

BAINBRIDGE - *The Pointers Who Belonged To Us All*

Written By Rob Hunter

Putnam County, Indiana, is longer than it is broad, a loose collection of farming communities 30 miles west of Indianapolis with Greencastle as its seat of local government. A Monon train approaching from the south would enter Putnam County at Cloverdale and rumble its way north through Putnamville and Greencastle until the engineer spied the Tree of Hope, rising like a sentinel along the main line just north of Brick Chapel. The next community—first in the vastness of the Tipton Till Plain, where the tracks met Big Walnut Creek—was Bainbridge.

In the late fall of 1965, Bainbridge, Indiana was a community of slightly more than 600 Hoosiers, with U.S. 36 as its main thoroughfare. It featured, among other enterprises, a grain elevator, a diner, a barbershop, a grocery store, a gasoline station . . . and a high school. The school's purple-and-gold athletic teams were called the Pointers, after the hunting dog that sniffs out game and points toward it with its nose, often with one front paw raised. Their boys' basketball team—as there were no girls' teams in those pre-Title IX days—were on the verge of something special, but few people besides their young coach knew it.

His first Pointers team had struggled, managing only six wins out of twenty starts. But the Bainbridge B-team emerged as conference champions, and with a few holdovers from the varsity, 24-year-old Pat Rady knew that good times were likely ahead. He doubted, though, that he was experienced enough to do justice to the task, and considered resigning. "But Principal Glen Steetle, Advisory Board members Archie Chadd and trustee Jewell Blue all expressed their confidence in the young coach, as did members of the team." So Rady agreed to stay. "I spent that summer talking to coaches," he recalls. "I talked to coaches who had won the State. I asked them how they got their teams ready for the tournament. Not so much X's and O's, but how they handled their kids." Thus, a foundation had been laid for one of the most successful coaching careers in the state.

What emerged in the next two years was like the proverbial comet streaking across the night

sky. Borrowing the words of an Indianapolis News sportswriter, the Bainbridge Pointers belonged to all of us. Their story included a cast of 16 small high schools that no longer exist, swallowed by consolidation; Bainbridge High School itself, with slightly over 200 students, closed in 1969. But it is also the story of a charmed hoops life in Putnam County, a two-year period when the eye of the basketball hurricane stretched from Bainbridge to Cloverdale, and in 1966 included Fillmore and Greencastle for good measure.

It was a success story, to be sure. But it wasn't an isolated success story. It didn't happen in a vacuum, for success on the court was no stranger to Bainbridge. Today no fewer than five members of the Hall of Fame, including Archie Chadd, have a Bainbridge connection. Ask fans old enough to remember and they will tell you about Jeff Blue, the All-Star who went on to play for Butler University and the Boston Celtics; the 26-0 regional champs team he starred on in 1959 was gleaned from a student body of 146. There were a total of twelve sectional and eleven county tourney champions in the school's history, in addition to a champion of the 1932



Bainbridge made the News!

of the 1932 Wabash Valley Tournament, a mid-season, interstate, two-week playoff with a massive field of teams—125 at its zenith—second only to the state tournament itself. (That particular club played through the grief they felt over the untimely death of a teammate named Lyman Boehr.) The successes sprang from the environment, nourished and encouraged by the citizens of the town and the people of Monroe Township.

Their coaching ranks included not only Pat Rady but also Elbert Allen, L.F. Lonsbury (of the Wabash Valley champions), Frank Pruitt, Dick Cummins, Ed Longfellow (of the unbeaten 1959 regional champs), and Kurt Grass, to name a few. Their fans knew and appreciated heads-up play. In a way that's increasingly rare today, even in the state of Indiana, Bainbridge had a love affair with the game of basketball.

That love came to full flower repeatedly, and it happened again in the late fall of 1965. It was a period captured in grainy black-and-white home movies, a time when neckties were stylishly thin, eyeglasses were either tortoise-shell or black horn-rimmed, and young ladies wore bouffant hairdos, stiff with hairspray. Hair length among the players was still above the ears, crew cuts and flat tops. Telephone party lines were common. The war in Vietnam was escalating, and seniors everywhere wondered how world events would affect them after graduation. But the gymnasiums were packed with fans, friends, and family; the air smelled of sweat and popcorn, and hoop dreams were alive. At game's end Bainbridge fans flocked to the Bon-Ton Diner (where challenger-seeking wrestler Gorgeous George once made an appearance) for hamburgers, chili, and cherry Cokes, then rehashed the action next morning at McCall's Barber Shop, where players got free haircuts—provided the team had won. Like most small schools, the gym at Bainbridge had no balcony. It featured a large, wooden cut-out of Clem, the pointer dog mascot, high along the wall to one side of the stage, where kids sat cross-legged at the edge and the pep band beat out popular tunes while the teams warmed up. It was crowded and loud, even when the home team struggled. ("There was very little parking at the school," former player Jim Hanks remembers, "so people parked on the streets in town. The streets were packed with cars.") But November 1965 ushered in a new season, and the next two years would be very different.

The Pointers posted consecutive records of 23-3 in 1966 and '67. They lost six players to graduation in 1966, twice as many as Milan lost in 1953. And they did more than rebuild. They reloaded. The players were not especially tall—freshman cen-

ter Fred Cox stood tallest at 6'6"—but they were fast and smart. And they were tenacious. In the words of their coach, retired now after 51 seasons coaching at six Indiana high schools, "We started pressing (1-2-1-1, full court) as soon as we got off the bus." The other team either broke the press repeatedly or they did not. Most often they did not.

Take, for example, the 1967 sectional semifinal game versus North Salem, reported by the Greencastle Banner-Graphic: "Larry Steele was the big man in the first quarter for the Pointers as, taking his favorite shot from along the side line, he connected for 12 points.... Ron Rossok, working well under the bucket, chipped in with 9." The press produced an 8-1 lead that became a 27-11 score at the end of the first quarter. Bainbridge won going away, 111-47.

A lot of points, you say? Yes, even by Bainbridge



standards. But their two-year average was slightly over 87 points per game—20 more than the 1959 outfit—with a single game high of 123. If you gave the Pointers an opportunity to score, they usually obliged. But effort was the key for Coach Rady. "I don't look at the score," he says. "I look at the effort. And, boy, you better be giving us some effort." The Pointers seldom let him down. "We always worked harder in practice than we had to in games," Norm Steele remarks. "Coach always said that if we could survive the practice the games would be easy. . . . We were a fast-breaking team and I believe we wore most of our opponents out. Our main offense was fast breaks."

And the North Salem game was typical not only in its frenetic rhythm and prodigious point total, but

also in the level of competition the Pointers faced. "Bainbridge's disadvantage is in not playing a major league schedule," wrote Dale Burgess of the Associated Press in 1959. Like everyone else, it played other small schools nearby, such as Russellville and Roachdale, two archrivals from the northern part of the county and members of the Big Four Conference (which drew its name from the four member counties). Though well-known to bigger schools—it made a believer out of East Chicago's John Baratto, who drove 160 miles to Montezuma to watch the Pointers play a road game in '67—Bainbridge never over-scheduled, even failed to get sectional host Greencastle onto their schedule. "We tried," Rady explains, "but Greencastle would not schedule county teams at that time." Not that it mattered: Bainbridge took a first-round victory (93-71) over the Tiger Cubs in 1966 and the championship game (94-85) the following year. Regular season schedule notwithstanding, they proved eager to play big schools in front of big crowds, and they were destined to do exactly that. Their style, rugged and fast-paced at both ends and buttressed by a deep and dependable bench, made Pointers games a tough ticket. "If you didn't show up ninety minutes early," says former cheerleader Bobbi Canada, "you didn't get a seat." Some without a ticket braved the cold, set up ladders, and took turns watching through the gym windows. Such was Pointer passion.

The 1966 Pointers dropped their regular season tilts with Fillmore (61-69, featuring 6'10" center Wayne Bright) and Cloverdale (76-87) before Christmas in 1965. But they rebounded nicely, taking the Putnam County Tourney with wins over Roachdale (74-56) and Cloverdale (79-73), handing the Clovers their only regular season loss. Young Larry Steele proved himself something of a prophet, predicting both the champion and the margin and winning a ten-dollar contest sponsored by the Banner-Graphic. But the Bainbridge victory created a local quandary: Who should be considered number one in the county? Banner-Graphic sports editor Frank Puckett Jr. ranked them this way: Greencastle (12-2), Bainbridge (14-2), Cloverdale (14-1), Fillmore (11-3), Roachdale (7-7), Russellville (7-7), and Reelsville (5-8). Yes, but what about the rubber game between Bainbridge and Cloverdale? That would have to wait until the sectional, right? Wrong.

Struggling always to maintain tournament balance, the IHSAA assigned the two Putnam County rivals to separate sectionals. Bainbridge was assigned to Greencastle, while Cloverdale—sandwiched between U.S.40 and SR42—went to Brazil. Fine. Then they'd play each other in the regional, right? Not exactly. The winner at Brazil went to Terre Haute; the winner at Greencastle to Covington, the same place the Pointers won their first regional in '59. Semi-state, then? Nope. The Terre Haute winner would go to Evansville, the Covington winner to Lafayette. If Cloverdale and Bainbridge played



"Coach Rady installed in all of us the mindset that we could beat anyone we played. We were always in great physical shape. And he told us, 'Have character, don't be one.' I never forgot that." - Gary Judy, Class of 68



again in 1966 it would be in front of a live television audience at Butler's massive Hinkle Fieldhouse . . . in the state championship game! And this wild scenario came deliciously close to playing out.

A field of eight teams and 3,000 fans packed Greencastle's gym to the rafters in the last week of February 1966. Fillmore, Cascade, Rockville, and North Salem filled out the upper bracket. Roachdale and Russellville drew the third game, and Bainbridge faced tourney host Greencastle in the final game of the first round. Fillmore and Bainbridge advanced to the sectional finals, and on March 3, the Banner-Graphic reported, "Bainbridge Drops Fillmore, 89-75." Fillmore led throughout the first half, but Steele scored 12 of his game-high 25 points in the third quarter to give the Pointers a 66-52 lead heading into the final stanza, and Bainbridge avenged its early season loss to the conference champion Cardinals. For Pat Rady it was a first sectional championship. (Fifty years later Rady's son, Patrick, would coach his first sectional champions . . . at Cloverdale.) Larry Steele and Bill Judy made the All-Sectional first team; Ron Rosok and Larry Canada made the second.

Cloverdale, meanwhile, took the title at Brazil and benefitted from an upset that helped determine the Terre Haute Regional field. Lynn Stephen's fifty-foot buzzer bomb lifted Unionville over tourney host Bloomington, and the following weekend Cloverdale erased Unionville at Terre Haute, 70-62, then coasted to the regional crown there with an 82-65 victory over Shakamak. Meanwhile, at Covington, Bainbridge prevailed handily over Fowler (90-70) then overcame Coal Creek in the fourth quarter (85-74), and for the first time in tournament history a single county had two teams alive at the semistate round. The Indianapolis press went mad for it. "Putnam County's Pride and Joy: 2 In Semis," read the headline of The Indianapolis News sports page on March 13, 1966, with team pictures printed immediately below. The Pointers' next opponent, awaiting them in Game 2 at the Purdue Fieldhouse, was the 7th-ranked Senators of East Chicago Washington, the former state champs coached by the venerable John Baratto. Baratto, as was his habit, already knew something about the downstate team his players were about to face. Or so he thought.

"Baratto sent his assistant, Sammy Esposito, to scout us," Rady recalls. "Esposito went back and Baratto said, 'Is the small school going to hold the ball on us?' And Esposito told him, 'Coach, I don't think so. They're going to run with you.' Baratto said, 'No small school is going to run with us. They're going to hold the ball and we're going to have to try and press them.' And Sammy kept telling him, 'Coach, you'd better not prepare for that. They're going to run with it.'" Bainbridge did, and nearly overran the Senators.

The game followed the now fabled opener between Lebanon and Logansport, in which Rick Mount tallied 45 points and the Tigers roared from behind for a heart-stopping 65-64 victory over the Berries. Then it was Bainbridge's turn, and for B-team cheerleader Carol (Evens) McFarland, the sights and sounds of the Purdue Fieldhouse were

a little overwhelming. "An ominous beat and roar from inside the gym sent chills up our backs and necks," she recalls. "Our first sight was of the East Chicago Washington fan block, rising from the floor almost to the roof. The wall of emotion swayed and cheered to the lead of the 14-member cheer squad. That sight and sound was most intimidating. We knew that we had our work cut out for us that day We were in the big leagues!" And after three quarters of a foul-plagued contest—both Steele and East Chicago's Trifunovich were saddled early—the Pointers found themselves in much the same position Lebanon had, down 61-50. Large segments of the crowd had already departed, but they were sadly premature: Bainbridge outscored Washington 24-17 in the fourth. In the words of Star sportswriter Max Stultz, "Ron Rossok, Bill Judy, and Larry Steele blew up a storm which caught the Senators with their overconfidence showing." The comeback fell short by a final of 78-74, but might have succeeded save for a series of missed free throws down the stretch. Washington led the game in rebounds, 54-48, with Steele, Rossok, and Sutherlin getting 38 of the caroms for Bainbridge. Steele and Rossok were named to the All-Semistate team, and Bainbridge bid farewell to

seniors Dick McFarland, Rich Branham, Bill Judy, Larry Canada, Steve Sutherlin, and Dick Evens.

Cloverdale was luckier, emerging from Evansville with wins over Vincennes Lincoln and North Vernon to secure for themselves a berth in the 1966 State Finals. These days, one can buy a ticket at the door for the Finals—all four of them—but not back then. "If you don't

have a ticket," one newspaperman wrote, "forget it. There aren't any available. All 14,943 ducats are distributed through the schools and there's no doubt that the Fieldhouse will be full for the first time this season." It proved to be the end of the line for the scrappy Clovers, defeated by Indianapolis Tech in the second afternoon game, 57-51.



Coach Rady and former "pointers" with their mascot

The 1966-67 Bainbridge season began with a largely new roster, one that included Larry Steele's younger brother, Norm. "We always started the game with a set play from the first jump ball," Norm remembers. "Ron Rossok, who was our center at 6'2", would 9 times out of 10 control the opening tip. The tip would go to one side of the circle while on the other side a pick was set for a cutting player. The ball would go to the cutting player for a layup. It didn't matter how tall the opposing center was, Ron found a way to get the tip to start the game." The Pointers recorded lopsided wins over Rosedale, Fillmore, and Turkey Run, followed by a one-point loss to Cloverdale. They then ripped off ten consecutive W's—including a holiday tourney championship at Zionsville—before losing again to unbeaten Cloverdale in the Putnam County Tourney. They closed with big wins over Reelsville, North Salem, and Ladoga, and a close win (75-72) against an outstanding Darlington team.

The Pointers easily repeated as sectional champions at Greencastle, recording two games of over 100 points and a third with 94, making them tops in the state for both scoring average and winning margin. Cloverdale was not so lucky, their undefeated season spoiled by tourney host Brazil, 58-63, in the semifinal round of the sectional there.

Assigned this time to the regional field at Frankfort's new Case Arena, Bainbridge promptly thumped New Market, 79-42. Morris Pollard's Speedway Sparkplugs were next, and they posed a special problem: they employed a defense called the "half-court match-up zone." The Pointers had never faced anything like it, and Coach Rady had to admit that he didn't know how to respond. In stepped Joe B. Hall, then a recruiter for the University of Kentucky. On the back of some lineup cards Hall diagrammed a strategy for breaking the zone, and Rady demonstrated it to his team using chairs at the Lincoln Motel. The Pointers caught on at once and left the Sparkplugs behind in the nightcap, 79-71. One sportswriter wrote that Bainbridge "displayed fine scoring balance and sizzling outside shooting in Rossok, Larry Steele and Gary Martin." He added, "Martin scored nine points—most of his fielders coming from deep in the corners to wreck the Speedway zone." Another outstanding performance came from Steele's brother Norm, "only a junior. Norm used his fine moves and explosive speed to score crucial fielders on his way to a 12-point performance." Once more the Pointers had a date at the Purdue Fieldhouse.

The following weekend, while holed up at the Cedar Crest Motel in Lafayette, the Pointers got the following telegram from the Russellville Bees: "CONGRATULATIONS. SEE YOU IN THE [Butler] FIELDHOUSE NEXT WEEK. YOU BETTER BE THERE."

And they very nearly were.

Reporting from Purdue that Saturday, Max Stultz called Larry Steele "probably the best player on the floor all day." The Pointers outran Logansport—the only team to beat top-ranked Michigan City, and the school that in '59 ended Bainbridge's unbeaten streak—71-67, a contest not quite so close until the end. (A friend wrote to Rady that a Logansport radio announcer told his listeners, "Logan has a tiger by the tail!" Of Bainbridge he remarked, "The team is a fast one!") They then faced Marion Crawley's 2nd-ranked Lafayette Jeff Bronchos in the nightcap. For three quarters the game seemed a mismatch, especially in the third, with Jacobson of Jeff connecting on nearly every shot he took from the field. Norm Steele remembers it this way: "Coach Rady had already called a couple of timeouts when he finally pulled the players who started the game and put in all new players. Coach proceeded to point out how we were playing scared and were stinking the place up. I don't remember his exact words, but the message was clear. The guys who went in did a great job of holding their own against Jeff. The starters watched for awhile and returned to the floor and played much better for the rest of the game...." Indeed.

The transformation was immediate and dramatic. In the words of Stultz, the Bronchos uncharacteristically "forgot everything they knew" in a blizzard of 13 press-induced fourth-quarter turnovers. Bob Hamontre of the Putnam County Graphic wrote, "Larry Steele became a human dynamo, racing all over the court, stealing the ball and dropping in buckets from every possible position on the floor. Rossok caught the fever and dropped in a few himself while clearing the boards in his spare time. . . . Every fan in the house yelled himself hoarse." (Crawley remarked later, "We ran our regular patterns, but we just started throwing the ball away. It was the first time all season we hadn't been able to break a press.") Fifty years later, longtime Pointers fan Leon Tippin remarked that Steele's salvo of shots arched and spun through the hoop with a "ker-chunk!" Larry racked up 21 of his game-high 32 in the quarter, and the Pointers erased a 21-point deficit with seven minutes remaining to

pull to within one point, 73-72, with :09 to go. On the ensuing play, Jeff's John Van Kurin met Norm Steele at center court, and Steele executed a slick theft—but not slick enough for the official standing closest to the play. It proved to be a costly whistle . . . and an erroneous one. "With three seconds to go in the game, they called a foul on me," Norm recalls. "This happened right in front of the referee who had a clear view. All I did was reach out and poke the ball away. Nothing but ball." Van Kurin nailed the resulting free throws and Jeff took the contest and the State Finals berth, 75-72. Dick Ham of the Lafayette Journal & Courier called the rally "almost unbelievable." Bainbridge out-rebounded Jeff for the game, 46-41, and shot .361 from the field. But to sportswriter Gary Linn the Pointers were more than just remarkable. They were "a team with class."

The following week Coach Rady and three of the Bainbridge players drove up to Jefferson High School, presenting the victors with a bucking bronco floral tribute and best wishes for success in the finals. Marion Crawley and school officers responded by giving the coach and players a guided tour of the facility and grounds. That Saturday Jeff eluded Willie Long and the Ft. Wayne South Archers, 79-70, then lost the championship nightcap to an Evansville North squad led by Bob Ford, 60-58. It was Marion Crawley's last game as a coach.

Among the Pointers, 1967 was the swan song for seniors Dean Rossok, Ron Rossok (an All-State third team selection), Marvin Price, Gary Martin, Earl Coffman, and Larry Steele. But for Steele, who made the '67 Indiana All-Stars, it was hardly the end of his playing days. After four years playing for Adolph Rupp at the University of Kentucky, Steele was drafted by the Portland Trailblazers—an NBA expansion team at the time—and six years later

played on their 1977 World Championship team. For over 30 years he has been the director of the Larry Steele Basketball Camp in Oregon.

After the '67 Semistate a friend wrote to Pat Rady, "No doubt you will go places in the coaching field, and no doubt you will have plenty of offers. . . ." Rady did get offers and he did go places, his teams amassing 761 wins in a career that spanned six decades and included one trip to the previously elusive Final Four (1991), while coaching at Terre Haute South, where he also served as Athletics Director. He and his wife, Margaret, still live in the city. Both Rady and Steele have been inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

A goodly number of former Pointers players and their families still live within an hour or so of Bainbridge. Many are retired; still more have grandchildren. All remember this golden time of basketball and community with a fondness that has never faded. And 50 years later only two of the players on the

'66 and '67 rosters, Rich Branham and Joe Dozier, are deceased.

Teens who live in or near Bainbridge attend North Putnam High School now, along with their friends from Roachdale, Russellville, and the northern townships. Where the old high school stood is a vacant lot, and the Bon-Ton Diner—though still an eating establishment—carries a different name. McCall's Barber Shop is no more; neither are Monon freight and passenger trains. But the tracks remain hard by the massive grain elevator and the town (pop. 767) is a bustling place of small businesses, still surrounded by farms with livestock and acres of corn and soybeans. The glory years of Pointer athletics are attractively housed in a community center along U.S. 36, still the main drag through town. On a recent day last fall a large number of Bainbridge alumni, former players, and fans gathered at the center to remi-

Sectional and Regional Champs 1959 Bainbridge High School



Front Left: Sarah Bridges, Elizabeth Luther, Robert Gilley, Bill Nicholson, Mike O'Hair, Dick Judy, Janet Austin, Ronnie Skelton, Back Row: Asst. Coach Dick Crawley, Principal Ray Alishouse, Mike Blue, Bill Harshbarger, Jeff Blue, Don Jeffries, Lyle Cooper, Jim Shoaf, Wally Estes, Coach Ed Longfellow

nise and reflect, adding the contemporary touch to an old story worth hearing and re-telling. They are the Pointer Nation, an elite group who remember what the game meant to them and to the community. Listen to what the community had to say.....

"We used to go to all the games, and the gyms were full. They were full! And that was wonderful. Bainbridge has always been my home; I've lived here all my life. And my dad was on the Wabash Valley championship (team) in '32. . . . Bainbridge had the best fans of all. . . . I just appreciated everyone, and I miss the basketball games. They were just wonderful."

— **Patsy (Hanks) McCammack, Class of 1955**

(Author's note: Her father, Gordon Hanks, was an All-Wabash Valley second team selection)

"I can tell you that even though we had a great run here at Bainbridge, and I went on to play at Butler and a short time with the Celtics—and all that was fun and exciting—the most fun time in basketball for me was at Bainbridge. Because it was new, it was the first time. Winning the county tourney, winning the sectional, it was a time like none of us had ever experienced."

— **Jeff Blue, Class of 1960**

"There was just nothing like it, Bainbridge. . . . It was a great experience and a good place to get started and it really piqued my interest in coaching and teaching. I stayed with it for 47 years in the classroom."

—**Dick Crawley, Assistant Coach in 1959**

"My experience with Indiana high school basketball was inspiring. Its lessons have kept me young all my life. I played for Bainbridge High School in the 1960's. As a senior I played for Pat Rady in his second year there, 1965-66. The work ethic he taught us carried us to the Sweet 16 that year, and has served me well throughout the ensuing 50-some years. I teach high school science today in Chesapeake, Virginia, and I still play the game. A teammate of mine, Larry Steele, once said, 'I just love to play basketball!' Well, . . . me too!"

— **Steve Sutherlin, Class of 1966**

"In Coach Rady's basketball practices, we were drilled to run sprints until our tongues hung out. We were well prepared for his up-tempo game!"

—**Dick McFarland, Class of 1966**

"My experiences as a player at Bainbridge High School during 1963-67 will never be forgotten. Those memorable years under Coach Rady helped inspire me to become a teacher and basketball coach. Coach Rady helped mold me into the person I am today and was instrumental in developing my philosophy of coaching."

— **Gary "Gus" Martin, Class of 1967**

"Pat and I didn't know, but we soon learned, that we had a special group of athletes, cheerleaders, and students at Bainbridge. They were loyal to each other and Bainbridge and have patterned their lives caring for each other. The two trips to the semistate was a rare accomplishment for a school the size of Bainbridge. I am sure my limited success as a teacher and coach was due to the standards set by Pat Rady, and the success we experienced at such an early period in our careers."

— **Assistant Coach Jim Sharp**

"I lived one block from the school. When I was nine my father put up a basketball goal in the driveway. (He died of cancer the following year.) So if practice was not right after school, the players would come to my house instead of going home and coming back. Mom would feed them and they would stay and watch TV, or go out and play basketball on my court. She loved it when they came to the house. Basketball at Bainbridge brought the community together. It was more than a game. As players we learned from Coach Rady that there's a right way and a wrong way to live our lives."

— Jim Hanks, Class of 1968

"Coach Rady installed in all of us the mindset that we could beat anyone we played. We were always in great physical shape. And he told us, 'Have character, don't be one.' I never forgot that."

— Gary Judy, Class of 1968

"The spirit was like nothing I'd ever seen. It was a privilege to be a cheerleader at Bainbridge High School because we had such a great following. We always knew we were little, . . . but mighty!"

— Bobbi (O'Hair) Canada, Class of 1966

"That '65-66 basketball season was so incredibly exciting for all of us—the twenty-three wins, the outpouring of our Bainbridge school and community spirit that built over the season, celebrating tournament championships, building lifelong bonds with teammates and coaches! The day of our trip to the Lafayette Semi-state was especially memorable—meeting early at our school to load up and arrange what was a seemingly endless caravan of cars filled with dedicated supporters, all hurriedly organized by our cheerleaders, and the 50-mile trek to Lambert Fieldhouse led by our own State Trooper John Danberry! The excitement and electricity in the packed fieldhouse that day was awesome, and the anticipation of waiting to play the second afternoon game was almost overwhelming. It was devastating to lose with such a close final score to East Chicago Washington—we weren't ready for our season, our high school careers as Seniors, to end. We wanted it so badly for Bainbridge and our many loyal supporters, for it all to be over felt surreal. Memories from the season and that day seem like they were only yesterday."

— Larry Canada, Class of 1966

(Author's note: Roachdale looked after Bainbridge's fire and law enforcement needs during the Lafayette Semistate.)

"Bainbridge basketball in '65-66 and '66-67 was a story about love, but the story did not start with us. We just enhanced it. All of the young men (boys) were inspired in some way from the great basketball history of this community. For all of us it started at least from a team standpoint in the 5th through 8th grades, and our coach was the shop teacher, Mr. Noel Nicholson. In high school Coach Rady and Coach Sharp brought their love of basketball to this group of boys along with the guidance and freedom to run, jump, and play the game the way that brought out the best in us. The game really only asked us to make one of two choices, either love or fear. We did not fear any team. But we loved basketball. If you love deep enough and long enough, amazing things happen. Bainbridge basketball was a great love story!"

— Larry Steele, Class of 1967

"Being a Bainbridge Pointer was the best four years of my life, and I later played at Lindsey Wilson College in Kentucky, thanks in part to Coach Rady. (Later there was a place for me on the All-Army Team, after touring Vietnam, traveling to different countries and playing there.) But as for Bainbridge, we had the greatest fans there ever was; our cheerleaders were tops, and anywhere we went they led the way. Most of all, I owe it to the coaching staff of Mr. Rady and Mr. Sharp. I simply can't thank them enough."

— Ron Rossok, Class of 1967

"I didn't come to Bainbridge until my sophomore year. When I found out we were moving to Bainbridge, . . . I was telling some of my (Morristown) classmates— and we're talking about freshman girls here—when these girls found out I was moving to Bainbridge they said, 'Oh, my goodness! Jeff Blue went there! He plays for Butler!'"

— Darlene (Buzzard) Bee, Class of 1966

“Pep sessions were thunderous with excitement in our small gym. Downtown merchants decorated storefront windows. We felt prepared for any opponent with the entire school and community behind the BHS team!”

— Carol (Evens) McFarland, Class of 1969

“We were all friends. We weren’t just classmates, we were friends. But to play on three county championship teams and everything, . . . It was the time of my life.”

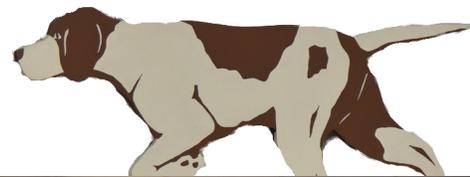
— Bill Rossok, Class of 1964

And what a time it was. Thank you, Bainbridge.

(Rob Hunter wishes to extend special thanks to Pat S. Rady, Melanie Hunter, and Jerry Sutherlin for their efforts in making this article possible.)



1967 Bainbridge Team
 L/R Back row: Steve Miller, Coach Jim Sharp, Earl Coffman, Fred Cox, Norm Steele, Gary Judy, Larry Steele, Ron Rossok, Jim Hanks, Coach Pat Rady,
 Kneeling: Russ Evans, Gary Martin, Gary Richard, Marvin Price, Dean Rossok, Mike Miller, Roger Ader, Cheerleaders: Vicki (Judy) Steele, Debbie (Summers) Treadway, Sally (Scobee)Coffman, Carol (Evens) McFarland



“Clem” the Pointer Mascot

Brainbridge Hysteria!

