony Henry - left halfback - the best slow HB I ever coached. He knew his weakness (lack of speed) and because of same learned to get the most out of his interference. He was one of the all-time great backs developed at Dosta Hi inspite of his lack of speed. A steady yard gainer and ball control type back.

(1933, 1934) Gus Cleveland, son of Dr. A. G. Cleveland, Superintendent of Valdosta Public Schools for over thirty years, ranks among the top of the guards in two respects - desire and determination. He was extremely nearsighted, having to wear glasses. In spite of this severe handicap, Gus, because of his intense desire to play the game, left his footprints on Cleveland Field that bears his Dad's name. Desire & consistency were his forte.

(1933, 1934) Ray Griner - best of the small ends, truly great for his size and weight. He did everything that was asked of an end and gave no quarter and asked for none.

(1935, 1936, 1937) Oscar Dalton (Halfback & Capt. 1937 team) He was the hardest running back, not fancy but bruising type runner and a hustler from start to finish. A hard worker on the field and off - he worked at a drug store when he wasn't in school and on the practice field. A fine example, a never-say-die spirit.

(1934) Ellis Clary, quarterback - smartest at calling plays - he was like a coach on the field - if he had been eligible to play more than one year the sky is the limit as to the greatness he might have achieved - he developed into a Big League baseball player and now coaches the Washington Senators. A scrapper all the way.

(1934 1935) D. W. "DeWimp" Freeman -- the most sacrificing of all players he would get up at 3 & 4 am to deliver milk, but never missed a practice or a night chalk talk. He was so big and because of his size, awkward, but what he lacked in finesse he made up in hard work and roughness. We had a hard time getting pants to fit him and many times, I thought he would lose them, so intent was his play.

34, 1935) The two Paine boys M. J. Paine and Travers Paine were pains in the neck the opposition - two of the biggest, roughest, toughest linemen to come down the pike they were the rough-house type of players - the rougher it was, the better they liked it. They were cousins and each tried to out do the other in practice and on the playing field. They could play guard or tackle equally well -- when they played as a pair of guards they comprised the best and biggest interior line play I ever had. Travers Paine played some good ball for Georgia Tech.

To be continued in the next Newsletter.

Sadness

It is with deep regret and sadness to announce the death of Mrs. Margaret Roberts Graham. She was a friend, relative and member of LCHS. Mrs. Graham taught in the city schools for many years and we all remember her geometry classes. She was a good and faithful member of LCHS, attending nearly every meeting and function. We will always miss this lady.

The Society has received two memorial gifts in memory of Mrs. Margaret R. Graham, one from Mrs. Nan Allen and one from Mr. and Mrs. George H. Hart Jr.

Museum News

LCHS members Natalie Williams, Tom Shelton and Susie Thomas journeyed to Quitman Monday evening September 8th to attend a meeting of the Brooks County Historical Society. Brooks County occupies a nicely restored old law office for its meeting place and is contemplating establishing a museum. Our members were invited to attend in order to advise and furnish input as to how to go about setting up a museum. As always, the Quitmanites were exceedingly hospitable. As a token of appreciation, the Brooks Society presented our delegation with a commemorative plate depicting the old Brooks County Jail (where prisoners were housed from 1884-1980). The jail was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 and is presently used as a Law Enforcement Museum. We are pleased to place this gift in our Museum.

Many thanks to Jean Rogers Malone who has given us several pictures, some of her father, E. H. Rogers, and some of old school scenes. All pictures are nicely framed.

A REMINDER -- to the members of Lowndes County Historical Society. A special photographic display dedicated to the memory and photographic talent of Mr. Veran Blackburn, long-time Valdosta resident and respected photographer, will be held at the Society's Museum on Sunday November 23, 1986, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm. Members and non-members are urged to bring some of their treasured Blackburn photographs to be shared with the general public for this special showing. We will have someone at the Museum on Wednesday, November 19th, from 9:30 to 11:30 am and again on Thursday November 20th, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm to receive the photographs and set them up for display. These photographs may be individual portraits, family portraits, events, scenes -- anything photographed by Mr. Blackburn. Please bring any information concerning the photos with you as to names, events, time taken, etc. Photographs shared should be picked up by the lender immediately after the showing ending at 5:00 pm, Sunday November 23rd, or the following day on Monday, November 24th, from 10:00 am until 12:00 noon.

We would appreciate your cooperation in helping make this a real tribute to the artistry of Mr. Blackburn. Refreshments and decorations for the event will be furnished by the 4-H Club of Lowndes County. Join us for a most enjoyable affair.

More of Coach Hooks' article next month and many thanks again to Mrs. Hooks for sharing it with us and thanks to Big Lou and Clarence for their help.

Albert S. Pendleton, Editor