



The Crow's Nest

NEWSLETTER OF THE FERNDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2013

Ferndale High School: The Sweetest Season, Fifty Years Ago

Roger Schmidt

In the fall of 1962, Roy Burkhart was starting his seventeenth year as a teacher and the head basketball coach at Ferndale High School. After having a somewhat successful season in 1961-1962 he told a reporter from the *Detroit Free Press* that he felt the coming basketball season would be a "building year." If that was the case, he got the job done in record time.

His starters that year were seniors Truman McNeal at the forward position, Don Brooks and Jeff Hicks at guard. Juniors were Bob Falardeau at forward and Bruce Rodwan at center. His reserves were juniors Lewis Smith at forward, and George Morey at guard. The remainder of the varsity squad included Curtis McNeal, Rick Bloodworth, Ed Snook, Ken Crooks, Jerry Tarsan, Arnie Lopez, Bob Super and John Stenback. The Athletic Director was Gus Hanson and the managers were Bob Pfeifer and Rod Coffey.

First up that year was Port Huron, known as the Big Red. They were stunned when Ferndale opened up a 15-5 lead in the first quarter.

Ferndale went on to win 60 to 48. Birmingham Seaholm fell next 36 to 30. The following week they crushed East Detroit (63-32), breaking a seven-year losing streak. Ferndale went on to beat Berkley (67-45), Roseville (55-44), Kimball (53-42), and Mt. Clemens (69-47). Ferndale seemed to score at will and their defense was stellar. After a slow start against Hazel Park they went on to win 57 to 45.

In the second half of the season their opponents continued to fall week after week. Starting off, the Eagles met Port Huron and soundly defeated them 70 to 51.

Reporter Bill Murray of the

Ferndale Gazette said Ferndale had a strong defense, "played sound fundamental basketball," and didn't press their shots by taking bad ones. Then in a thriller, and trailing most of the game, Ferndale beat Birmingham Seaholm 51 to 50 when Bob Falardeau dropped in a last second lay-up. In the games that followed, the Eagles went on to defeat East Detroit (82-



Standing, l. to r.: Varsity Coach Roy Burkhart, Reserve Coach Frank Joranko, Terry Allen, Bob Pfeifer, Paul Aksamit, Rick Bloodworth, Ernie Snook, Bruce Hanon, Roger McRipley, Ken Crooks, Curtis McNeal, Bob Super, Rod Coffey, Bill Murray, Frosh Coach Wallace Carl, Athletic Director Gus Hanson. Seated: John Stenback, Arnie Lopez, George Morey, Jeff Hicks, Don Brooks, Truman McNeal, Bob Falardeau, Bruce Rodwan, and Lewis Smith. Photo: *Ferndale Gazette*, 1963

52), Roseville (76-56), and Kimball (68-39). In another squeaker, this time against Mt. Clemens, with just 42 seconds left in the game, the scrappy 5'9" George Morey sunk a basket to put Ferndale back in the lead 57-56. The final score was 59 to 58. In the last regular season game they beat Hazel Park 54 to 39, taking their fourth Eastern Michigan League (E.M.L.) title in five years. This was only the second perfect regular season in school history, the other being the 1951-52.

First up in the Class "A" District playoffs was Berkley, who fell to the Eagles 67 to 43. Ferndale then won the District by soundly defeating Dondero 52 to 32.

The Regionals were played at the University of Detroit Memorial Building. They began against Warren who got swept away 62 to 45. Then along came Highland Park, long known as one of Ferndale's bitterest rivals. Highland Park had never lost to Ferndale, having bested them ten straight times in the previous 16 years, but that was about to change. Ferndale beat Highland Park by the final score of 43 to 42. The Polar Bears fell to the mighty Eagles when Bruce Rodwan made a lay-up with 37 seconds left in the game. Many felt this was the turning point on a run to the championship.

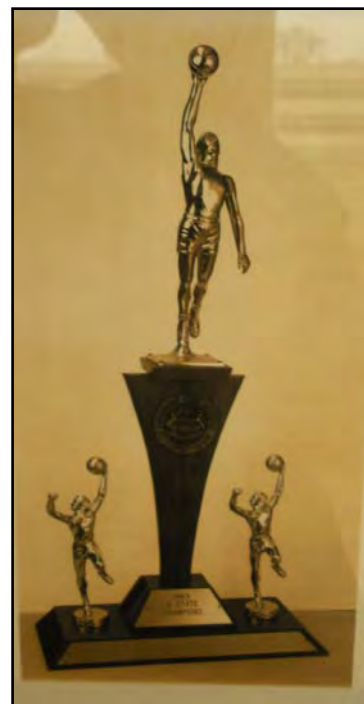
Next, over 9,100 people watched as Ferndale defeated a powerful Grosse Pointe team who had a 21-0 record going into the game. It appeared that the Blue Devils had the game won in the last seconds, but what should have been the winning basket was no good when their forward was called for "traveling." The score was 56 to 55. Reporter Bill Murray summed up the wins against Highland Park and Grosse Pointe with just one word, "Wow!"

On to Jenison Field House in East Lansing and the Class "A" championship. Trailing Detroit Northwestern in the Semi-finals by as much as 11 points in the second half, the Eagles rallied and came on strong in the last four minutes. Great defense by guards Morey and Hicks broke up the "stall" by the Colts to get the ball to Bob Falardeau for the winning jump shot with 20 seconds left. It was another nail-biter as the Eagles prevailed 52 to 51. The Finals, on March 23, 1963, were almost anticlimactic as the Ferndale Eagles defeated the Adrian Maples 76 to 58. A sell-out crowd of 12,473 and many more who saw it on television watched as Ferndale's perfect season came to a brilliant conclusion.

After the game, reporter Murray was in the locker room and noted that it was almost quiet and the players seemed stunned. He thought a comment made by player Don Brooks typified the attitude of the team: "Maybe someday we'll realize what we did." It was Ferndale's best season ever, 22-0. It was also the first time an E.M.L. team, or for that matter a team from Oakland County, had won the Class "A" crown. It was, without a doubt, the sweetest season.

Post Script: All season, when asked, Coach Roy Burkhart had said his team won because of "teamwork" and not because of any one individual. *Gazette* reporter Bill Murray wasn't surprised when none of Ferndale's players was named to the All-State team that year. He said, "There was no one that outstanding, they were all good." He was, however, surprised when Burkhart wasn't named Coach of the Year.

Sources consulted: Daily Tribune, 3-20-85. Undated, clipping from the Detroit Free Press, in Ferndale Historical Museum archives. Ferndale Gazette, 12-6-62, 12-20-62, 1-17-63, 1-24-63, 1-31-63, 2-14-63, 2-21-63, 2-28-63, 3-7-63, 3-14-63, 3-21-63, 3-28-63,



State Class A Basketball.
Trophy, 1963. Ferndale High
School. Photo: Garry Andrews

THE CLASS A COACH: ROY BURKHART

Jean Spang

The Ferndale High School winning of the 1963 State Basketball Class A Championship remains a legendary part of Ferndale history. The players are remembered not only for their brilliant play as a team in a season of no losses, but also for their later successes in life: Center Bruce Rodwan became an attorney; Forward Bab Falardau, a research chemist; Guard Jeff Hicks and team captain Don Brook, manufacturers representatives; Truman McNeal, factory personnel; Lew Smith, a psychologist; and George Morey, a Ferndale firefighter. And the team's coach, Roy Burkhart, who began in the Ferndale School District in 1946 and a physical education instructor after serving in the U.S. Navy, and retired in 1982, was there to see several generations of students through their school years. As he once remarked: "Wins and losses are important, but it's what happens to kids after they get out of school that's really important."

Burkhart served 23 years as basketball coach at Ferndale High, never losing a season, but he also coached football, baseball, and track. After seeing his team win the 1963 Class A State Basketball Championship, he saw his basketball team win another State Championship in 1966. He later recalled that for years his Number 1 nemesis was Coach Jim Wink of the Highland Park basketball teams who often beat the Eagles in district or regional games.

In 1970 Dr. Burkhart, a graduate of Denison University, Michigan State University (master's degree), and Wayne State University (doctorate in education), was appointed Director of Physical Education, Athletics, and Recreation for Ferndale Public Schools, which enabled him to coordinate physical education programs at the elementary, junior high school, and

senior high school levels, and oversee recreation programs for midget league baseball, swimming, and girls special gym activities.



Commemorative poster Coach of the Year 1964-65, Ferndale High School. Photo: Garry Andrews.



Roy Burkhart, Class A team. Photo: Talon yearbook, 1963.

He retired in 1982, the last of Ferndale High School's "Big Four" coaches: Ted Meister (football), Gerrit "Lefty Brandt (baseball), and Gus Hanson (athletic director). (Burkhart also said that Frank Joranko, football, should be included in this roster for his important coaching role at Ferndale High School before he left to coach at Albion.) Coach Burkhart had served 36 years as a teacher, coach, and school administrator. In 1965 he was the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Coach of the Year; and in 1967 was inducted into the Michigan High School Coaches Association's Hall of Fame.

In 2001, he passed away at age 84 in Hendersonville, N.C., leaving a wife of 60 years, two children, and a lasting legacy in the City of Ferndale. As long-time Eagles public address announcer Joe Mahan recalled at Burkhart's memorial service in Ferndale: "He was a man of principle. As a coach, there wasn't a better bench coach. He was a great influence on his players and other students. He made so many lasting contributions to the school district." The high school gym, the Roy Burkhart Complex, was named for him in 1982. And the "Heroes Garden" of the small memorial park at the edge of Geary Park, Ferndale, today there is a stone marker dedicated to him as "Educator, Coach, Athletic Director, U.S. Navy World War II." Trophies from his two teams' successes as Class A champs still stand on proud display in Ferndale High School's trophy cases.

A Class A life: Roy Burkhart!

Sources: General information, *Championship, 1963*: Jim Evas. "Roy Burkhart knows it's not all in the box scores," Daily Tribune (no date) clipping in Ferndale Historical Museum archives. Mahan remarks from Steve Stein, "Basketball coaching great Burkhart dies, Mirror, October 14, 2001. Burkhart promotion to administrator: Robert Tribula, "Appoint Burkhart director of P.E. athletics, recreation," Ferndale Gazette, July 1, 1970. General information: Unattributed, "Burkhart penned a basketball saga," Daily Tribune, May 21, 1982.

FERNDALE LANDMARKS:

600 W. NINE MILE (NINE MILE AT LIVERNOIS)



Lincoln High School (1921).
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.



Ferndale Foods (2013).
Photo: Garry Andrews.

135 W. NINE MILE



Ferndale State Bank (1927).
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.

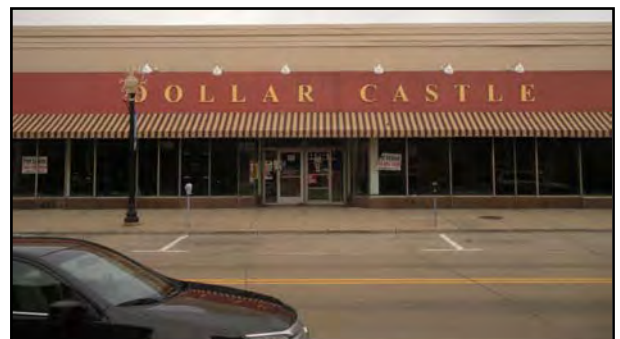


The Orchid (2013).
Photo: Garry Andrews.

200 W. NINE MILE



S.S. Kresge Co. (1940s).
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.



Vacant (2013).
Photo: Garry Andrews.

THEN AND NOW

1600 W. EIGHT MILE (N.E. CORNER, EIGHT MILE/PINECREST)



Ethyl Corporation (1938).
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.

Demolished (2013).
Photo: Garry Andrews.

1200 W. NINE MILE (N.W. CORNER, NINE MILE/PINECREST)



Hough Estate (ca. 1916).
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.



Office of Dr. Peter Anderson (2013); and a multiplex apartment house.
Photo: Garry Andrews.

22812 WOODWARD (N.E. CORNER, NINE MILE/WOODWARD)



Anderson's Real Estate Office (1915).
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.



Como's Restaurant (2013).
Photo: Garry Andrews.



Burkart & Mount
Photo: Ferndale
Historical Museum

HORSE AND CANINE TEAMS: FERNDALE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Jean Spang

Animals have served in official capacities at various times in Ferndale history. In 1918, the first police officers in the Village of Ferndale, Mike Burkart and William D. Newcomb, made their rounds on horses (names unknown). When horses were replaced by cars in the early 1920s, Newcomb transferred to a position in Ferndale's Water Department, and Lt. Burkart remained on the Police Department until he retired after 22 years.

Both officers and their mounts were fondly recalled by early village residents. Burkart and his horse were especially remembered for finding a lost child, "chasing thieves through the open fields," trailing a car "borrowed" by a resident's errant son down Emwell, and just generally being the only "cowboy in town."

In 1928, the year Ferndale became a City, Chief Roy Reynolds first promoted the idea of using dogs to assist officers. He decided to "salvage" a "mean" police dog (German Shepherd) that had been left at the station to be gased. Its owner complained that the dog, named "Glen" was hard to control and a menace to children. After six months of training, Glen was the star of his class at the State Fairgrounds training site, winning the rank of Sergeant--and a menace to criminals as he rode around town perched on the front seat of a Buick police roadster with his "partner" Reginald H. Lemkie. He could be trusted to check buildings on his own and pounce on unsuspecting law breakers in the dark streets of wooded Ferndale.

The same year, Fritz, another German Shepherd, assigned to Lt. Burkart, formerly of the Mounted Division, joined Glen in the canine unit. Fritz quickly became a respected member of the force—and Burkart's family with whom he lived. Off duty, one of Fritz's claims to fame was his ability to jump atop a dining room table that was fully set for dinner and not break a dish, a skill that "tough-guy" Sergeant Glen, apparently, never mastered in the Lemkie household. (No word about what Mrs. Burkart thought about Fritz's acrobatic skill.)

Police work with Glen was sometimes embarrassing, Lemki later admitted. On one assignment Lemki was returning to the station with a drunk driver in the back seat. "I'm riding with a trained dog," Lemkie warned, "Sit still and don't make a move or he'll get you." As the police car neared the station, the prisoner leaned over and tapped Lemkie's shoulder. Before he could say a word, Sergeant Glen had the prisoner by the nose.

Glen and Fritz were full-time members of the force for 2 ½ years. Lemkie and Burkart rode patrols with the dogs huddled in the front seats of the police cars—handy especially in winter with open roadsters and no heaters. Both dogs rode patrol with them on midnight shifts until the men were transferred to day work. Then, rather than train new dogs, the department abandoned the "Canine Cops." Both dogs spent their retirement in easy lives at the homes of their partners.

In 1954, Lemkie said that, in retrospect, because of their ferocious attitude, the use of dogs in metropolitan areas "today" would create more problems than it would solve. And in 1984, Chief Pat Sullivan recalled that in the 1960s the Ferndale Police Department made an attempt to form a K-9 unit, but the dog "was not the nicest animal that ever lived," was later hit by a car, and plans were then abandoned.

Nevertheless, beginning in 1984 and ending in 2003, the Department had a proud canine division.

Officer Mike McCullough was the partner of three successive dogs, all German Shepherd: Blackjack, 1984-92; Mirco (variously spelled Merko or Mirko), 1991-2000; and Atol, 2000-03. Each was capable of sniffing drugs, attacking on command, tracking suspects through a maze of city streets, and doing extraordinary "public relations work." McCullough's police car was especially designed for a police dog's comfort: screened side windows in back, and no back seat. Once retired, each dog gained a loving home, complete with annual vacations, with McCullough's family.

Today, humans remain the only species on the city's employee roster.



Newcomb & Mount
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum
archives.



Officer McCullough & Black Jack
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum



L. to R.: Burkart and
Fritz; Lemkie and
Sergeant Glen. Photo:
Ferndale Historical
Museum

Sources: Mounted Division: Maurice Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear* (Ferndale Historical Society, 1971): 62, 65. *Memories of Burkart*: Ruth Rodgers Elmers, June Waugh Kotlarek and Gerry Kulick (ed.), *Old Timers Tell It Like It Was* (Ferndale Historical Society, 1987): 53, 61, 69, 93. *Officer Lemkie's memories of Fritz and Glen*: Summarized from an interview appearing in an undated, unattributed newspaper clipping (probably 1954) in Ferndale Historical Museum archives. *Memories of Fritz*: Letter from Mark Burkart (Mike Burkart's son) to Museum staff, July 18, 2006. General information on names of dogs, 1984+, supplied by Diane Emmi, *Ferndale Police Department*, February 12, 2013. Information on Blackjack and Officer McCullough summarized from article by Lesa Doll, "Police Pup: Ferndale departments adds four-legged officer," *Daily Tribune*, September 20, 1984. Information on Merko and Officer McCullough summarized from Mary Ann DeNeve Slavcheff, "Cog, Officer Become Partners," *Daily Tribune*, December 10, 1933.

From our President/Director, Garry Andrews

Dear Members,

It is not every day that one is so privileged to get a piece of history that at one time was a common household appliance, but today it is so unique that it rarely is found in good shape, let alone in one piece. Due to the generosity of the Cowley family daughters in memory of their parents and grandparents they have donated this “turn of the 20th century” ringer washer to the Ferndale Historical Society. This particular model the “Z 54” was patented on May 15, 1915. A small motor, (long since gone), operated a cog and gear system that was attached to the motor by a leather strap. The gear system operated the agitator that was attached to the lid of the wooden barrel wash tub. This washer came with two ringer components. A manual one for working without the use of electricity and the electrical one you see attached. The tub made like a wine barrel still had to be filled manually and there was a spigot and drain on the side to empty after washing was complete. This particular washer once belonged to the Charles Miller family. Mr. Miller was an Irish immigrant and plasterer that came to Ferndale after the First World War and built the house at 303 West Drayton Street, in Ferndale, in 1921, taking possession of the home in 1924. The washer was moved in at the same time. The home was then sold to another Irish Family, the Cowley’s grandparents, the McIvors. Mr. McIvor worked as a maintenance man for Chrysler then Ford. When Mr. Miller left, he left the attic and basement full of imported Irish treasures that the McIvors never touched. Nor did the next generation when their daughter Virginia married and raised her family in the same home. This home has only had two owners. With the recent passing of their mother, the Cowley sisters decided it was time to share those hidden treasures as they prepared to pass the house over to its third owner. We are honored to be left as the keepers of such a valued piece of history. We are in the process of preserving and restoring this piece of antiquity. We look forward to your visit to the Museum to see our newest acquisition and a piece of Ferndale history. Please be sure to check that your memberships are up to date. The Ferndale Historical Society wishes you the best of health and a spring full of great things.

Further info* on our new addition to our Museum: *“It’s no surprise that bright, sunny weather was every woman’s wish on [washing] day. In the basement, or outdoors when the weather was fine, the pots were set to boiling. Clothes soaked the night before, as a prelude to Monday’s labors. Then the arduous routine of washing, rinsing, and wringing began. When clean, the wash was hung on outdoor clotheslines. In bad weather, it was hung in the basement to dry – and dry – and dry. “Why Monday? Because clothes were changed for church and Sunday dinner the day before, it was logical to wash the previous week’s duds after the day of rest. Washday determined the menu for Monday, too. There was simply no time for elaborate food preparation when laundry waited to be done, and nothing too strongly scented or spiced was prepared, lest the clothes take on an odor.”* *”Doin’ the Wash,” Waterford Historical Society Newbill (March / April / May 2013).



PARKING IN THE WITHINGTON LOT, FERNDALE

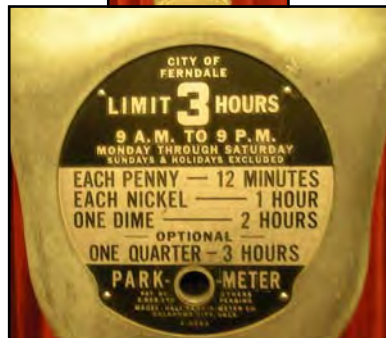
THEN

CURB SERVICE

A METER FOR EVERY CAR



Ca. late 1950s / early 1960s.
Photo: Ferndale Historical Museum archives.

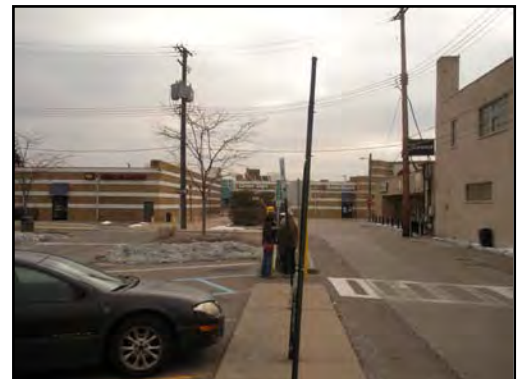


Parking Meter (Late 1900s).
Photo: Garry Andrews.

NOW

SERVICE CURB

THREE METERS FOR THE WHOLE LOT



February 20, 2013.
Photo: Garry Andrews.

Please Look Inside!

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Calendar of Events:

- Thursday, March 28, 2013 6 pm Board Meeting, Historical Society, held at the Museum, public is welcome
- Thursday, April 25, 2013 6 pm Board Meeting, Historical Society, held at the Museum, public is welcome
- Tuesday, May 14, 2013 7 pm “Early Ferndale Part 2: A City is Born,” Ferndale Public Library
- Thursday, May 23, 2013 6 pm Board Meeting, Historical Society, held at the Museum, public is welcome
- Thursday, May 27, 2013 10am-1pm Memorial Day Open House, Museum, public is welcome

The Crow’s Nest, Spring 2013

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