

**Charleroi,
Pennsylvania
Baseball History
Presented by
Mid Mon Valley
All Sports
Hall
of Fame
1900 to 2020**

Jan. 1918.
15c.

In
Ty. Cal
Lee Fidd
Bob Veach
Hank Grewly
Frank Tamm
Johnnie Till
"War Time"

A Highlight History of Charleroi, Pennsylvania Baseball

Table of Contents

Fathers of Charleroi Baseball
(John K. Tener and John "Scissors" McIlvain)
Mon Valley League (early 20th century sandlot ball)
Charleroi professional baseball teams 1906-36 (independent)
Eagles Club World Series Banquet (1909-1960)
Homerun Exhibition Derby August 13, 1960
Charleroi Sandlot baseball:
Charleroi Whippets 1929-1934
Charleroi Union Athletic Club 1920s and 1930s
Charleroi City League 1940s
Macs Club
Charleroi Merchants (1950-1963)
Charleroi American Legion (The Magicians) 1947-2012
Charleroi High School Baseball Cougars (1938-2019)

Cover photos in order of presentation from left: Luke Mollis, Bert Humphries, Fred Hancock, John Shalapinsky, Craig Barkey; Art Artis, coaches Bob Pepper and Fran Celaschi; coach George Chacko, Jim Chacko; Fred Uhlman, Danny Litwhiler; Don "Bo" Gustovich, John "Scissors" McIlvain; Governor John K. Tener, Jack Fayak, Dan O'Rourke, Charles Sedor, Harry "Gunboat" Gumbert

Compiled, written and edited by Stephen V. Russell, researcher Thomas Jenkins, graphic artist Gracie Abel; contributors: Merchant player Jack Fayak, Dr. Malcolm Weiss, Legion players Daniel O'Rourke and Nathan Helster, 1959 Legion East-West All Star game manager Ron Necciai, Charleroi High players Kent Nichols, Russ Bergstedt, Bob Mazur, Dennis Stitch and Jimmy Chacko, coach Fran Celaschi, coach Rich Sacanni, author Joseph Esposito, Mon Valley local historian Ron Paglia, Vance Bunardzya, collections of John Shalapinsky, Jack Young, and Jack Green

Charleroi, Pennsylvania Baseball Highlights

Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame

In southwestern Pennsylvania Charleroi has a rich baseball history. Known as the Magic City, Charleroi produced a plethora of notable baseball teams and stars over more than one hundred years.

Fathers of Charleroi Baseball

That legacy begins with John K. Tener, who served as a Charleroi branch cashier for the First National Bank of Pittsburgh, congressman, governor of Pennsylvania, and president of the National League of Baseball. But he also played for the Boston, Chicago, and Pittsburgh professional franchises. An Irish immigrant, Tener was inducted into the Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame in 2006.

Among other notables the Mon Valley's "Mr. Baseball" John G. "Mac" "Scissors" McIlvain who served in all aspects of the game from sandlot and professional knuckleball pitcher to management of sandlot and American Legion teams. Like MLB Hall of Fame legend Connie Mack, Charleroi's "Mac" was a baseball lifer inducted into the Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame in 1960.



Governor John K. Tener
1863-1946



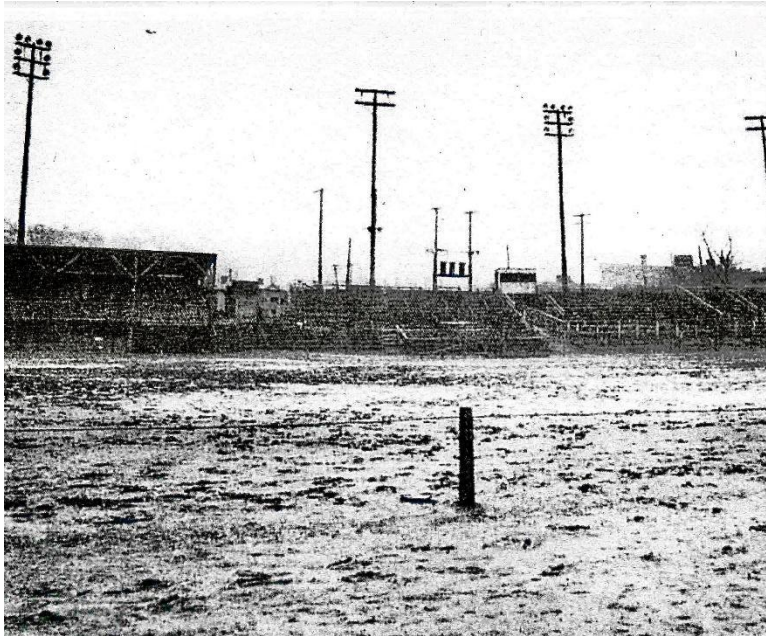
John "Scissors" McIlvain
1883-1972

The **Mon Valley League** at the turn of the 20th century included sandlot teams in Charleroi, Belle Vernon, Brownsville, Donora, Fayette City, Monessen and Monongahela. So popular, even the Pittsburgh newspapers carried box scores. The Blue laws disallowed Sunday ball, until the early 1930s, but the ballparks were filled on Saturday and twilight weekday games. The players enjoyed the status of a semi-pro circuit and got paid while most had full-time employment. Some of the greatest names in Mon Valley baseball history displayed their wares in this league. Three played in the Big Leagues: outfielder Bob Coulson 1908, 1910-11, 1914; pitcher Bert Humphries 1910-15; and pitcher Jock Menefee 1892-95, 1898, 1900-03. John "Scissors" McIlvain who pitched in the League said, "Every team imported ballplayers. Some came from as far as Pittsburgh." Mac pitched for the Donora industrial team and received \$50 to \$60 per month for his services. Those salaries were paid with gate receipts which attracted banner crowds of 2,500.

Charleroi professional baseball 1906-1936

It was an age when fairly small towns hosted minor league baseball clubs and in the Mon Valley both Monessen and Charleroi played host in the early twentieth-century.

The minor league baseball's field location in Charleroi was at Second Street and Hussey Street, thus the name designated as the Second Street Ball Park or commonly known as Charleroi Ball Field. It was a plain and simple wooden structure situated between the railroad track and the Monongahela River. Home plate was located at a spot near



Second Street. The right field foul line extended along Second Street to the river, about 325 feet. The left field fence, 338 feet, bordered the company houses known as "Shovel Row." Behind home plate was the grandstand covered seating area with a chicken-wire screen to protect against foul balls. It curved around home plate, extending to about one-fourth of the way to first and third bases. The two dugouts were placed at the ends of the grandstand. Along the left field side was uncovered seating known as the "bleachers." They were the most popular seats; they were less expensive and you got a better view of the game. A ten-to-twelve-foot fence surrounded the entire park, the inside of which was generously covered with local business signs. Lights were installed in 1929, one of the earliest for a Mon Valley ball field. A 24-foot-high screen was added in 1931 that decreased cheap home runs hit to the right field. Seating capacity in the grandstand behind home plate that stretched half way down the first

and third base lines accommodated about 350 fans. With the addition of the bleacher seats that extended down the left field line the capacity increased to approximately 2,500. In 1937 Charleroi School District purchased the ball park and converted into one of the finest Mon Valley stadiums which would seat 7,000 fans. Construction on the stadium began in January 1937 with completion in the fall at a cost of \$90,000. The last event played there was on October 22, 2010.

1906-1907 (P-O-M) Pennsylvania-Ohio-Maryland League

1906 Butler Buckwheat's/Piedmont/Charleroi with a record of 26-70 finishing in 8th place with manager Thomas Lindsay and pitcher John McIlvain who moved to Charleroi on August 6, 1906.

1907 Charleroi Statistics with a record of 45-63 finishing in 6th place with manager Thomas Sloan.

1908-1909 (P-W-V) Pennsylvania-West Virginia League

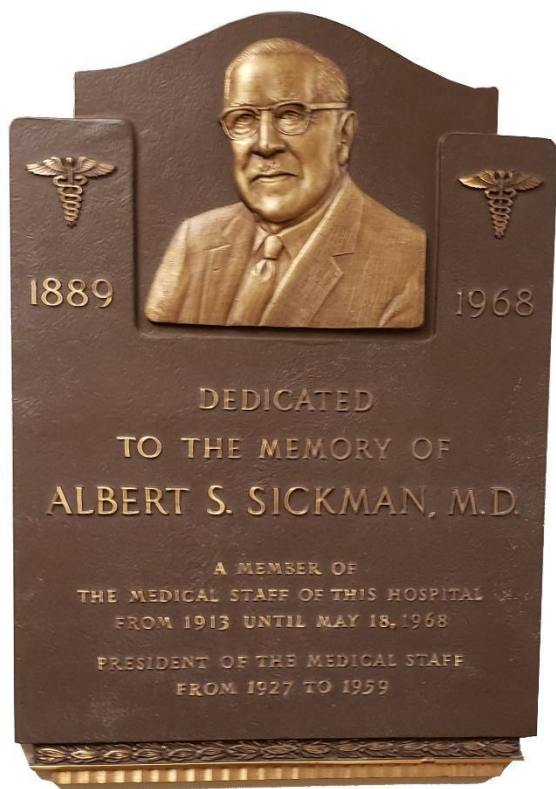
1908 Charleroi Cherios referred to as Cherubs with a record of 56-53 finishing in 3rd place with manager Archie Osborne.

Future big-league player Bert Humphries from California, Pennsylvania hurled a perfect game for Charleroi against Fairmont, West Virginia on May 20, 1908 which Charleroi won 1-0. Humphries struck out eight Fairmont batters. Charleroi pitchers, by the way, had five successive shutouts with Humphries' efforts. The other pitchers involved in that string of scoreless hurling were player-manager Archie Osborne and John "Scissors" McIlvain. Harry E. Price, the late publisher of *The Charleroi Mail*, was the team's official scorekeeper.



1909 Charleroi/Parkersburg Parkers-Cherubs with a record of 16-33 with managers H. Osbourne and Frank MacHale.

Middle Atlantic League



After the Pennsylvania-West Virginia League left Charleroi, professional baseball didn't come back until the later 1920s with a familiar face leading the way. John McIlvain worked to convince the two-year-old Middle Atlantic League that Charleroi was a large enough town to support Class C ball. McIlvain got permission to purchase the Uniontown franchise in 1927. Thus, the Charleroi Babes were born and had a season record of 42-75 finished eighth in the League. McIlvain became the club's first president, first manager and at the age of 44, one of its regular pitchers. Warwick "Cowboy" Comstock helped manage the team with Mac. The following year it was necessary for a

group of civic leaders and businessmen to provide financial assistance. The group was led by local physician and chief of staff at the Charleroi-Monessen Hospital A.S. Sickman, as president, and Steve Woodward, burgess of Charleroi, as his chief aide. The Babes in 1928 improved under manager W.C. Phillips, Jr with a record of 62-60 and finished fifth in the League.

Harry Barnett was the sports editor of *The Charleroi Mail* and wrote about Charleroi's gloried 1929 championship season as the sports writer with the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* in 1950. Charleroi selected a new nickname for the team when veteran Charleroi newspaperman, Bob Wiper, conducted a contest. The name "the Governors" was selected as a tribute to John K. Tener, a Charleroi boy who became president of baseball's National League (1915-1918) after one-term as governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1911-15).

The Governors won the first half pennant race and defeated the Wheeling Stogies, four games to one, in the championship series. Next, Charleroi defeated Hagerstown, the champions of the Blue Ridge League,

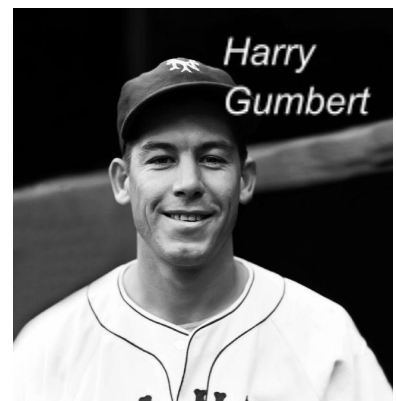
to win the Tri State series. The Charleroi playoff record was the best ever compiled in the Middle Atlantic League. Those who witnessed that miracle season thought the “Governors” were of big-league caliber. The Governors finished with an overall record of 67-47 with a first half mark of 37-23, second half at 30-24. The league’s season was divided with 58 games in each half. Manager-player Bob Rice played third base. Rice eventually reached the majors as traveling secretary of the Pittsburgh Pirates (1947-1969). The Charleroi club of 1929 was a well-balanced outfit with the lusty clouting of outfielder and the “iron man’ pitching of “Lefty” Joe Drugmond. “Lefty” was the circuit’s top pitcher with a record of 23-12 in 1928 receiving MVP honors. Even more remarkable in the Drugmond record was that the aging southpaw appeared in 42 games of a 125-game schedule for a league record. In 24 games in 1929 Joe went 12-7. Drugmond could pitch both games of a double header and win each game. One of his teammates the graceful center fielder Lou Phillips remembered, “He had a strong left arm.” And Phillips didn’t do bad with a .991 fielding average.



Fred Lucas

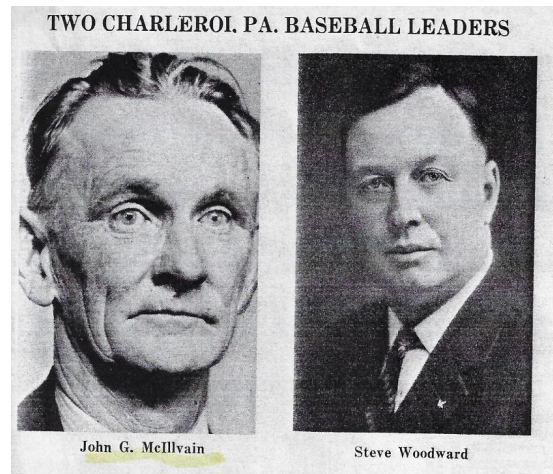
The Charleroi star outfielder Fred “Fritz” Lucas had played for the Governors since 1927 and won the triple crown of the MAL in 1929 batting .407 with 21 homers and 34 doubles. He became the first player to hit over .400 in the Middle Atlantic League. Lucas would go on in 1935 to play for the Philadelphia Phillies as a reserve outfielder and pinch hitter in 20 games batting .265.

In 1929, a frightened and raw-boned kid of 16, Harry Gumbert of Ellsworth, Pennsylvania reported to manager Bob Rice. After a few weeks Gumbert was sent packing for seasoning although returning to the Governors in 1930 to make his debut in professional baseball as a lean, lanky, right-handed pitcher still wild issuing 88 walks. He took part in 34 games, pitched 225 innings, won 13 and lost 12 games, struck out 90 and was nicked for 222 hits. “Gunboat” Gumbert finished the 1930 season in the “fast” International League



for Baltimore appearing in a few games but on his way to a big-league career from 1935 to 1950 with 143 wins, 113 losses and 48 saves. His last team was the Pittsburgh Pirates. Gumbert became the first Charleroi High graduate to make good in the major leagues.

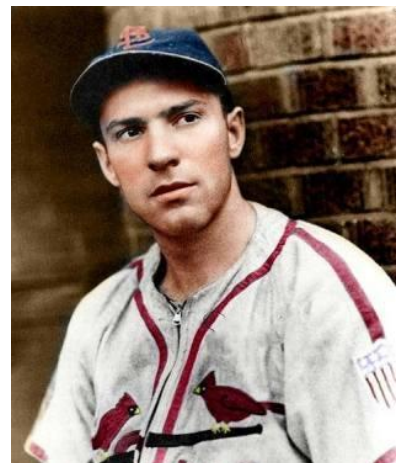
The club wasn't able to stay out of the red financially even with a pennant winner and in 1930 it was the Charleroi Volunteer Fire Department to the rescue. In 1930 the Governors performed with a record of 58-57 managed by Dave Lamb and finished in fifth place. The financial crisis grew worse in 1931 and at midseason the franchise was taken over by the League. Not being a farm club of a big league team made it tough fiscally. That was the last year of the Governors finishing with a record of 30-92 and in eleventh place under manager W.G. "Bill" Phillips and Kemp Wicker.



In 1934 Charleroi physician Dr. Charles Rosenbloom, 25, the youngest executive in organized ball, and Burgess Steve Woodward gave the Magic City its final fling with professional baseball. From 1934 to 1936 Charleroi hosted the Charleroi Tigers, a Class D affiliate of the Detroit Tigers in the Penn State Association League. Exhibition games were played against the Homestead

Pittsburgh Crawfords, and House of David to boost revenue. John "Scissors" McIlvain would be back to pitch. The 1934 Charleroi Tigers (Statistics) had a record of 45-62 landing them in fifth place in the PSA under manager Dixie Parker. In 1935 the Charleroi

Tigers (Statistics) record was 53-53 under manager Earl Smith. In 1936 the Charleroi Tigers (Statistics) record was 45-62 with a fifth-place finish under managers Joe Klinger and John McIlvain. Burgess Steve Woodward recruited talent and signed a future big-league player off the



sandlot fields of Bloomsburg State College. In a SABR article by Glen Vasey he wrote of Woodward's prodigy. "At Charleroi in 1936, Danny Litwhiler batted .313 in 66 games, demonstrating moderate power and an unlikeliness to either walk or strike out. He earned \$75 a month. Good money if you could get it, in a depression-saddled land, especially for doing something that you surely loved."

Minor League baseball ceased operation for good in 1937 when the Charleroi School Board decided to build a football stadium at the ballpark location. But professional baseball players would make Charleroi a place to stop for exhibition games and home run derby charity activities.

Charleroi played host to Pittsburgh Pirate players from the 1925 and 1927 teams that participated in the World Series with Pittsburgh winning it all in 1925. The Pirates played exhibition games against local Charleroi teams through the 1930s at Beechwood Park, the present site of The Back Porch Restaurant. Big name participants included Pirate Hall of Fame stars like Honus Wagner, Pie Traynor, brothers Paul and Lloyd Waner, and Hazen "Kiki" Cuyler.

The Homestead Grays of the National Negro Baseball League also drew well in the Mon Valley community. These games were popular and some Charleroi teams fared better than others. It was difficult to beat these major league caliber players who were denied entrance into the big leagues until the color barrier was broken by Jackie Robinson of the Dodgers in 1947. In one holiday July 4 doubleheader in the mid-1920s, southpaw pitcher "Lefty" Williams, who was always a thorn in the side of Charleroi teams, along with his colleague Oscar "Cannon Ball" Owens, proved too much for the local batters. Williams then came back in the second game and this time pitching right-handed defeated the locals.

John "Scissors" McIlvain recalled to Mon Valley sportswriter John Bunardzys of the time he saw Josh Gibson of the Grays smash prodigious home runs with ease and regularity at the Charleroi Ball Park. "Gibson drilled one a country mile over the fence in left-center in 1937 or 1938. We thought it was never going to come down out of the sky."

Charleroi Eagles Club World Series Banquet

From 1909 to the 1960s, the popular Eagles Club World Series Banquet was held in the Magic City. Its theme was to celebrate baseball which culminates each year in the World Series when a world championship team is crowned. When the banquet began baseball was the dominant passion of sports-minded people.

In the early twentieth century a boy's dream of doing great things in baseball symbolized the excitement of life itself with thrilling moments and accomplishment found on the diamond. It was a time to dream of making it to the big-leagues when there were only eight teams in each of the two leagues. The game had a reverence about it - almost a kind of religious experience. The story of those early twentieth century baseball players is chronicled in Lawrence Ritter's 1966 book, *The Glory of Their Times*, with a film documentary released in 1970. This banquet brought all of these aspirations home to Charleroi, as the community paid homage to the great game. The banquet became the oldest affair of its time and popular throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The founders of the banquet were two fellow Eagles, Jack Mathias and Dick Simon, which was recounted by John Bunardzys in his Sportraits column years later. The two gentlemen hit upon the idea of wagering on the outcome of the World Series between the Pirates and Tigers in 1909. Jack was a National League die-hard while Dick was a faithful American League stalwart. The Pirates took the series four games to three. With a young suckling pig as the wager, Jack, the winner, was to be feasted by Dick the loser.

Sixty fellow Eagles joined in the festivities to celebrate the occasion which by all accounts was described as the most succulent of feasts. Since then, the affair was carried forth for over five decades by the Eagles as a day in honor of America's favorite summer pastime.

Two Pennsylvania governors, John K. Tener (1911-1915) and David L. Lawrence (1959-1963), were staunch supporters and attendees. The banquet was held originally on Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. at the Eagles Home on McKean Avenue and occasionally at Charleroi High School. Crowds were usually between 250-300 with 350 attendees on November 2, 1955. The dinner menu consisted of a chicken dinner with a fruit cocktail, a

la Gehrig ice cream, and cigars. Master of ceremonies through the years included amateur entertainer and raconteur Johnny Jenkins (1938), A.S. Sickman, M.D., (1949), Pitt legend Dr. H.C. Doc Carlson (1953), voice of the Steelers Joe Tucker (1955), and director of Charleroi High athletics Steve Stepanian (1958).

Sports celebrities through the years graced the banquet. Two of the most prominent local Mon Valley big-league players, Cardinal Stan Musial of Donora and Pirate Jim Russell of Fayette City, were in frequent attendance. The new general manager of the Pirates Joe L. Brown made his first public appearance at the banquet and gave remarks on November 2, 1955. Charleroi minor league standout Charley Sedor was there as well. Other attendees over the years have included Pirate rookie Ron Necciai, Jerry Lynch, Frank Thomas, Frankie Gustine, Roy Face, Bob Friend, Bob Purkey, old-timers Bob Coulson, Bill Philips, Harry Gumbert, Pie Traynor and Honus Wagner just to name a few. Many gave short remarks. The Magician and Merchants teams were customary guests during their championship baseball seasons with leaders like John McIlvain, Alf Caruso and Ewing Chalfant in attendance. Charleroi School District administrative leaders would attend along with various coaches. Charleroi's Reid Smith attended the banquet and called it a "quality affair."

As interest in baseball waned, the Eagles were forced to drop the World Series banquet in the 1960s. Also, the Eagles invited many non-paying guests which took a heavy toll on financing the affair. But for its time it was one heck of a get-together.

Highlight – Home Run Exhibition Derby

The Saturday, August 13, 1960 Home Run Derby at Charleroi Stadium featured the Cardinal power pair of Ken Boyer and Stan Musial vs Pirate players Bob Skinner and Dick Stuart. The *Charleroi Mail* billed the event as a "Million-Dollar Home Run Derby," featuring four of the top sluggers in the big-leagues. The promotion was made possible by the combined efforts of the Kraft Food Company, Fox Grocery and *Pittsburgh Press* sports writer Les Biederman. Proceeds went to the Scoreboard Fund for Children's Hospital, while the Kraft Caramel and Fudgie bags went to the Bentleyville Boosters Club to aid them in their efforts to win a fully equipped \$20,000

baseball park, Carmel Park, in a Kraft-sponsored event. Some 3,000 locals made the benefit event a success as the fans (who paid a one-dollar admittance fee along with three empty bags of Kraft Caramel or Fudgies) saw Donora's Musial and Boyer power their way to a 14-1 victory over Skinner and Stuart who is remembered in Pittsburgh Pirates lore as Dr. Strange Glove. Stuart hit the lone Pirate tally with a mighty blast over the left field fence. Charleroi Merchants' players got in the act as catcher Joe Kalish handled Dick Groat's pitching while Art Artis, Walt Cieply and Fran Celaschi worked the outfield.

Sandlot Baseball

Since Charleroi's stab at professional baseball from 1906 through 1937, the community has provided fans with classy independent, sandlot, scholastic, and American Legion teams.

"There was a time when sandlot baseball reigned supreme on the area sports front. The Mid-Mon Valley produced some of the best teams and players for many years," recalled Mon Valley reporter Ron Paglia, a 2013 Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame inductee.



The 1931 Charleroi Whippet's fielded the following teammates, kneeling from left Frank Paterline, Klux, Mike Madzy, John Staranko, Rock, Paul Turtzer, Morasz, Realti; standing manager Dan Danesi, Joe Drugmond, Whighay, John "Scissors" McIlvain, Jim "Toots" Fillingham, Joe Kormuth, John Sloboda, Dan Paterline, Brigode

Charleroi Whippets was an independent baseball team in existence from 1929 through 1934. Community-minded teammates sent proceeds to the depression era needy. The team met for away games at Escher Pool Hall located at 801 McKean Avenue. Ken Escher was a team sponsor. The rosters varied yearly. Home games were played at the future site of Charleroi Stadium built in 1937. Night games were played. Whippets also fielded football and basketball teams. The mascot for the team was the Whippet (a dog of a small, slender breed originally produced as a cross between the greyhound and the terrier or spaniel, bred for racing).

Charleroi Union Athletic Club was an independent baseball team that competed with other sandlot teams in the Mon Valley during the 1920s and 1930s. Business manager Louis Bigi owned a grocery store at 1200 Meadow Avenue in Charleroi. Lou scheduled the games each season with teams from the Miner's League of which there were many as well as the Press League. Bigi managed the team along with Harry Stech with some talented players making it into the minor leagues throughout the country. Some of those players include Cleve Mathers, Jack Mathias, Arch Osborne, Eddy Miller, Ody Abbott, Dale Joliffe, Mike Madzy, Paul Turtzer, Dan Paterline, Joe Fillingham and Lou Phillips. Games were played two or three times a week. The Pennsylvania Blue Law prohibited any sports events on Sunday until 1936, when the law was repealed. Usual game time during the week was 5:30 and on Saturdays at 3:00 p.m.

Charleroi City League thrived in the 1940s and showcased teams like Ace Auto, A&J Market, Corning Glass, Roscoe, Macs Club, Stockdale Legion and the Hotel Charleroi which in 1946 was organized by enterprising John Shelapinsky who managed the squad which included Jed Laskey, Alf Caruso and Larry Papini. Games were played at either Charleroi High Stadium or Rec Field which later became Vets Field off Railroad Street.

Macs Club from 1943 to the early 1950s was a citizen's club that was located at 323 Fallowfield Ave. The building still stands located across the street from the fire hall in Charleroi. The club took its name after John McIlvain who had his hand in Charleroi baseball from the professional baseball days until his death in 1972. Macs Club promoted general sports and had a baseball team in the Charleroi City League. With a basketball team and duckpin bowling team, Mac's promoted amateur boxing events at Charleroi Stadium and on the third floor of the Borough building. Mac's also sponsored track meets and conducted baseball schools to teach the young the fundamentals of the national pastime. 1965 MMVASHOF inductee George Humphries was one of the athletic promoters along with Ewing "Grassy" Chelfant who worked with the baseball team. Humphries and Chelfant would bring teams into town for games and the proceeds would go to charity. That idea of civic responsibility was much ingrained in the members of Macs Club. They also were able to house teams at the Mac's Club and held their organizational meetings at the Club Room.

Charleroi also had a team represented in the Pigeon Creek League which was called Char-Dun, a jointure between Charleroi and Dunlevy. Teams in the League included Marianna, Cokeburg, Ellsworth, Van Voohris, Bentleyville and Malden. Other independent teams included Charleroi Bob's, McIlvain's and Mudrick's. Those teams played independent schedules and players did play on two and possibly three teams.

Mon Valley League 1935-1963

This sandlot League, which lasted through the mid-twentieth century, came into existence in 1935 as Charleroi professional baseball was coming to its conclusion. Sandlot ball helped develop future professional baseball players as well as provide fine baseball entertainment for the community. Charleroi's 1950's sandlot teams became very prominent and were preceded by the following Mon Valley League Champions:

1935: Monongahela

1936: Fairhope

1937-1940: Monongahela

1941: New Eagle

1942-1944: World War II play stoppage

1945-1946: Fairhope

1947: New Eagle

1948-1949: Allenport CIO (players included Tinsie Manown, Lefty Livingstone, Mario Bonde, Beans Giordanengo, Harry Scrip, John Scrip, Ed Popelas, Ziggy Zatak, Joe Werlas, Ed Schwab and Chris Bailey)

Charleroi Merchants began play in the late 1940s as a fast-pitch softball team competing against the Magic City Softball League. The Merchants joined the Mon Valley League in 1950 in an opening day matchup, May 1, with the Allenport CIO champions in Charleroi. All twilight games on weekdays began at 6:15 p.m., while Sunday attractions were at 2:30 p.m.

Ron Paglia recalls “the Merchants as perennial contenders for Mon Valley League honors with ace pitchers, solid hitters and fielding excellence.”

A 1950 Charleroi Merchant lineup looked as follows:

CF Forrest “Pooch” Pflughardt

SS Jack Green

RF Willie Shelapinsky

3B Nick Drygos

LF Fred Fleming

C John Shelapinsky

1B Alf Caruso

2B Vic Heisler

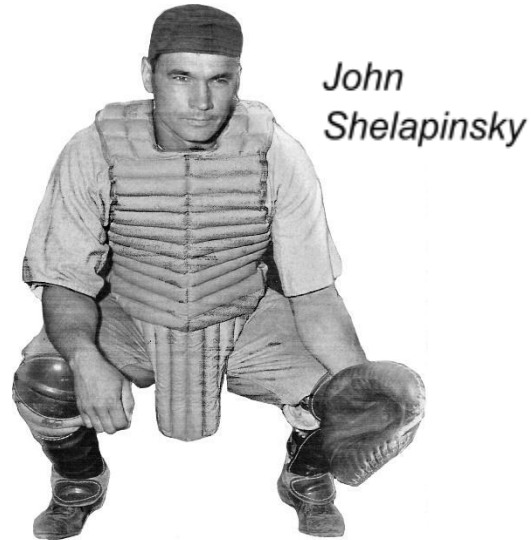
P Joe Kopach, Willie Zuraw (LHP), Ron Nandor

Reserves included Harry Reis (infield), Jack Williams (outfield), Billy Shaffer (infield), Ed Woytovich (third baseman), Angie DeFrancisco (catcher-infielder).

Merchant manager/players included John Shelapinsky (1950-53), Jed Laskey (1954-57), and Alf Caruso (1958-1960).

John Shelapinsky was a major force in the organization of the Charleroi Merchants. He had played and managed previously with the Monongahela Merchants. He brought his vast experience to the Charleroi sandlot team.

The 1950 Merchants were sponsored by Charleroi’s produce market owned by Alex and John Luckasevic known as Charleroi A&J. The Merchants wore gray uniforms trimmed in blue with their sponsors’ name on the back of their jerseys with blue hats. Other sponsors included Might’s Book Store and Charleroi Supply. Games were played at Charleroi Stadium and Rec Park. The season began in May and was completed by mid-August when sports focus turned to football. Teams had a roughly



40-game season. The competing teams in the League in 1950 included Allenport CIO, Fayette City, Charleroi, Fairhope, New Eagle, Arnold City, Webster, Donora, Monongahela, and Finleyville.

Other League members through the years included Monessen, Monessen Ozarks, Monessen CIO, Whitsett, Long Branch, Belle Vernon, Keystone AA (Elco), West Newton, Fayette City CIO, Van Voorhis, Richeyville, Perryopolis, Valley Inn, Charleroi Sportsmen, Stockdale, and Clarksville. "The Keystone AA team," Vance Bunardzys recalled "was like a JV team in 1954 for the younger Charleroi ball players who wanted to play. My Dad, John, referred to them as 'The Keystone Kids.'" In 1963 a six-team Mon Valley League was formed, and it consisted of Wyano, Monessen, Monongahela, Bellmarette, Charleroi Chieftains, and Van Voorhis. Alf Caruso was the Chieftains manager in 1963 and compiled a record of 18-21 and finished fourth in the League. The team was sponsored by the Charleroi Baseball Club which also sponsored the Charleroi Magicians. In 1964 Charleroi and Wyano left the Mon Valley League and joined the Fayette County League that consisted of Brownsville which featured Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame inductees Casper Voithofer (2012) and Bruce Dal Canton (1966), Wyano, Buffington, Masontown, Uniontown, Smock, and Republic. Tom Griffin managed in 1964 and the team went 23-19 and finished in fifth place and featured Art Artis who led the League in home runs with 9. The 1964 season ended sandlot baseball in the Mon Valley. The American Legion teams and softball teams took the spotlight.

Over its time the Merchant players included Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame selections like George Zuraw inducted in 2001, Fred Uhlman inducted in 2003, Larry Papini inducted in 2013, shortstop Jack Green inducted in 2015, and Art Artis inducted in 2010. Fred Uhlman ended his minor league career in 1955 and came home and played for the Merchants for a few years.

Larry Papini, a strapping 6-3,180-pounder, was playing for the Charleroi Merchants when opportunity knocked in 1954. He answered the call by signing a professional contract with the Boston Red Sox on May 29. After a couple of seasons in the Red Sox organization, Papini returned home and resumed playing for the Merchants. In 1957 Larry was selected

as the Merchants' Most Valuable Player after helping manager Alf Caruso's club finish in second place in the Mon Valley League behind Fayette City and then win the postseason championship. Playing in 52 of Charleroi's 53 games, Papini led the team in hitting with a .329 batting average, had 51 hits including five home runs, and knocked in 57 runs. He won the MVP award a second time in 1959 when he hit 17 home runs, a club and Mon Valley League record, batted .427 and had 40 RBI. George Zuraw, runner-up in the balloting, had a .459 average and belted 10 homers as the powerful Merchants walloped a record 63 round trippers. The 1960 season was the final one for Papini and the Merchants.

Vance Bunardzya, son of the legendary sportswriter John, remembered some poignant Charleroi Merchants' memories as told to Ron Paglia. "I was 10 in 1955 and the Merchants baseball team of the Mon Valley League used to play their home games at Charleroi Stadium. Dad was the Merchants business manager and took me to the games. Many times, I saw George Zuraw hit towering home runs over the right field fence and into the river. I had a job at the stadium assigned to hang the numbers on the scoreboard that stood behind home plate."

Other memorable players included Walt Cieply, Tim Lee, Fred Briggs, pitchers John Chatlak and Andy Zilka along with pitcher-outfielder Fred Fleming. An impressionable young recruit was Jack Fayak Sr. who was in "awe" of the veteran players. Jack was a 16-year-old developed youngster in 1952 for the Merchants and two years later in 1954, he was chosen as an All-Star selection to play against the Pigeon Creek-Wagner team held in the spacious Fayette City ballpark. Fayak was part of what was called the "Whiz Kids," coined by sportswriter John Bunardzya, from 1951 through 1954. Others included Al Liko, 2010 MMVASHOP inductee Stan



Jack Fayak Sr.

Milchovich, Rich and Steve Babich, Adam Vlanich, versatile Jim Lenhart, Mike Panich, Charlie Corbelli, Gene Uhlman, and star southpaw pitcher Wayne Campbell. Older players welcomed these youngsters as they took over more playing time.

Another young standout for the Charleroi Merchants who helped the team in the mid-1950s win games was Rich Babich, third baseman and shortstop, who hit a blistering .520 while helping the Merchants win the Mon Valley League title in 1955. Rich was named league MVP. "Looking back, the late John Bunardzys, former sports editor of the *Charleroi Mail*, pushed me like you wouldn't believe," Babich explained. "He wanted me to make it big." The Charleroi Merchants squared off with Big Ten champion Fayette City for area bragging rights in September of 1955. "We played Fayette City in a best-of-five series," Babich said. "They were Big Ten champs. There was a big controversy brewing that Charleroi of the Mon Valley League couldn't match the Big Ten League. We beat them in the series 3-1. That was a big thrill." Babich had a tremendous series against Fayette City with nine hits in 13 plate appearances, including a home run, two triples and a double.

Although the Merchants didn't win the championship series every year in the 1950s, they did win an overwhelming majority of their games in the regular season of the Mon Valley League.

These youngsters were joined by veterans like manager-player wiry Alf Caruso, always ready to argue with an ump, catcher John Shelapinsky with a strong arm, center fielder Willie Shelapinsky, Nick Dzygos, outfielder Forrest "Pooch" Pflughardt, and manager-player "beefy" Jed Laskey first baseman who proceeded Caruso as manager.

In 1954, California High graduate Jack Fayak was given a tryout with the Pittsburgh Pirates on June 12. At that time, Jack was batting at a .410 clip for the Merchants and was regarded as a fine defensive player. Also given Pirate tryouts were Rich Babich and pitcher Adam Vlanich and each got contracts. All three had the honor of selection to the 1954 *Sun Telegraph Hearst* All Star Classic sandlot baseball game on July 29 at Forbes Field. This contest pitted the County All Stars versus the City All Stars with a 7-1 City League victory. The best players of this event would

go on to the *Hearst All Star Game* (1946-1965) at the Polo Grounds in New York City. Further information about this prestigious All-Star game for sandlot youth ages 16-18 is featured in Alan Cohen's SABR work, *From Sandlot to Center Stage*.

The memorable 1954 Pigeon-Creek Wagner League vs Mon Valley League All Star game in Fayette City featured pitcher Joe Kopach, second baseman "Nunny" Milchovich, right fielder Jack Fayak, shortstop Jack Green, and center fielder Mike Panich. Right-hander Adam Vlanich came in the game in the fifth giving up three runs relieved by hefty and crafty Ray Brown who was well versed on the Pigeon Creek hitters. Fayette City's Henry Studnicki made the defensive fielding gem of the day with an over the shoulder circus catch of Rocky Mitchell's long smash to left center. The Mon Valley League came out on top with a 4-3 win before an estimated 1,000 fans at Fayette City Ball Field.

Early in September 1953 the Mon Valley League playoffs proved memorable because of a bizarre ruling by veteran umpire Robert Potts. With the Monessen Ozarks ahead 13-1 in the third inning, Potts dramatically forfeited the game to the visiting Charleroi Merchants. Potts accused the Ozarks of "stalling." That touched off a mob scene at Ninth Street Park with more than 1,500 fans gathered for the sixth game of the title series. Monessen, leading three to two in the series, appeared to have the 1953 crown all wrapped up when Potts intervened. Mon Valley League Commissioner John Bunardzys, a 1968 MMVASHOF inductee, called the situation "a real headache." As the score mounted, it appeared that Charleroi began stalling to drag the contest into darkness before four and a half innings could be played. The Ozarks reacted apparently by deliberately striking out. Potts became disgusted with the antics of both teams and informed managers to cut out the foolishness. The ump called the game. The commissioner and managers met later awarding the sixth game on forfeit to the Merchants. A game was to be played on Labor Day to determine the champion. Commissioner Bunardzys resigned his post over this incident. Mon Valley League President P. Bud Roman, a 1973 MMVASHOF inductee, ordered the game resume play where the big rhubarb had developed at 4 p.m. Labor Day. Merchant manager Jed Laskey refused to abide by the ruling. As a result, the Monessen Ozarks

were declared the 1953 MVI champion, making this the second successive season with the honor.

The Merchants won their first Mon Valley League championship in 1955. The team came out of nowhere from the last playoff spot to make the playoffs. In the playoff series the squad came together. In round one the Merchants defeated Van Voohris and in round two defeated New Eagle. The last series ended with catcher Carmen Cappelli hitting a three-run home run and hitting the game winning hit in the tenth inning to defeat Finleyville 6-5 to capture the title. The "Miracle Merchants" had solid pitching behind Fred Briggs, Adam Vlanich, Carl Witmyer and a no-hitter pitched by Joe Kopach. Throughout the playoffs timely hitting solidified the wins with a Jim Lenhart grand slam and a ninth-inning home run by Fran Tokar. The team's season record ended at 34-23.

Outstanding Merchant players who made the team a baseball powerhouse from 1957 to the end of the decade included names familiar to the Mon Valley: Arty Artis, Fran Celaschi, Billy Majesky, Dick Sabo, Tom Rotheram, Fred Briggs, Eddie Holod, Carl "Abbsy" Witmeyer, Rich Zuraw, Fran Tokar, Maury Guttman, Carman Cappelli, Mike Shuback, Billy Austin, and Billy Burke. These players were joined by returning professional baseball players like Pittsburgh Pirate Jake Martin who played in 1957 and 1958. Jake had also previously played with Van Voohris. Jake had a fastball clocked at almost 100. His drawback was wildness. Billy Burke, age 21, after his discharge from the Air Force was a leading factor in the Merchants sweep of the pennant and playoffs in the MVL in 1959. With good speed and a defensive standout, he would sock 15 doubles, four triples and nine home runs, driving in 43 runs. With 143 at-bats Billie scored 40 runs and was credited with 46 hits.

"Billy Burke was signed by the Boston Red Sox in 1959," reporter Ron Paglia wrote, "and toiled five years as an outfielder and pitcher in the farm systems of Boston and the New York Yankees before his baseball adventures ended in 1964."

The Charleroi Mail headlines for a July 4, 1958 game read, *Merchants Top Little Bucs, 4-2 Barli Fans Ten, Cieply 3-for-3 In Thrilling Battle*. The game played at Charleroi's Vet's Field is remembered well by

Mon Valley greybeards. The Little Pirates managed by Pittsburgh Pirate versatile employee Charlie Muse, featured a young, fast and spirited outfield. But the older and more experienced Merchants, spearheaded by Roy Barli's fancy six-hit pitching and Walt "Woch" Cieply's loud bat refused to buckle. "Barli, who normally plays first base, displayed terrific poise and sharpness on the mound, fanning ten, and picked a couple of runners off first base with his deceptive move. Cieply was a veritable ball of fire, as he usually is, winding up with two doubles and a triple for seven total bases. Billy Majesky also cracked a two-bagger for the Merchants."

"Cheech" Celaschi remembered the "1960 Charleroi Merchant team was really loaded. That's probably the main reason the league broke up. The other teams could barely compete."

Mon Valley League champions 1950-1964

1950: Fayette City Legion

1951: Monongahela (players included Ray Minjock, Ken Barbao, Vic Furiga, Stan Homer, Alex DeRosa, Jim Wujcik, Bob Koch, Manford Gayhart, Lou Sepe, Ron Necciai, and Lou Wujcik)

1952: Monessen Ozarks

1953: Monessen Ozarks

1954: Monessen CIO

1955: Charleroi Merchants

1956: Perryopolis

1957: Charleroi Merchants

1958: Charleroi Merchants

1959: Charleroi Merchants

1960: Donora CIO

1961-1962: No League

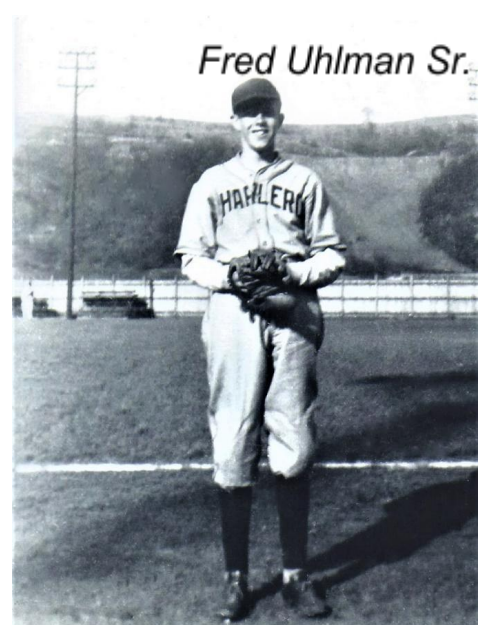
1963: Wyano

1964: Mon Valley League folds with those teams remaining moving to the Fayette County League

Charleroi American Legion (1947–2012)

Legion ball took its roots from the idea of a program for teenage boys as a promoter of equality, making teammates out of young athletes regardless of their income levels or social standings. Charleroi had its first American Legion baseball team in 1947 called the Charleroi Junior Legion coached by future NFL official Joe Connell, a 1955 Mon Valley Sports Hall of Fame inductee. By 1947 Charleroi was the envy of surrounding communities because of its tremendous baseball heritage. In a six-team circuit, part of the 25th District Junior League, Charleroi finished with a 9-2 regular season record. Charleroi and Monongahela tied for first place. In the playoff game Charleroi won 4-3. Monongahela protested the game stating that Charleroi had used an ineligible player. Monongahela was awarded the game and the title. Junior League rules specifically authorized playing only two 18-year-olds. It seems Charleroi had three 18-year-old players with one of the players who lied about his age. The mistake was caught about halfway through the season when Charleroi's Charley Sedor was dropped from the squad. If Monongahela had won the game, they wouldn't have said a word. Charleroi's Fred Uhlman, Charley Sedor and Ed Nandor were named to the Legion All-Star team.

Charleroi baseball teams have been part of many marathon games especially Mon Valley pitching duels. On Saturday afternoon, July 5, 1947, with 500 fans in attendance, in a game at Charleroi Stadium lefty Fred Uhlman pitched until the eleventh inning while his opponent Monongahela's Jess Leach, a slender



right-hander, pitched through the eighteenth inning for the win 4-3 over the Charleroi Juniors. The game lasted four hours, ten minutes. Unofficially it went down in the record books as the longest American Legion Junior tilt in the upper Mon Valley's baseball history. The end came when little Joe Reale opened the eighteenth inning with a single to right, stole second, went to third when pitcher Leach grounded out and scored on Jim Lazzeri's ground ball to George Zuraw at first, who threw to catcher Angie DeFrancesco. The catcher appeared to have Reale out, but when the dust cleared, the ball was lying on the ground and Reale was safe. Leach, a future Pirate prospect, fanned nineteen and walked five. Uhlman had a no hitter into the sixth inning and gave way to reliever Eddie Nandor who was charged with the loss.



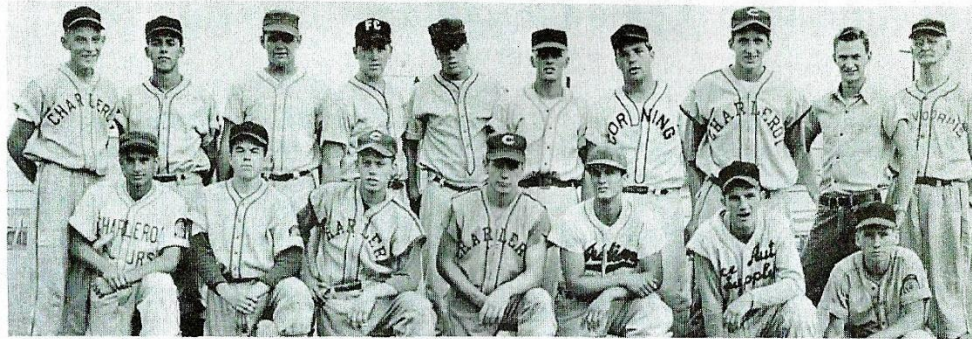
Photographed in 1947 at Charleroi stadium kneeling from left Ed Nandor, Angie DeFrancesco, a Fred Uhlman, Bill Shaffer, Milan Tokar, Eddie Schwab, Charley Sedor, Chuck Varsel, George Zuraw, standing from left Ronnie Monack, unknown, Jim Levy, Jim Oates, Gary Allshouse, coach Joe Connell, Zeke Green, Tom Felak, Bill Huttner, Ronnie Kruppa, Ed Watovich, sponsor J. F. Wall of Wall Motor Co (Ford Motor Company dealer). Uhlman, Sedor and Nandor were named to the 25th District Junior Legion All Star team.

In 1948 and 1949 Charleroi was managed by Angie DeFrancisco, an 18-year-old. No teams were registered in 1950 through 1952. Jim Stevenson and Bob Jackson managed the teams from 1953 through 1955 with games played at Rec Park. Records were for 1953 5-9; 1954 7-7; and 1955 11-4. In 1956 Ewing "Grassy" Chalfant and John "Scissors" McIlvain organized a prep team and played a limited schedule. In 1957 Chalfant and co-managers McIlvain and Jim Fillingham entered a team in the Mon Valley Prep League consisting of Smithton-Jacobs Creek, Belle Vernon, Scottsdale, and West Newton. Feature players included Ron Cosner, Tim Lee, and Art Artis.



Through the efforts of Charleroi's Mr. Baseball "Mac" McIlvain and other community leaders, the Charleroi Legion "Magicians" were created in 1958 and were sponsored by Charleroi American Legion Post 22. Ewing "Grassy" Chalfant led the way forward as General Manager with "Mac" its first field manager from 1958-1961. Veterans Memorial Field was home to the Magicians. In reflecting on the mascot name chosen, "Magicians," the moniker was taken from Charleroi's nickname the "Magic City." Charleroi received its magic quality from the lively business atmosphere in the community, a Mon Valley mecca for shopping. The tag was used for Legion teams through the 1970s and then adopted by the Thorobreds in 1979. Charleroi Legion baseball teams had their share of championship seasons through the end of the twentieth century: 1958, 1959, 1962, 1963, 1970, 1973, 1977, 1983, 1984, 1990, 1997, and 1998.

1958 25th District Champions



The Charleroi Magicians failed to win the state American Legion Junior baseball championship, but they were still tops in Western Pennsylvania and the 25th District. Their overall season record was 27 games won, while losing four.

Front row: (l. to r.) Paul Strellick, Joe Kalish, Art Artis, Ron Cosner, Jimmy Chacko, Rich Menyo, and Wilford McKenna.

Back Row: (l. to r.) Jerry Wiltz, Chuck Cardinale, Mickey Bitsko, Dennis Harger, Bob King, Joe Wiehl, Jerry Moffit, Tim Lee, Dave Felak and Field Manager John G. McIlvain
Missing from photo: Arky Hall and coaches, Tommy Griffith and James "Red" Hall.

The Charleroi Magician's baseball team shined with championship teams and memorable players like Jim "Mouse" Chacko and Art "Little Magician" Artis. The 1958 Magicians became the 25th District Champions by defeating Washington. The squad went on to defeat Vandergrift to move on to Reading for the state playoffs where Charleroi defeated Boyertown 11-7 and lost to CoPlay 8-7 and to Norristown 12-7. The team record was 27-4.

The Magicians continued their winning ways in 1959 taking the Western Pennsylvania State Championship with a record of 23-5. For a second year in a row the Magicians participated in the state Junior American Legion tournament at Reading the third week in August. The Magicians bowed out August 22 in the semi-finals losing to Coplay,

In Jr. Legion Game

Artis, Chacko In Final Fling At Lancaster



ART ARTIS



JIMMY CHACKO



4-3, after the day before upsetting Coplay 10-4. Shortstop Dave Felak's slick fielding and four hits helped defeat Coplay in that 10-4 win. Artis and Chacko came away with post-game awards in the state series. Artis was cited as, "outstanding pitcher" and Chacko the "top hitter." Artis, a lefty, worked 21 innings in three days against three of the top teams and compiled a sparkling 0.86 ERA while winning one and losing one. Chacko collected eight hits in 18 at bats for a .444 batting mark. Magicians' manager John McIlvain was presented with a trophy by officials of the tournament for his many years of service to Legion ball.

As reported in *The Charleroi Mail*, Saturday, August 29, 1959, "Art Artis was one of four area lads chosen to represent the West squad in the American Legion Junior East-West All Star game at Lancaster. The West won 4-2. Along with Artis in the outfield, Jimmy Chacko was joined by Chuck Giuffrida of Donora and Monongahela's Homer Green. Chacko smacked a run producing double, his team's only extra base sock, and walked three times in five trips to the plate, while Artis went 1 for 3 and walked once. Giuffrida hurled three innings and scored on Chacko's double, while Green had a hit in three trips to the plate." The West was managed by 1996 MMVASHOF inductee Ron Necciai who also managed the 1958 West team which also won. Ron was assisted by Edward Fusco. Ron remembered the 1959 West team went into the eighth inning behind by one run. Necciai told Chacko he had to get on. Chacko obliged by getting hit by a pitch and then stealing second. Art Artis would bunt Chacko to third. Green got a hit which allowed Chacko to score and tie the game.

The Magicians were well represented in the 14th annual Pittsburgh *Sun-Telegraph* Hearst sandlot baseball classic at Forbes Field on Monday, July 13, 1959 by Jim Chacko and Arty Artis, both MMVASHOF inductees in 1997 and 2010. The two Charleroi High graduates were among 103 players nominated for the honor by professional scouts. The Hearst All Stars featured Legion players 16 to 18. Instrumental in the formation of the Pittsburgh Hearst classic was Bob Rice who had coached the Charleroi Governors to a championship in 1929. Chacko remembered his participation along with his great friend Arty Artis, "I had gone two for three and had a double and triple that hit off the right field screen off of pitcher Art Artis. I usually played center, but for some reason I was placed at

shortstop. It was enjoyable. I was selected as an alternate to the Hearst All Star game in New York City. Glenn Beckert, future Cub second baseman, was chosen from our Pittsburgh group for the honor to play in the annual Hearst Sandlot Classic at New York's Yankee Stadium August 16 and justly so." In the field Chacko handled four chances flawlessly, making three putouts and an assist. Chacko's team was coached by former Pittsburgh Pirate Frankie Gustine. *The Charleroi Mail* reported, "Artis was the last of three hurlers for the winning team guided by Ottie Cochran, 5-4, and the little left-hander looked good despite being touched for four hits and three runs. He struck out two and failed to issue any walks."

Magician player Jim Chacko, a Charleroi High 1959 grad, recalled coach McIlvain. "When you hit a homerun and came into the dugout, Mac would act like nothing happened saying, 'I didn't see it.' I led American Legion ball in the state in hitting one year at close to .600."

In the early 1960s Bellmar's Ron "Slugger" Baron, age 13, joined the Magicians. Ron's prowess was as a catcher, although he did roam the outfield, played third base and pitched at times. His pitching assignments were unique in that he threw as a righthander and as a southpaw. "That was a very competitive league with some outstanding players," Baron said in an interview with longtime Mon Valley reporter Ron Paglia in 2007. Among Baron's teammates were Stan Kemp, Arky Hall, George Kalamaras, Jack Shannon, Lenny Lipscomb, Larry Nichols, Mickey Hornak, Tim Ferrari, Tim Myers, John Hisiro, George Carlock, Gary Cramer and Babe Seftas. Kemp reflected on Baron as a player. "Ron was a versatile player and played everywhere on the diamond. He had baseball smarts and knew what to do in situations by instinct. Led by example by his immense competitiveness and grit." In 1964 Baron was a 25th District All Star. Baron was effusive about his praise for McIlvain's coaching discipline.



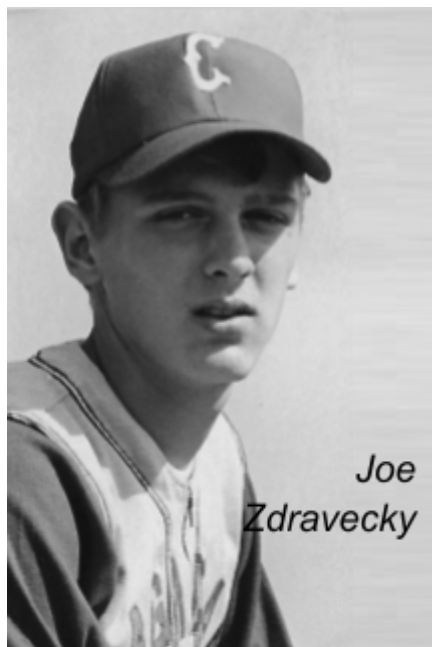
1961 Charleroi Magicians at Rec Park and later named Vets Field. One of their few down years the team went 6 wins and 11 loses. Seated in the front is batboy Larry Fisher. Those seated from left Jerry Blackburn, Stan Kemp, Dave Paig, Joe Lopez, Rich Carcella, John Daniels, Ron Baron, Floyd McKenna and Tim Myers; standing from left Bobby Abbott, Dick Hough, Mike Sylvester, Ron Paterline, Daryle Ruby, Dale "Arky" Hall, Bart Meikle, Bob Gottheld, George Kenny and manager John "Scissors" McIlvain.

Kemp remembered a Baldwin player, Tom Buick, “who was a pitcher and ambidextrous infielder. A crafty southpaw pitcher, Tim Myers had a great pickoff with a runner at first. Players would make bets on whether Tim was going to pick the runner off.”

Kemp also recalled manager “Mac” McIlvain who was deaf. “He would run out to argue with the umpire to plead his case. The umpire would yell back not knowing that Mac couldn’t hear a word.” “Butch” Kemp himself was an integral part of the early 1960s Magicians as a switch hitter who played shortstop, centerfield and outfield. Stan Kemp was inducted into the MMVASHOF in 2005.

Jack Daywalt succeeded Mcllvain as manager in 1962 with a 25th District championship. The following managers in the 1960s included Tommy Griffin in 1963 (13-7), Angie DeFrancisco returned from 1964-1966 followed by Mcllvain in 1967. Manager Jim Colditz completed the 1960s capping his time with a 1970 (19-8) 25th District championship. That championship team was led by All-Star selections, Russ Bergstedt Jr. (1B) and Duane Coulson (SS). Other members of the team included Jimmy 'Cack' Constantino (C), Bobby Marks (3B), Dave Massare (2B), Jackie Reis (LF), Billy Dillard (CF), Rick Booth (RF-P), Warren Voelker (RF-P), Ronnie Johnson (P), Mike Demo, Raoul Jeanmenne, Carl Hisiro. Russ Bergstedt recalled, "We had players from Charleroi, Monongahela and Donora. Coach Colditz and his assistant Carl Witmyer did a great job recruiting the Mon Valley." The 1970 team lost to Republic in the playoffs 19-8 after defeating Washington in the first playoff series.

Jack Shannon played two years of Legion ball in 1963 and 1964. Pitching coach Mac Mcllvain tried to convert Shannon to a pitcher as Jack



was a lefty. Shannon preferred to remain as a center fielder and did. He recalled "our team won the 1963 25th District championship with a record of 13-7." Shannon remembered the first-round playoff with three-games against Export. The Magicians lost in three games: won game one 1, 9-2 against future Pittsburgh Pirate Bobby Moose, then lost game two, 4-2 and lost the rubber game, 9-6. In game three Shannon had a perfect day when he went 5 for 5 and helped to knock Moose out of the game. Two Magicians were absent for the first two games. Stan Kemp and John Hostetler were in Hershey taking part in the Big 33

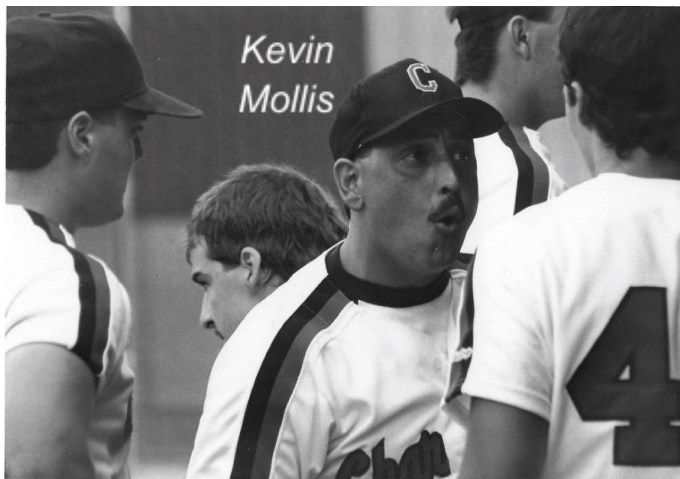
game. Hostetler made it back for the last game but Kemp had to report to the University of Virginia for football camp.

A talented Monessen athlete, Joe Zdravecky, joined the Magicians in 1969 and pitched a no-hitter against Washington. Charleroi finished the season in fourth place behind Washington (12-3), Canonsburg (11-4),

Jefferson (10-4) and the Magicians at (12-6). Patsy Mauro, a Belle Vernon Area graduate attending Bethany, joined the Magicians in 1968 and was a catcher and outfielder on a disappointing season for the Magicians that finished (5-11).

Carl "Abbsy" Witmyer took the helm in 1971 (13-7) and 1972 (9-12) succeeded by Ringgold High School baseball manager John Kendra. John would win three District 25 titles in 1973 with pitcher's righty Joe Montana and lefty Mark Duetsch, in 1974 and 1975 (12-7). One of the players on those teams, Bob Whitfield, recalled Montana in an interview with the *Charlotte Observer* in 2014. "This was in 1972 or '73, we were all punks. We thought we were studs because we could play baseball. Joe Montana lived about 10 miles away and we were on the same American Legion team. We won a lot. One time Joe was pitching a game in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and Joe Namath's father was there. Montana was lights out during the game and Mr. Namath called him over afterward. 'Son,' he said, 'you're a hell of a pitcher.' I was standing right there. And Joe said, 'Well, I'm a better quarterback. And one day they're not even going to remember your son's name because they'll remember mine.' And Mr. Namath said, 'Son, I hope that's true.'"

In 1976 Bill Mitnick managed through 1978 (16-6) and took a championship his final season. In 1979 the Legion team became associated with the Thoroughbred League and in 1980 Keith "Crash" Reconnu took a League championship. Thoroughbred manager Daryl Hixenbaugh in



1981 and 1983 shepherded championship teams. At third base in 1982 and 1983 was Don "Bo" Gustovich.

In 1984 a new manager Marsh Tire Services owner Kevin Mollis, a 1972 Charleroi High grad, would lead the Charleroi American Legion team, now part of the Fayette County American Legion League, to six Northern Division championships through the 1980s.

Mollis in his 16-year stint as manager won 11 Regional titles with one trip to the state finals in his first year.

The 1984 Charleroi Legion did things no one including the manager expected and became a “dream” team. It was a long season and the record for this championship team indicated that ending the season with a mark of 29-7. The lineup included center fielder Gary Pipik, first baseman Tim Gales, shortstop Larry Perok, right fielder Will Procasky, left fielder Tom Pivovarnik, catcher Dan Ferretti, third baseman Rich Barber, second baseman Mark Jurczak along with pitchers Vince Capozza, Brock Witmyer, and the work horse pitching of Jim Farkas. The Legion team defeated Uniontown in a three-game series to advance to the Fayette County League championship, two games to one. Charleroi beat Connellsville 8-0 behind Jim Farkas and 6-4 behind Vince Capozza to win the Fayette County title. Advancing to the Regionals Charleroi defeated Shaler 5-1 behind Farkus in Butler, Pennsylvania. With Gary Pipik hitting three triples, Charleroi with Tim Gales on the mound defeated Peters Township 13-2 in game two. Next, Gary Pipik was the hero with an inside the park homerun defeating Penn Hills 4-3 behind the pitching of Jim Farkus. Charleroi won the Regional 6 championship by defeating Shaler once again, 3-1, behind the pitching of Tim Gales. For the Regionals Gary Pipik went 11 for 19. First game of the state playoffs at Boyertown, Charleroi faced the Region 3 champions Newton. In 10 innings behind Jim Farkus, who went the distance, Gary Pipik’s double scored Mark Jurczak with the winning run in a 4-3 Charleroi win. In game two Charleroi defeated Shamokin 4-2. Vince Capozza and Brock Witmyer pitched for Charleroi and Larry Perok had three hits with Will Procasky and Gary Pipik each with two hits. The next game with powerhouse Boyertown changed the Charleroi momentum with a devastating 18-3 loss. Next, Charleroi lost to Newton, 5-1. Charleroi finished this magical season as the third placed team in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

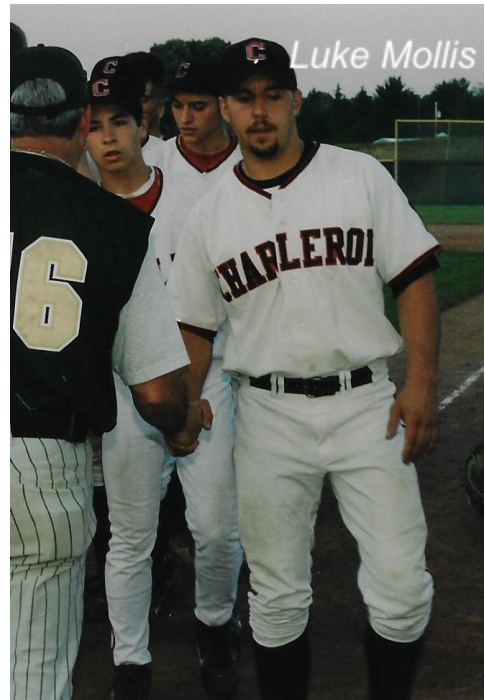


1984 Charleroi Legion team: kneeling from left (OF) Joe O'Hara, (OF) Tommy Pivarnik, (2B) Mark Jurczak, (SS) Larry Perok, (3B) Richie Barber, (P/1B) Timmy Gales; standing assistant coach Ed Protin, (OF) Will Procasky, (P/1B) Brock Witmyer, (OF) Jeff Schmisnik, (C) Danny Ferretti, (P/OF) Vinnie Capozza, (OF) Gary Pipik, (P) Jim Farkas, first-year manager Kevin Mollis

In the 1990s Charleroi had some success in winning the Northern Division championships. In 1991 with a record of 16-11, the team made it as Northern Division champions. In 1992 made it to the playoffs with a record of 14-12. In 1993 the overall record was 27-13. In 1994 the overall record was 21-7. In 1995 the overall record was 17-10. In both 1996 and 1997 Charleroi won the Northern Division with overall records of 26-10 and 36-7. The 1997 team also won the Fayette County Legion title bowing in the Regionals to Mt. Lebanon and player prospect Don Kelly and losing to Plum.

Manager Kevin Mollis in 1998 pursued Charleroi's third straight North Division title. This season would become a Cinderella story for the long-tenured coach. With veteran players returning like shortstop/pitcher Matt Null, outfielders Jeremy Reppert, Greg Ghilani, Jarrod Essey and the coaches son Luke, a league premier catcher and consistent .400 plus

hitter, there were three of the four infield spots to fill to solidify the team. The season got off to a slow start coming on strong in the second half with impressive winning streaks. A quartet of Charleroi players were chosen for the mid-season Legion All Star game which included Luke Mollis, third basemen, Craig Barkey, and outfielders Jeremy Ruppert and Greg Ghilani. On July 8 Charleroi wrapped up their 11th Northern Division title in 15 seasons for manager Kevin Mollis defeating Waynesburg 7-1. On July 14 Charleroi beat California 12-3, in the playoffs. On July 17 Charleroi defeated Waynesburg, 12-10. Charleroi won again on July 19 defeating pitcher Mike Patitucci's Brownsville team, 24-5 in the first of the best of five series. On July 21 in the second game Brownsville with the bat of Jesse Cramer Jr. defeated Charleroi, 9-7. In the next game Charleroi defeated Brownsville, 14-7. On July 23 Charleroi won their second consecutive Fayette County American Legion title with a 6-4 come-from-behind victory in a classic pitching duel between Charleroi's Matt Null vs Brownsville's Mike Patitucci. In the Regional Tournaments Charleroi beat North Allegheny on July 28, 13-6 behind ace Matt Null. On July 29 Charleroi lost to Mt Lebanon, 16-2. On July 30 Charleroi beat Brownsville, 11-8. On July 31 Charleroi defeated Shaler, 5-1. On August 1 Charleroi defeated North Allegheny, 11-10, winning on an unearned run in the ninth inning. This win earned Charleroi a spot in the Regional championship games. The Charleroi offense ran out of gas with the pitching in the tournament finale with Mt. Lebanon. Against future MLB player Josh Wilson, Charleroi only managed five hits. Wilson, who, in the second round hit three home runs and drove home eight runs to lead his team to a 16-2 win over Charleroi and in the championship game Wilson struck out 13 batters in a, 10-4 Mt. Lebanon trouncing of Charleroi.



Mt. Lebanon coach Al Liberi gave high complement to catcher Luke Mollis. "He has a cannon arm. He knows the game. He frames pitches

really well and you can tell he's a leader." Charleroi ended a phenomenal season with a record of 27-10.

In 1999 Kevin Mollis entered his sixteenth season as manager. He had reached eleven playoff finals. This would be the manager's farewell tour. The team got a late start to the season on June 11. Eight Legion players from Ringgold High School advanced to the WPIAL and PIAA playoffs. Ringgold's catcher Craig Barkey replaced Luke Mollis behind the plate. The outfield featured Chris Harvey, Dan O'Rourke and Thom Stimaker. O'Rourke emerged as a pitching option in the middle of June when in a game against Carmichaels the righty scattered six hits on 111 pitches in a 16-1 win. "Craig Barkey mentioned to me that (O'Rourke) could throw the ball hard and he could do well as long as he keeps his control," said manager Mollis. "He had everything under control. The more games he pitches the more confidence he will get."



Craig
Barkey

Charleroi came into the season defending its Fayette County League championship lacking in players and enough pitching. Charleroi's season came to end in the middle of July when the team went on a losing streak and was swept out of the playoffs. The only three players back from the previous year that Charleroi lost to Mt. Lebanon in the regional finals were: 18-year old's Brett Anselmino, a second baseman/pitcher, catcher Barkey, and first baseman/left-handed pitcher Todd Rygelski. During the season Charleroi lost players due to injury which left the roster six-players shy of the 18-man limit allowed by Legion baseball. Newcomers who kept Charleroi competitive were shortstop T.J. Cardin, left fielder Kirk Loos, third baseman Terry Morgan, first baseman/third baseman Clay Swango, out fielders Lloyd Price and Brad Urwin, and utility infielder Adam Landrin. Ending the season with a 18-8 record Mollis believed, "we had a good season, there are a lot of young kids here that will be back next year."

From 2000 to 2013 American Legion teams were managed by different mentors. Tom Hartman had the following records: 2000 (16-7) won Northern Division, 2001 (16-11), 2002 (14-10), 2003 (16-18), and 2004 (12-15). Hartman's debut as manager on May 25, 2000 was successful as his club posted a 4-1 win at Farmington. Chris Evancho sparked the decision by scattering seven hits and striking out 12, and Trevor Consavage, Kirk Loos, Adam Landrin and Lloyd Price paced the offense. Luke Mollis managed in 2005 (15-11), and 2006 with a Fayette County title (26-8). Kevin Mollis returned in 2007 (18-9) when son Luke had to step down after taking the Charleroi High football job. Jim Costantino succeeded Kevin in coaching duties for 2008. He had been a ball boy with manager McIlvain's team and a catcher at Charleroi High in the late 1960s. Constantino went (13-10) in 2009. Costantino was assisted by Bruno Pappasergi, Brad Bassi and Luke Mollis who would finish out the last hurrah of Charleroi Legion ball in 2012 with a (13-10) record. By 2013 there were not enough players to field a team. The players coming out for Legion ball dwindled due to travel teams and the Mon Valley population loss.

CHARLEROI TAKES TITLE

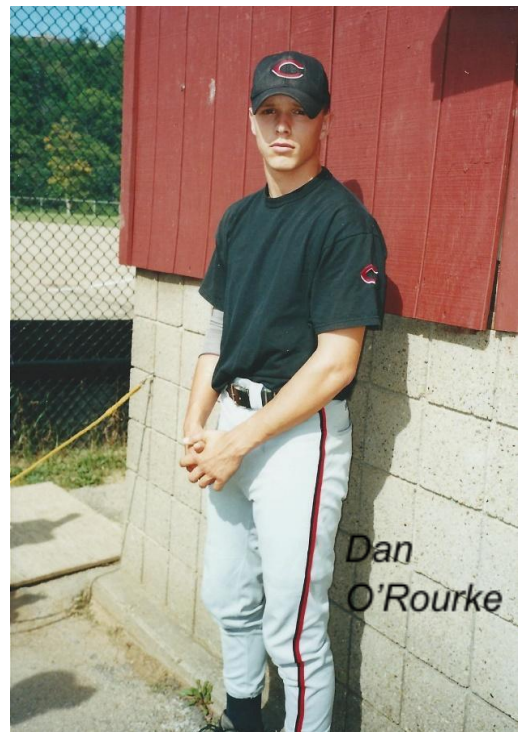
2007



Jim Forence/The Valley Independent

Charleroi prevailed Monday in a slugfest with Uniontown to win the Fayette County American Legion championship. Above, the team celebrates after receiving its trophies. For more, see Page 1B.

One of the players on those later Legion teams was RHP Dan O'Rourke (1999-2001) who skipped his last year of Colt League ball to play for the Charleroi Legion. In his first year he went 5-3 as a pitcher. In 2000 O'Rourke went 7-0 with 3 saves along with a .460 batting average. He was named Charleroi MVP while he also received the Fayette County American Legion Pitcher of the Year trophy. In 2001 O'Rourke had a fastball which topped out at 92 posting a 5-1 record. Hitting over .400 with 12 home runs O'Rourke was an easy choice to play in the East-West



Dan
O'Rourke

Legion All-Star game. Dan reflected on his time with Charleroi Legion baseball:

Reflecting back on my baseball career, I can honestly say that playing summer ball for the Charleroi Legion created some of the most memorable years of my life. While most players played for two years, I was fortunate to actually play for three as I moved up after my sophomore year. I remember some of the older guys saying how nice it was to play for the team as the following was so big. We had fans that would come to all of our games, even away games, and cheer for us louder than I have probably ever had throughout my career. These were the years where Legion baseball in Pennsylvania was some of the best in the country as Pennsylvania did not start a lot of AAU or travel ball at the time, so most of the best players in the state still played Legion ball. In fact, when we had the tryouts for the prestigious East-West All-star game that was played in Harrisburg, most of the players in the final round were Division 1 prospects. I was fortunate to play in the East-West All-Star game during my final year of Legion ball and a lot of the players went on to play Division 1 and/or professional baseball.

We had players that came from three different school districts - Ringgold, Charleroi and Monessen, which was nice because we could establish relationships with kids from other areas. We were probably three deep at every position, and I think we actually had to have cuts my first year, which is sad as now it is difficult to even field a team. Players were dedicated and wanted to put on the Charleroi Legion uniform due to its rich history.

Playing down by the river, hitting balls into the water, having an energetic announcer, Lou Pokorny, and a large fan base, created a traditional baseball atmosphere that made the game fun to play. We had some tough matchups versus good competition that repeated throughout each summer.

Coach Kevin Mollis was a hard-nosed, old-school coach who kept the players in line. However, he taught us how to play the game the right way, and was dedicated to his players and to Legion baseball as a whole. Kevin had a very unique relationship with the umpires (as did his mom) that made

disagreements rather interesting. Kevin wanted to win and appreciated players that worked hard and put forth effort to become the best they could.



Mid-1930s: Sons of Rest Tigers

Bottom row from left Carl Ditta, Willie Hazuka, John Hazuka, John Zuraw, Paul Strellick, Anthony Klus, F. Klus, Business Manager Peg Holesh; back row Ansy Zippay, John Toth, Steve Hazuka, Nick Drygos, Joe Kopach, manager John Shelapinsky and Willie Shelapinsky

Sons of Rest Tigers (1933-36) John Shelapinsky, a 1934 Charleroi High School grad, was a creative young man not yet 20 when he began to organize Charleroi high school boys' (15 to 18 years old) baseball teams. Without a high school baseball team until 1938, he brought together what would later be called Legion and sandlot teams. By 1935 his team was christened the Sons of Rest Tigers. Not only would Shelapinsky manage but he caught and played the outfield.

Charleroi High School Cougars

WPIAL high school baseball organized in 1914 and Charleroi High joined the interscholastic athletic association in the spring of 1938. Monessen High School among local schools was the first to join the WPIAL in 1920 while California, Donora, Monongahela and Charleroi joined in 1938. Lateness in affiliation was due to tight money and lack of local facilities although Monessen played the 1920 WPIAL championship against Allegheny High at one of Charleroi's fields which possibly was at Maple Park located at First and McKean Avenue, Beechwood Park in Lower Speers or the Eighth Street Field. Allegheny High won 3-1. Baseball was played in these local high schools prior to 1938 but as a club sport or at an intramural level. As well, many community leagues formed in the early twentieth century urged on by the overwhelming popularity of baseball, the National Pastime. Charleroi's earliest independent baseball opportunities included John "Scissors" McIlvain's baseball club, Whippets, Robins, Charleroi Yanks, and Bob's Mon Valley League sponsored by Gene and Boots Candies which started in Charleroi circa 1930. High schools were at a disadvantage keeping their best players because of many high caliber community leagues.

Thirteen Charleroi High School graduates have played professional baseball. Most of them played Charleroi High baseball but not all (Gumbert, Shelapinsky, Umbel). The list by the year of their signing and organization follow: Harry Gumbert 1932 Yankees, John Shelapinsky 1937 Tigers, Fred Hancock 1939 White Sox, Charley Sedor 1947 Cardinals, Fred Uhlman Sr. 1948 Pirates, George Zuraw 1949 Indians/Pirates, Carl "Abbsy" Witmyer 1957 Reds, Billy Burke 1960 Red Sox, Jeff Umbel 1965 Tigers, Bob Mazur 1972 Pirates, Bob Whitfield 1977 Orioles, Mark Deutsch 1978 Cubs, and Dennis Stitch 1985 Mariners.

The first Charleroi High baseball team fielded in 1938 was by two Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame inductees' coaches Steve Stepanian



(1957) and George Chacko (1976). Games were played at First Street Park near the Gulf Station today. The team finished in third place in section 6 with a 6-4 record. California High School won the section in that inaugural year. Charleroi's first home win, 5-1, came against a Donora team touting Stan Musial who played right field and came in as a relief pitcher. When Charleroi traveled to Donora for the rematch on May 10, 1938 at Legion Field, starter Stan Musial outlasted Cougar hurler Peck Dooley, 9-8. Musial scattered nine hits and fanned eight batters while Dooley was tagged for 12 hits while striking out 12. Another future big-league player appeared in the game shortstop Fred "Petey" Hancock who hit a towering home run which cleared the left field fence. Musial forecasting his future big-league batting titles went four for four. George Chacko went solo as coach in 1939 and finished the season at 2-6. But better things would come in the decade of the 1940s.

The games switched to Charleroi Stadium in the 1940s. In this decade the Cougar baseball teams won six section titles in 1942 (their first), 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946 and 1948. The teams went to the final game for the WPIAL championship at Forbes Field in 1943 losing to the Bell Township Lions, and in 1944 and 1946 losing to Aliquippa. Three different coaches were at the helm through the decade which included George Chacko 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945; Jim "Toots" Fillingham 1940, 1941 and 1947; and Pete Garnic 1946, 1948 and 1949.





1946 Charleroi High School baseball team section record 9-1

Front batboy D. Cahill, seated from left B. Nicholson, A. DeFrancesco, A Sannier, E. Nandor, P. Bakaitis, E. Holod, C. Sedor; standing coach Pete Garnic, C. DeMarco, M. Morgan, F. Uhlman, J. Green, J. Williams and H. Pennline

Two players in the 1940s led the Cougars with their phenomenal play, 1947 grad Charles "Weasel" Sedor and 1948 grad Fred Uhlman. George Zuraw, a 1949 grad, maintains that Charlie was the best Charleroi baseball player in his era. Sedor, 5'9", 155 pounds, was a center fielder/first baseman, who was a spark plug as a lefty lead-off hitter who had the knack to draw walks, steal bases and to make contact. Some distinguished managers coached Sedor at Charleroi High School and the summer city league sponsored by the Charleroi Hotel. They included George "Beans" Chacko, John

*Charles
"Weasel"
Sedor*



Shelapinsky, James “Toots” Fillingham, Pete Garnic and Henry “Gooch” Pennline. From 1945 through 1947, Sedor had a batting average of .373.

George Zuraw believed Charleroi baseball in the late 1940's could best be described as the “New York Yankees of the Mon Valley.” Charleroi rarely lost against other valley teams with great pitching including the likes of Ed Roebuck, Tony Segzda, Leach and Gaudio. Sedor’s opening day at Charleroi High during his senior year drew 2,500 fans at old Charleroi High Stadium. “Pittsburgh papers didn’t believe it!”

“When Sedor was at bat, usually leading off, if he swung and missed, he would step out of the box and rub his eye as though something got in his eye. He hardly ever struck out.”

“Another factor in his hitting was to taunt the pitcher verbally. ‘Hey, pitch, look who’s coming up to hit,’ while waving his bat at the pitcher.”

George Zuraw remembers every January 1, Sedor would knock loudly at the front door at 9 a.m. in cold weather, snow or rain and have his glove and ball saying, “Another season is coming, so let’s get ready!”



1947 Charleroi High School baseball team section record 7-3

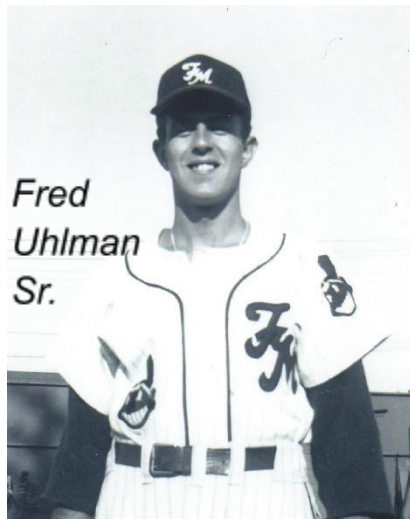
Seated from left C. Sedor, A. DeFrancesco, E. Nandor, W. Shaffer, G. Zuraw; kneeling J. Green, F. Lucas, M. Tokar, R. Nicholson; standing coach

Jim Fillingham, J. Chalfant, W. Huttner, J. Martucci, D. Brutout, D. Cahill, R. Tuman, F. Watkins, and W. Suzich

Sedor's exuberance for the game paid dividends when he played in the Cardinal and Yankee farm systems from 1948 to 1956 with a stint in the U.S. Air Force in Wiesbaden, Germany where he also played ball and was an All Star. In 1956 in Rochester, Minnesota Sedor played with Charleroi native Fred Hancock who also managed the team.

Another high caliber baseball player in Charleroi before the talents of Sedor and Zuraw was a 1944 graduate Harold "Lefty" Livingstone from Allenport who planned on a big-league career. He had a tryout with the Pirates out of high school but injured his leg. At 5'10," 185 lbs., he was a strapping lad who pitched, played first base and outfield with major league speed. A bird dog Pittsburgh Pirate scout Jesse Smith from the Mon Valley recognized his prodigious hitting ability. "Livingstone had more ability than two contemporary big-league players from the Mon Valley Stan Musial and Jim Russell but he didn't get past Class C." His minor league career lasted from 1946-49 mostly with the Redford Rockets in the Blue Ridge League in 223-games and a .289 batting average. Livingstone played for the Charleroi Hotel before his minor league stint and Fayette City Merchants and Legion teams.

A star southpaw baseball player, Fred Uhlman averaged 14 strikeouts a game in 1947 and 1948. He had great control and an electric fast ball. Fred remembered beating Swissvale 4-1 in the playoffs in 1948 at Munhall, and Dick Groat, who would later star for the Pirates and Cardinals, thought Uhlman's pitching the best he had ever faced in high school.



Fred
Uhlman
Sr.

Mon Valley baseball enthusiasts enjoyed Fred Uhlman's pitching duels with Brownsville's Ed Roebuck, a 1956 MMVASHOF inductee. Roebuck, an eventual Dodger, could never beat "Flingin" Fred. In fact, the Cougars won 14 straight against the Brownies. In one game in which the Cougars won against Roebuck, Fred pitched 11 innings, unimaginable today, leading

the Cougars to a 2-1 victory. The Cougars in 1948 made it to the WPIAL final where they lost 2-1 to Carmichaels. Uhlman tossed a two-hitter but was the victim of some errant plays behind him.

The Cougars during the regular season on May 6, 1948 pulled off a triple play against Monongahela. The play happened in the top of the seventh inning when Jess Lynch singled to left and passed Billy Schaffer at third. Alex DeRosa walked. The Wildcats had runners on first and second with no outs. Denny DiPaola hit a humpback liner into right field on a 2-0 count and the runners took off at the crack of the bat. Frank "Tote" Lucas with his back to the infield lunged and made a one-handed grab. He twirled around and threw to first baseman George Zuraw who stepped on the bag and threw to shortstop Billy Huttner who stepped on second to complete the triple play. It was Fred Uhlman's third consecutive shutout on the year with a win of 3-0. Uhlman would win the prestigious Leslie Morgan Charleroi High award for the schools' best graduating athlete. Fred had a full athletic scholarship to Wake Forest University in both baseball and basketball. But Fred would receive another offer he could not refuse.



1948 Charleroi High School baseball team section record 9-1

Seated from left D. Cahill, J. Martucci; kneeling F. Uhlman, J. Russell, J. McGuire, J. Green, W. Huttner, E. Schwab, J. Vincentich; standing M. Tokar, C. VanShura, F. Lucas, coach Pete Garnic, A. DeFrancesco, G. Zuraw, R. Felak and W. Shaffer

The Pirates signed Uhlman at age 17 after his graduation and placed him on the 40-man major league roster. "One of the reasons I signed with the Pirates right away was because they said they'd take me on the road during the 1948 season," Uhlman remembered. "I went to New York, St. Louis and Chicago before the commissioner called and told the team I couldn't travel with them." Uhlman spent the early fifties in the minor leagues and 28 months in the U.S. Air Force. He would eventually have a distinguished MLB scouting career with signing examples including Bobby Moose, George Foster and Steve Finley to name just a few.



1949 Charleroi High School baseball team section record 7-3

Seated from left Chuck Corbelli, Duane Cahill, Gerald Winship, John Martucci, Jim Klein and W. Campagni; kneeling Norm Celaschi, Bill Shaffer, Bill Huttner, Tom George, Frank Green, George Mitchner, John Vincentich, and Ron Nandor; standing coach Pete Garnic, John Clark, Fred Fleming,

*Tom Felak, Jack Green, Jim Russell, Jack Jones, Fred Briggs, Ron Krupa,
Jim Oates and George Zuraw*

The 1950s had bookend head coaches with Pete Garnic in 1950 and in 1959 with George Chacko back at the helm. Coach Jim "Toots" Fillingham filled in the years in between with a phenomenal run of five straight section championships 1954-1958. Fillingham had a coarse coaching style. It wasn't easy for players to relate to him. Three pitchers of that era led the way first in the early 1950s with Adam Vlanich, 5'11," 170 lbs., then in the middle 1950s with pitcher Carl Witmyer, 6'2," followed by the crafty and wiry Art Artis, 5'8," 160 lbs., in 1958 and 1959.



*1950 Charleroi High School Baseball team record 7-3
(second place tie with California High)*

Kneeling from left Zeke Green, Fred Fleming, Digger Russell, Jones, Ron Nandor, Ed Wytovich, and Ron Kruppa; second row left to right coach Pete

Garnic, Wayne Campagni, Pee Wee Green, Joe Snyder, George Michner, Jack Young, Chuck Corbelli, Fred Briggs, and Steve Slavonia; third row left to right manager G. Winshop, Bill Janeri, unknown, Tom Simala, Ray Dean, Biagini, Bob Lococo and Ron Celaschi



1951 Charleroi High School baseball team record 3-7 (fourth in section)

Front row from left Steve Slavonia, Herk McCracken, Ron Nandor, Joe Snyder, Jack Young and Chuck Corbelli; second row left to right Pee Wee Green, Ray Dean, Bill Williamson, Gene Uhlman, George Michiner, Nunnie Milchovich, Jim Lenhart and Mike Panich; back row left to right Denny Livi, Adam Vlanich, Don Young, manager Jim "Toots" Fillingham, R. Sharp, George Guzzie, Tim Simala, and manager Jerry Winship

Ron Paglia recalled in a 2008 *Tribune-Review* memories article the 1952 WPIAL section 19 campaign which had one of the most bizarre endings in Mon Valley scholastic baseball history. "It involved Charleroi and

California, whose rivalry on the diamond in the 1950s often matched the spirit of that reserved for scholastic football and basketball.

Both teams entered the 1952 season with experience and high expectations. Coach Don Cornell's California club showed the likes of Don "Ducky" LeJohn, Larry Papini, Tom Selep, George Slogick, Wayne Campbell, Ray Huggman, Cecil Suhrie, Mike Digon and Al Liko. Meanwhile, Jim "Toots" Fillingham's Cougars boasted such players as Ron Nandor, Jack Young, Gene Uhlman, Stan Milchovich, Mike Panich, Steve Slavonia, Charley Corbelli, Jack Fayak, Bob Green, Bob Walters, Adam Vlanich and Jim Lenhart.

Charleroi took the first meeting between the teams 3-0 as Nandor pitched a four-hitter at the CHS Stadium. Nandor, a veteran righthander, struck out six and walked three and helped his own cause with two of the six hits the Cougars managed off Campbell. He also drove in an insurance run in the sixth inning.

Sharing offensive honors with Nandor was sophomore outfielder Jack Fayak, who had three hits in as many trips to the plate, knocked in the Cougars' first two runs and scored the third. Green and Jay Klein scored Charleroi's first two runs in the opening inning on Fayak's single. Earlier in the week, Fayak belted a home run and triple and had five RBIs in a 12-11 slugfest win over Monessen.

Second baseman Stan Milchovich had Charleroi's other hit. Charleroi's victory left the Cougars and Trojans tied for first place with 4-1 records.

They remained deadlocked at the front of the pack as they met in the regular season finale two weeks later on May 22 at California. The Cougars, despite touching Campbell for only three hits, won the game 3-2 to clinch the Section 19 championship with an 8-2 record against California's 7-3 mark."

It looked like the Cougars were on their way to the WPIAL playoffs after they beat the Trojans 3-2. But California protested an umpire decision in which Charleroi had the bases loaded with two out. The batter, Jimmy

Lenhart, hit a ball that hit him in the batter box. The catcher scooped up the ball and threw to first for the out. The home plate umpire, George Kuvinka called the runner out. Charleroi coach Fillingham argued that the ball had hit the batter while he was in the batter box, which would make it a dead ball. He appealed to the first base umpire and the call was overturned. The batter then walked to score the go ahead run. California protested the game. The WPIAL decisions committee made its ruling on the grounds that the two umpires who worked the game disagreed on the disputed batted ball. The game would have to be replayed and was set for May 28. California won that game 3-2 and advanced to the playoffs. The victory gave California an 8-2 league record and dropped the Cougars to 7-3 and a tie for second place with Monongahela.



Disputed game on May 22, 1952 with California vs Charleroi playing for section title. From left at home plate player Gene Uhlman, John Bunardzya with hat on, Coach Fillingham, and umpire "Herky" Kuvinka

The Charleroi Mail sports editor John Bunardzya believed Charleroi was the better team especially with their outfield of Clemente-like players Mike Panich, Steve Slavonia and Jack Fayak who was phenomenal with his bat. Centerfielder Fayak recalled Bunardzya puzzled that "that Charleroi team never won a championship."

In 1953 Coach Fillingham's team finished second again to California in section 19. California won the section with an 8-2 record. Cal lost to McKeesport in the first round of the playoffs. Jack Fayak started on the mound for the Trojans as he had transferred from Charleroi.



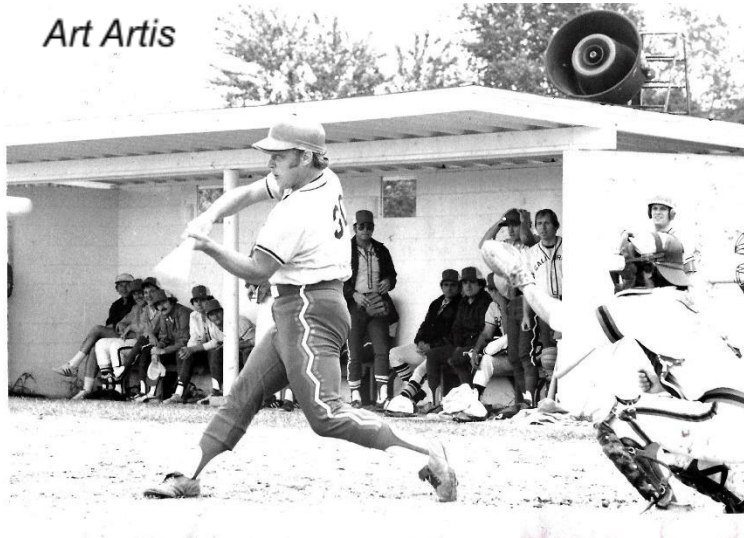
The Brownsville Brownies were section 20 champs in 1954 and fell to section 19 champs Charleroi (16-1) 1-0, in the WPIAL playoffs. Cougars ace hard-throwing Adam Vlanich tossed a four-hitter and recorded 10 strikeouts. On June 7, 1954, Charleroi High lost a heartbreaker to Springdale Dynamos in the WPIAL final, 2-1 at Munhall. Many of those players which included Maury Guttman, Vlanich, Billy Burke, Tom Parks, Mike Shuback, and Carman Cappelli immediately signed on to the sandlot teams like the Merchants and Keystone AA.

Adam Vlanich, a 1954 Charleroi grad, was an outstanding right-handed Cougar pitcher who had a cumulative record of 25 wins and six losses over four years from 1951 to 1954 as a baseball letterman. Upon graduation he won the Leslie Morgan scholar athlete award. Adam played for the Charleroi Merchants from the age of 15 to 25.

Carl "Abbsy" Witmyer was ranked as one of the top pitchers in the WPIAL throughout his scholastic career and American Legion baseball which earned him numerous All-Star accolades. Over his four years as a Cougar the southpaw had a phenomenal cumulative record of 27 wins and four losses spurring Charleroi High to win three section titles. In a 1956 WPIAL playoff game against Brownsville, Witmyer out dueled lefty Paul Redzanic, 2-1. Witmyer allowed two hits and recorded 13 strikeouts, while Redzanic gave up four hits and struck out five. In Witmyer's senior season he made an appearance at the prestigious Hearst *Sun-Telegraph* All Star baseball game at Forbes Field. He joined elite company when he and Myron Pottios received top athlete honors at their 1957 graduation. Carl received a baseball scholarship to Miami of Florida but instead played three years in the Cincinnati Reds baseball organization. His nickname "Abbsy"

was bestowed by fellow athlete and friend Otto Payne from the popular comedy team of Abbott and Costello.

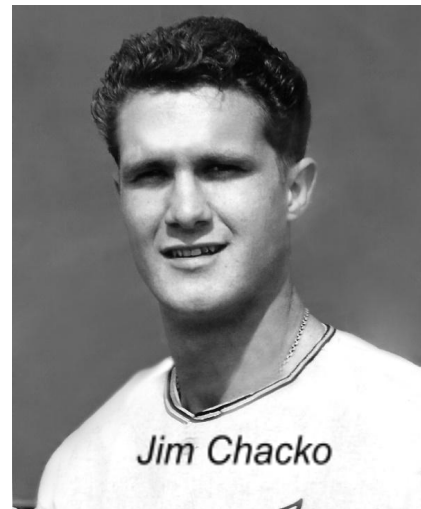
In 1958 Coach Jim Fillingham's Cougars ended in a tie with Donora for the section title with a 6-2 record. The Cougars won the playoff 5-2 to finish as section champions. Some of the memorable players on the team included Tim Lee P-first base, Ron Cosner second base, and Jimmy Chacko center



Art Artis

field. Sportswriter John Bunardzya in *The Charleroi Mail* wrote of Artis, "If anyone deserves to be collared with a floral horseshoe its lefty Art, the Cougars' jack-of-all-trades who pitches, plays first base and patrols the outfield. He is 'Artful Art' on the mound." The Cougars in the playoffs beat Beth-Center 16-1 in the first round behind Art Artis. In the quarter finals Charleroi beat Brownsville 1-0 on a no hitter by Tim Lee. Charleroi lost in the semifinal to Munhall 2-1 and finished 11-3 on the season.

The date April 5, 1958 was a memorable one for Charleroi Cougar fans. Jim Chacko, 5' 11," 175 lbs., hit a towering home run going 430 feet (30 to 50 feet from the left field file pole) at Cougar Stadium off one of the four Elizabeth Forward's pitchers used that day which included Edgar Smart who started and took the loss, Frank Kartaez, Mike Mendicino and Bill Robinson a future Pittsburgh Pirate. That monstrous home run hit over the wall and over the houses and then hit the road (previously known as Shovel Row) and came to a stop by the Lock Fold Box Company's fence across the street from the houses. Chacko recalled, "We won 14-2 and I also contributed another home run inside the park and a triple. Our great



shortstop, Dave Felak, hit a prodigious 410 feet homerun before mine. Dave went on to become a Penn State captain on their baseball team.” In his Sportraits column John Bunardzys pointed out that “because Cougar Stadium, with home plate at the southern end of the field, was known as a pitcher’s ballpark, only four other players – notwithstanding Josh Gibson and his crew -- had ever hit a baseball out of the stadium to left field before Felak and Chacko did it on the same day. They were Pete Bakaitis of CHS in 1945, Ed Kearns of Donora several years earlier, Leon “Pappy” Johnson of Monessen twice in 1947, and Larry Papini of the Charleroi Merchants in an Oldtimers Game in the 1950s.”

*George
Chacko*



George Chacko returned to coach the talented Cougars in 1959. It appeared there was a dispute about playing in the stadium between coaches Rab Currie and Jim Fillingham. Currie, the athletic director, removed all sports but track and football out of Charleroi stadium where the baseball team had played. Coach Fillingham resigned over this. The team finished at 8-2 in Section 16. The

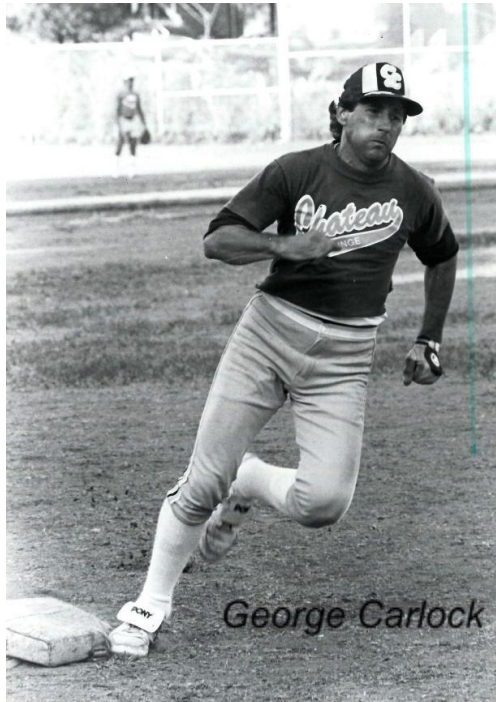
Cougars lost in the last game of the year 7-5 to Donora who became the new section winner. This ended Charleroi’s five-year reign as section champs. 1959 was the first year the Cougars played at the new Veterans Memorial Field or shortened to Vets Field which first opened in 1958 with the Magicians playing there. Players like Chacko and Artis would shine on the Legion and sandlot teams in the summer of 1959. Artis was offered a contract with the Detroit Tigers but he preferred to attend college and became a legend on the Mon Valley sandlot and Legion teams. Chacko received offers from both the Reds and Cubs but accepted a baseball scholarship to Los Angeles State College.

Charleroi baseball in the 1960s fell on hard times with no section titles and losing veteran coach George Chacko on April 8, 1963. He collapsed coaching at third base in the bottom of the third inning at Vets

Field during the season opener against Donora. The ambulance took him to the hospital where he died of a cerebral hemorrhage at age 55. The game continued with Charleroi defeating Donora 6-4.

Coach Chacko was certainly old school in his approach, keeping his players modest in whatever success they had. He had a saying, "Never brag about yourself. If there is any of that let it come from others to say."

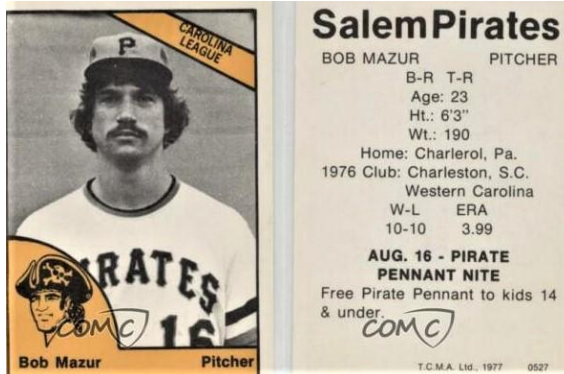
Chacko was succeeded by Neal Corbin who continued as coach through 1964. In 1965 Fran Celaschi entered as head mentor. A 1956 Cougar graduate, Fran was "Toots" Fillingham's right fielder and leadoff hitter when Charleroi was winning section titles. The team for the remainder of the 1960s was undistinguished.



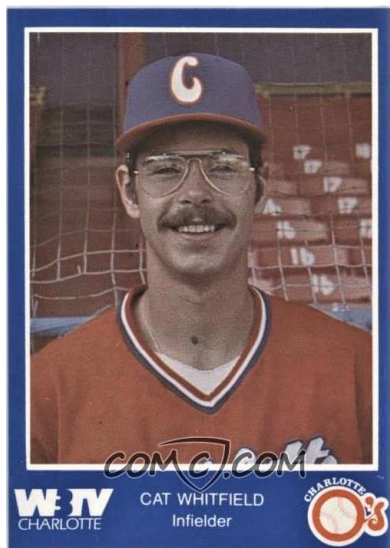
Memorable Cougar players from the early 1960s include MMVASHOF inductee's catcher John Hostetler (2011) and shortstop and pitcher Stan Kemp (2005). George Carlock, 5'10,"155 lbs., was "pound for pound one of the best," thought contemporary player Tom Jenkins. A 1965 Charleroi graduate Carlock was a great all-around athlete. A four-year varsity baseball Cougar, he played left field and was an excellent contact hitter. Later George was memorable for the Mon Valley softball teams he played with distinction. Later 1960s exceptional players included third baseman Don Roberts and center

fielder Mike Kujawski both 1967 grads, shortstop Don Lang a 1966 grad, shortstop Rob Teska a 1968 grad and first baseman Russ Bergstedt a 1969 grad.

Coach Celaschi's Cougars throughout the 1970s saw marked improvement with his



first section title in 1971 with a record of 10-3. The Cougars lost in the first round of the playoffs to Mt. Pleasant 7-6. In a playoff game to determine the section winner in 1972 Charleroi defeated Brownsville, 4-3, with the emergence of pitcher Kent “Teet” Nichols who compiled a 17-1 record during those two title seasons. “I enjoyed pitching during those years because we had position players who were good fielders and knew the game,” recalled Nichols. In 1972 with a record of 13 and 4 and a section title, at first base was Kevin Mollis, second base Billy Henderson, Bob Whitfield who replaced four-year Cougar shortstop Duane “Tat” Coulson, third base Dale Crouch, left field Bob Price, center fielder Bob “Maz” Mazur and right field Mark Sauritch. A four-year varsity Cougar, Mazur, 6’3,” 210 lbs., was a 1972 Pirate ninth-round draft pick with scout Danny Murtaugh doing the honors. Coach Celaschi believed Mazur had the tools for professional baseball. “He has the speed, arm, and size and could be made into a major league hitter with instruction. He hits the ball hard. He’s the best all-around player I’ve coached.” Mazur batted .441 his senior campaign. Ironically, selected as an outfielder, Bobby was moved to the mound after two years of professional ball because his arm was stronger than his bat. Teammate “Teet” Nichols remembered in high school, “Mazur had a cannon of an arm.” A right-handed pitcher, Mazur made it to Shreveport in the Class AA Texas League in 1978 before closing his career. 1973 was an off year for the Cougars going 5-4 in section play but Charleroi rebounded with back-to-back section titles in 1974 and 1975.



Gregarious Bob “Cat” Whitfield, 6’3,” 178 lbs., was a four-year varsity hard-hitting, slick shortstop who contributed to those section titles before graduating in 1974. Whitfield got his “Cat” nickname from high school teammates and more particularly Kent Nichols who thought he resembled the “Cat in the Hat” character out of Dr. Seuss when he appeared as a freshman player. Whitfield would go on to play at Alderson-Broadus College in Philippi, West Virginia and then the Orioles farm system from 1977 to 1983 reaching

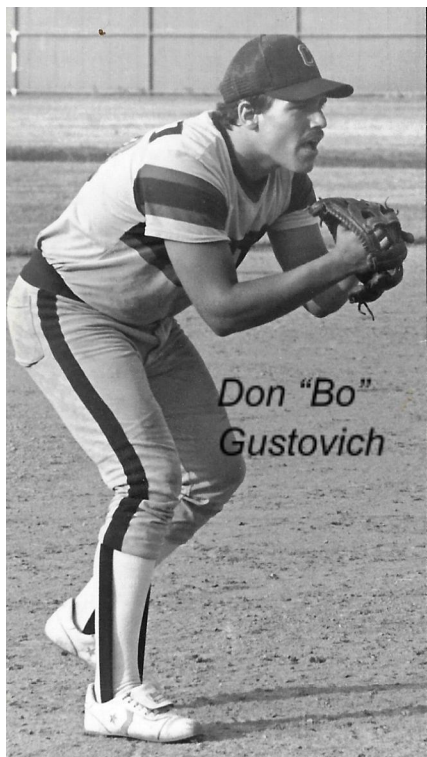
Charlotte Class AA of the Southern League. The modern-day Gehrig “Iron Horse” Cal Ripken Jr. was actually edged out for the starting shortstop position at Charlotte in 1980 by Whitfield. Ripken was placed at third base and Cal recalled, “Whitfield was the better fielder. Whitfield was a very talented player, and he kept the whole team lose.” Ripken and Whitfield manned the left side of the infield together in the 1980 Southern League championship victory.

LHP Mark Deutsch, 6’0,” 170 lbs., a 1974 Charleroi grad helped lead the Cougars to the WPIAL playoffs. Mark would throw a no-hitter against Monessen. After playing college ball at Garrett Community College and at Davis and Elkins, the Chicago Cubs signed Deutsch in 1978 and he made the Rookie All Star team. To conclude the decade Charleroi would win section crowns in 1975 (14-2), 1977 (14-1) and 1978 (12-3) with the emergence of center fielder Dennis Stitch along with pitchers Dan Gustovich and Tom Cunningham.

Dennis Stitch recalled a game between Monessen and Charleroi in the 1978 season that clinched the section title for Charleroi: *One of the most memorable baseball games was in 1978 versus the Monessen Greyhounds played at Veterans Memorial Field in Charleroi. The much-anticipated baseball game was played before a huge crowd on senior day. Tom Cunningham pitched a terrific game and kept Monessen’s hard-hitting lineup off balance. I made two outstanding catches from my center field position. In the last inning with the Greyhounds runners in scoring position, I ran down a ball hit deep in the left center gap for the final out of the game to preserve the win. Cougars win the game 2-1 and are Section Champs. Great excitement from the fans as Charleroi is WPIAL playoff bound!* Stitch would continue playing baseball at the University of Pittsburgh and signed with the Seattle Mariners in 1985.

In the decade of the 1980s Charleroi High School played musical chairs moving up and down in WPIAL class play. Due to enrollment decline the success of the team improved when moved to Class AA play both in 1982 and again in 1986. Charleroi won the section 19 championship in 1982 with a section record of 12-2 behind ace pitcher Tim Cunningham who led the Cougars to the WPIAL finals bowing to Northgate 12-6. In the

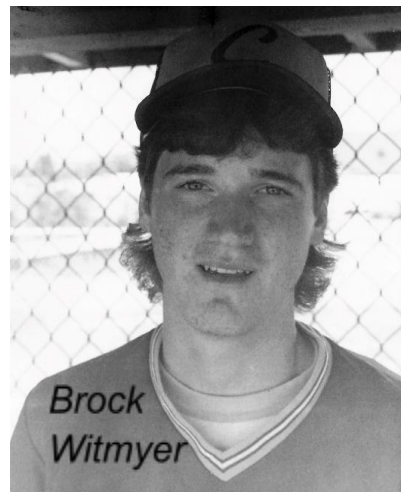
state playoff the Cougars beat Erie East in the first round 6-1 in Erie. Next was Northgate once again in the state quarterfinal and Charleroi lost again 6-3. Other key players included third baseman Don "Bo" Gustovich, left fielder Mickey Carcella, center fielder Phil Jeanmenne, DH Steve Spicak and outfielder Gary Pipik.



Don "Bo" Gustovich, a 1983 Charleroi grad, played third base through numerous venues in Charleroi including the high school Cougars, the Legion, Thorobred League, and the Collegiate League. Brock Witmyer recalled that "Bo" was "a solid athlete who played hard with baseball smarts."

Returning to Class AAA in 1983 the Cougars were not successful again until 1986 with a return to Class AA and a section 19 title with a 12-2 record featuring players which included left-handed pitcher Brock Witmyer, third baseman Brian Vegso, and Gary Pipik in left field. Charleroi would continue as section champs in 1987 and 1988 and as playoff contenders to end the decade.

1986 Charleroi graduate pitcher Brock Witmyer followed in the footsteps of his father Abbsy. Brock performed for the Merchants, Legion, Collegiate League and Charleroi High pitching two no hitters one against Uniontown in 1985 and Bentworth in 1986. In Legion ball Brock would strike out 16 batters in a game against Carmichaels. Brock would earn a baseball scholarship to Southern Florida.



Celaschi's 1987 team won the first round of the playoffs with a 7-3 win over Geibel. Charleroi won the quarter final game against the error prone Fort Cherry Rangers 13-6 and lost in the WPIAL semi-final to Ford City 2-1. Impact players included pitchers Scott

Smith and Rob Huber, center fielder Craig Lee, second baseman Anthony Angotti, third baseman Brian Vegso and shortstop Gary Riley.

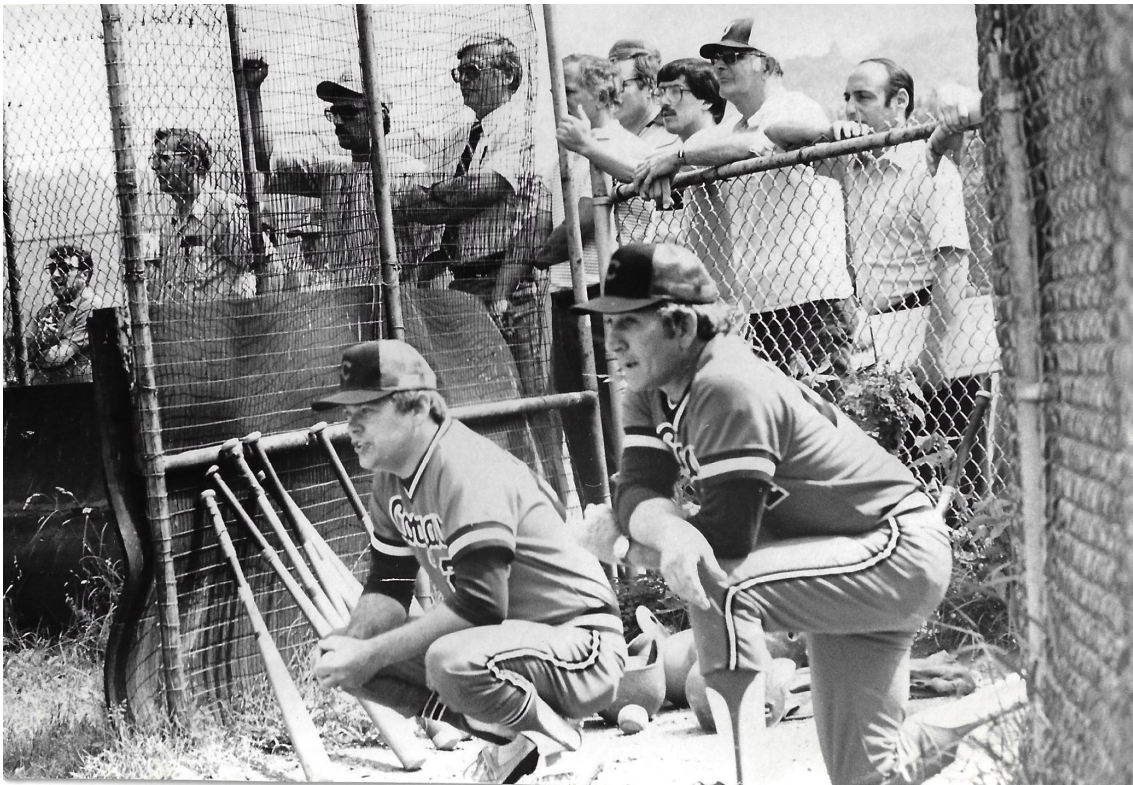


1987 Charleroi High School 13-2 record: bottom row from left John Stewart, Tim Laskey, Craig Lee, Brian Pivovarnik, Eric Vavrick, Mike Dzurinko; middle row Larry Menendez, Tommy Ross, Gary Riley, Sam Donini, Nick Milchovich, Mike Paydo, Mark Simala; back row coach Fran Celaschi, Robbie Huber, Brian Vegso, Scott Smith, Dave Colditz, Mickey Messina, Anthony Angotti, Chris Iddings, manager Jay Mohney

Charleroi won the section title in 1991 with a section record of 14-1, overall, 18-1, after playoffs 20-2. Coach Fran “Cheech” Celaschi would end his career as Charleroi diamond mentor in 1992 with a 27-year career with 11 section titles. He was known for working the “squeeze play” that won many ball games in Celaschi’s 300-plus win career.

Fran “Cheech” Celaschi recently reminisced on his 27-year coaching career. *I was fortunate to have outstanding ball players that came out of Charleroi High School. What a ride that was for me! My source of inspiration came from the competitive nature of the kids. We were able to*

bring back a winning attitude and I was gratified seeing my passion for the game rub off on my charges. My kids didn't fear any team they played from Quad A to Class A because they were determined and understood that success requires sacrifice. One of my good Charleroi friends Joe Santoni and proprietor of the long-gone meeting place Santoni's Restaurant, asked me if I knew what made a good coach. His answer was emphatic - good players. What Joe didn't say was that talented players with bad attitudes don't win. To win as a coach required skilled players with good attitudes. I learned as well through volumes of experiences.



1982 coach Bob Pepper, coach Fran Celaschi, Reid Smith, John Wilkinson, John Kendra, and Brian Herman

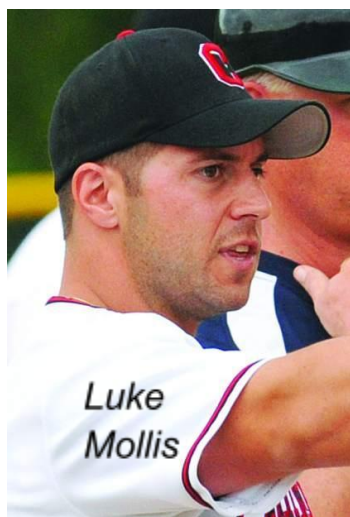
Enter Celaschi's longtime assistant Bruno Pappasergi to lead Cougar baseball through the remainder of the 1990s. Bruno was well trained for the task at hand as he credited his mentor, "Coach Celaschi taught me a lot about baseball and coaching in general." In 1996 the Cougars captured the section 8 Class AA title with a 11- 4 section record and overall going

12-5 with the emergence of catcher Luke Mollis. Charleroi returned to Class AAA baseball in 1997 (7-5) and won the 1998 section 2 title with a 10-2 section record and overall, 14-3 featuring outfielder Jarrod Essay, and pitchers Matt Null and Matt Kurowsky. In 1999 Charleroi returned to Class AA and finished fourth in the section 3-6.

Coach Pappasergi would step down as Charleroi mentor after the 2001 season and his successor was Mon Valley baseball guru Daryl Hixenbaugh who had coached in numerous venues and had a double stint at BVA as head coach from 1987 thru 1994 and later from 2014 to 2019. Hixenbaugh's record for his three years at Charleroi, 2002-2004, was 9-26. Pappasergi returned as head coach in 2005 and brought the team back to a second-place finish with a 9-3 section record. Again, a second-place finish in 2006 with the emergence of players like at third base and shortstop Justin Deutsch. Nathan Helster, a 2007 Charleroi grad, besides playing the infield, did some pitching. He batted .529 with 16 extra base hits and 35 RBI's along with stealing 26 bases his junior year. Coach Pappasergi called Nathan, "a pure baseball nut – who plays hard with strong bat speed and superior knowledge of the game." Nathan was a four-year varsity high school letterman and a 2007 WPIAL All Star, All Section and All District. He also was an integral player with the Charleroi American Legion team and Redd Dawgs in the Fayette County League. Helster was named a 2007 Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame scholar athlete at the June 16, 2007 banquet.



Nate Helster



Charleroi High 1979 graduate Brian Corrin returned to Charleroi as a physical education teacher. He became the head Cougar baseball coach from 2009 through 2012 with a cumulative record of 18-51.

Luke Mollis became the baseball high school head coach in 2013. Mollis, a 1999 Charleroi graduate and former baseball and football standout at the school, had served as an assistant on coach Brian Corrin's staff. Charleroi athletic director Bill Wiltz was thrilled to see Mollis take over the baseball program. "We're happy to have him, we're happy to

have someone of that quality and experience. He's a teacher in our system. He was a great player to come through our program and he was a successful college player as well." Mollis, a middle school physical education teacher, was hired as baseball coach at a salary of \$2,841. Faithful Bruno Pappasergi was hired as his first assistant at a salary of \$2,527. Coach Mollis had a tough first year with a season record of 1-18. In 2016 the team went 11-8 and made third place. As the third-place team in Section 2-AA, the Cougars almost upset top-seeded Neshannock in the first round of the WPIAL playoffs but dropped a heartbreaker, 2-1. In 2018 the team went 11-7 overall and in 2019 overall 7-11. The coronavirus disrupted high school baseball in the 2020 season with no games.

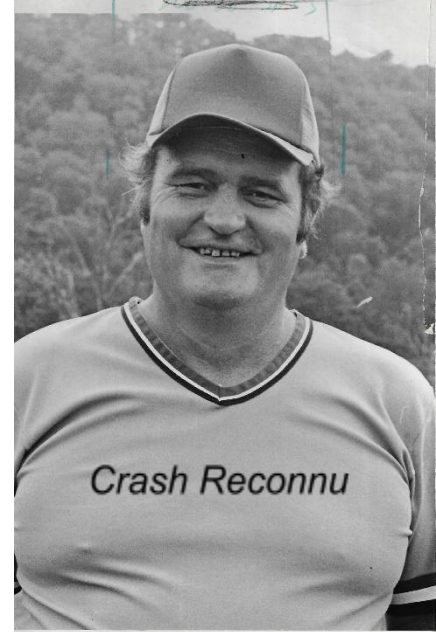


Charleroi Marsh Tire Mavericks (Fayette County Baseball League)

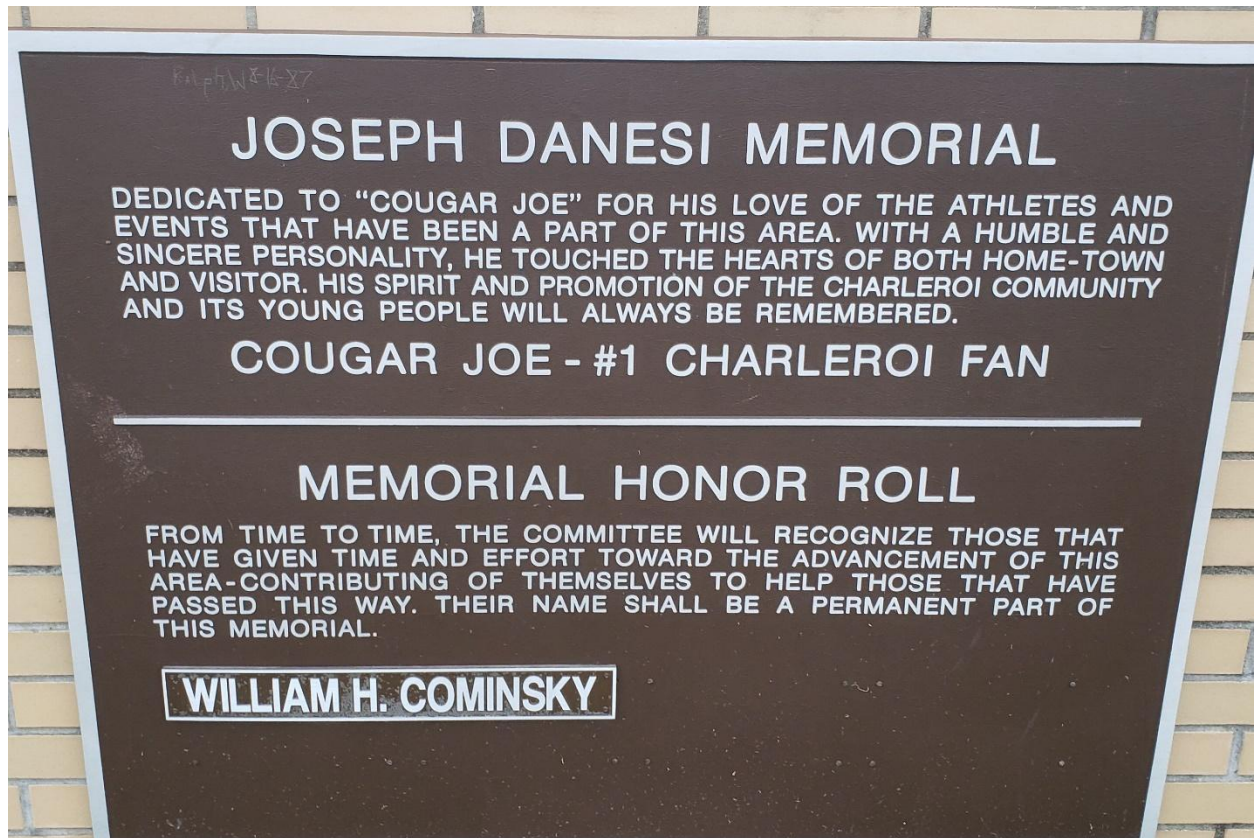
Marsh Tire Mavericks was a member of the Fayette County Baseball League from 1996 through 2002. It was one step up from Legion baseball and was comparable to collegiate league baseball. Don Hartman managed for the first two years with records of 24-2 in 1996 and 8-10 in 1997. A.J. Cooper would lead the group from 1998 through 2001 with a total record of 95-51. Players in 2001 making it to playoffs included Rick Bergstedt, Brian Evans, Mike Peltz, Chris McManus, Chad Ramsden, Luke Mollis, Brett Anselmino and Jarrod Essey. In a game against Belle Vernon-Fayette City, Rick Bergstedt collected 11 RBIs in three innings with a three-run homer in

the fourth inning, two run singles in the fifth and a grand slam in the sixth. The last year was in 2002 managed by Brian Evans with a 10-13-1 record.

Charleroi Thorobred League started in 1979 and ran to 1986 and were known as the Magicians. The age group of these players ranged from 17 to 23. Their first manager was Keith "Crash" Reconnu. He coached two years and won a league title in 1980 (18-7). Daryl Hixenbaugh took over in 1981 with records of (19-6), 1982 (8-16), and in 1983 (19-7) with the team in the Regionals at Vets Field. Hixenbaugh would coach through 1986. In 1987 the team morphed into the Collegiate League. There were two entries in the Collegiate League from Charleroi that included The Magicians and the Merchants.



Charleroi Veterans Memorial Field Dedicated July 4, 1958



Author's notes: This document is not an exhaustive dissemination of the history of Charleroi baseball but a highlight of some of the leagues, teams and players. The first source of information came from the highly regarded Mon Valley newspaper *The Charleroi Mail* (1905-1906) which was incorporated with *The Valley Independent* in 1960. Disruption in newspaper coverage especially in the 1970s due to labor strikes created coverage gaps: August 28, 1970-April 12, 1971; July 12, 1973-December 31, 1974; January 1, 2016-May 1, 2016. Google was especially of value with Charleroi's early 20th century independent minor league baseball teams. But looking for information on a sandlot team called the *Sons of Rest* produced zero results but fortunately we have the notes of 2006 MMVASHOF inductee John "Shell" Shelapinsky. *The Valley Independent* ceased publication on December 15, 2015 and their sports glossy photograph files were fortunately donated to the Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame used in this history. Three "Jacks" of Charleroi baseball, Jack Green, Jack Young, and Jack Fayak, were budding historians as kids

preserving Charleroi baseball scrapbooks and glossy photographs.
Greatest debt to Charleroi native Tom Jenkins for the diligent research he provided.

Suggested readings:

George C. Martinet's *Charleroi – the first 100 years 1890-1990* Charleroi Historical Society 1990

Millennium 2000 Charleroi Honoring Our History by *The Valley Independent*

Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame Biographical Journal by Stephen V. Russell 2002

*Charleroi's Connie Mack of Baseball
John "Mac" McIlvain*



Both Connie Mack (1886-1950) and John "Mac" McIlvain (1899- 1959) had close to seven decades in baseball either as a player, coach or manager. McIlvain had a writeup in the very first Sports Illustrated dated August 16, 1954. "800 games since 1899 John "Scissors" McIlvain at 71 is the oldest consistently active pitcher in baseball. In a Pittsburgh sandlot game he struck out 4 batters while allowing only 6 hits, two earned runs. When not playing ball he is employed as a paper hanger."

Copyright © 2021 Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-578-92707-7

Anyone wishing to include their Charleroi baseball story gems to the ongoing digital version of this book, please send your information to:

midmonvalleysportshalloffame@yahoo.com

Charleroi Baseball Personalities

