

## **SPECIAL EDITION**

# The Lee County Legend

K E E P I N G   T H E   M E M O R I E S   A L I V E

## *A Salute To St. Charles*

Lee County has a tremendous sports history. The schools, players, coaches and communities have made a lasting impression on the sports community. With The Lee County Legend we are telling the story of this rich history.

We cannot think of a better place to begin than with the St. Charles community. The coming together of our publication and the St. Charles High reunion is a perfect match. And the St. Charles sports history is as fascinating as you will find.

The stories of good players and good teams are plentiful. Coalfield baseball had good footing in St. Charles as did high school baseball. Football and basketball have great stories, too. Obviously, volumes could be written about St. Charles sports. We couldn't write it all here, but we certainly want to begin.

To tell this story we will need to consider several things. St. Charles has always been such a close knit community of hardworking people. The schools, the teams, the athletes and the coaches were always the center of attention for their fiercely loyal fans. We want to tell of this reputation of community spirit. We want to highlight great athletes, outstanding teams and special events as we capture the history of sports.

The Lee County Legend salutes you, St. Charles, as we begin to tell your story in this special edition.

### **DEDICATION**

*This publication is the realization of a dream. I could not begin without remembering three special people who walked the halls of St. Charles High School. God's placement of these St. Charles people in my life proves His goodness. I dedicate this issue of The Lee County Legend to my Mom, Marjorie McElyea Audia (1922-1995), class of 1940; my 88 year old Dad, Samuel Audia, class of 1941; and my wife, Jane Doss Audia (1948-2008), class of 1966.*

*Dave Audia Publisher*



## I REMEMBER ST. CHARLES

By Dave Audia

I love playing ball. I remember St. Charles being a huge part of that emotion for playing.

Born in 1947, my first school was the one-room V.I.C. Elementary. Playing marbles was not my game. I became pretty good at catching "minners and crawdads" in the creek. A year later, the school closed and we went to Monarch Elementary. I saw softball games there, but was afraid to play with older kids.

In 1956 we moved to Bonny Blue. I rode the bus to St. Charles Elementary for the 5th, 6th and 7th grades. My love for sports exploded into a need to compete. St. Charles teams lit that fire in me.

In football I saw a St. Charles team of just a few players take the field against the multitudes from East Stone Gap and Gate City. I looked up to Norman Cody, Nolan Carter, Googie Wallen, Cecil Cochran, Howard Dotson, Fred Irwin and others. Seeing them in muddy, sweaty uniforms, listening to every word from the coaches made me want to play with them.

In basketball, walking home to Bonny Blue in the dark, after a St. Charles game, gave my brother, Louis, and me time to replay the game. I wanted to shoot layups like Cecil Cochran. He lived up the road from us, on "Big Dude Hill". Louis and I loved how Tony Rogers could rebound and how Norman Cody could score. Tony lived by us, just across the road from Dr. Gabriel. We got Dad to help us put up a goal on the old Bonnie Blue "Y" building. We played there, hoping that our heroes, Cecil and Tony, would stop by to shoot with us. I don't remember if they ever did, but I still dream about those days.

In baseball, I remember sitting in the old grandstands, watching the St. Charles High boys play. I sat motionless and in complete awe when Frank Scott pitched. The catcher's mitt seemed to be smoking as the batters swung and missed. The team was good and Frank was the best. When he signed a professional contract with St. Louis, Frank set a standard for us all. Frank, wanting to play like you made me better.

Today, at age 64, I still want to play. I think back to recess and lunch. Taking an old worn basketball across the road on a dead run, through the opening to the ball field, then to the goal just past the old grandstands was all I needed to be happy. The 1956-59 St. Charles High teams influenced my lifetime.

## GETTING WHAT WE GOT

By Dave Audia

Being from up the V. I. C. holler, we didn't exactly have everything we wanted to become good ball players. Like you, probably, me and my bother, Louis, didn't always have gloves, balls, bats or uniforms nor even a level place to play.

Not thinking of being needy, we just got all we could from what we had. First of all, we got to play with kids just like us. Shoot, having to play baseball occasionally without a glove just made you and me and Louis tougher and better.

Every once in a while we got to see games in town with real players in red uniforms with shiny bats and white baseballs. Watching players like Cowboy, Hershel, Pee Wee, Spot and Lefty filled our heads full of ideas and dreams. It gave us something to practice for when we got back up the holler.

Me and Louis and you got lots of other help in becoming athletic. We got stronger by bringing in the coal. You've been there. A 65 pound youth trying to carry two 20 or 25 pound coal buckets at a time will make you strong or break your back.

We learned to throw accurately by delivering the Knoxville News Sentinel throughout Bonny Blue. Hey, one miss and Mr. Gilbert's paper would be in the creek. Then I would be up the creek.

We learned balance by walking from V. I. C. to Monarch Elementary on the rails of the railroad track. And, by trying to slide down a slate dump in Bonny Blue while standing on a piece of cardboard.

We built endurance daily as Mom would holler, "Get out from under my feet". We would roam the mountains around V.I.C., Benedict and Bonny Blue looking for critters and snakes.

We learned to handle adversity. As soon as I lost all my marbles at V.I.C. Elementary, I went to the creek to catch "crawdads and minners".

And last, but not least, me and Louis built our speed with two kinds of sprints that you will understand. The "lunch time" sprint and the "outhouse" sprint were two races where you never wanted to finish second.



# YOU MIGHT BE FROM ST. CHARLES IF....

1. You have played with a football made from a stack of cups left from last Friday night's game.
2. You know Mrs. Smalley's connection with major league baseball.
3. You have been run over by Googie Wallen on the baseball field.
4. You know who Ida and Ada are.
5. You know the name of the hillside where people sat to watch the game for free.
6. You know the name of Doc Gabriel's dog. How about his goat? His monkey?
7. You know about Dead Man's Bridge.
8. You know why there were two sets of flags on the baseball field fence.
9. You know the Monarch Esso station attendant who signed a professional baseball contract.
10. You know the names of St. Charles sports legends: Lefty, Cowboy, Hack, Sluggo, Winky, and Satch.



**Coaches of Character**  
 Don Williams (L) and Charley James (R)

These two coaches represent a great line of St. Charles High School coaches. Coach Williams and Coach James coached many great wins and seasons. Their ability to coach through "thick and thin" is what established their reputations. They coached kids to be better and in doing so, made positive impacts on the lives of hundreds. By coaching with character, they became "Characters" that we will always remember with fondness and respect!!

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**INTERESTING!!!**

\*

Hack Pope, Captain of the St. Charles high football team in the 1930's, was a baseball slugger for the St. Charles Miners. Hack hit one of the longest home runs ever at St. Charles. His blast in the early 40's cleared the fence and the river in dead center field. (More on Hack in a later issue).

\*

**AND!!**

Up until I was in High School, for me. "America, My Country" was strictly a Lee County song. Here's how I thought of and sang the lyrics:

My country—'tis of thee,  
 Sweet Land of Liberty, *of V. I. C.*  
 Land where my fathers died.....

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# Memories

*Nothing gives a community more identity than sports. You will not be long into a conversation about St. Charles before the topic will turn to sports. Let's look a few St. Charles highlights and the colorful styles of writing over the years.*

## POWELL VALLEY NEWS MAY 19, 1932

St. Charles defeated Pennington in a close and exciting game Sunday at St. Charles, 6-5. There seems to be a bumper crop of left handed pitchers this season. Pennington and St. Charles were well represented in the pitcher's box by Kelly and Scott, both of them being great big men from the south side.

The game from the first to the ninth inning was like a drunk man going down the street, first to one side and then the other.

There's no doubt but what this was the most thrilling and interesting game played in the league this season. One man was seen trying to drink his cigar and at the same time try to take a puff of smoke from his coca cola bottle.

Both teams were well represented by fans.

	R	H	E
St. Charles	6	9	1
Pennington	5	10	4

The game closed when Scott struck out V. Payne with two men on bases.

## POWELL VALLEY NEWS DECEMBER 1964

St. Charles played on an unfriendly court Friday night but overcame the handicap to win over Nickelsville 37-33. Despite the unruly fans and players the Midgets fought hard and took advantage of the technical fouls and held on to the lead to add to their winning total. They now have an 8-2 record.

Tom England was the point getter for the Midgets with 14, Winky Cody had 8.

St. Charles —Kirk 6, Jessee 4, Cody 8, Hendricks 5, England 14.

Nickelsville—Bond 13, Salyers 7, Fields 4, Minton 2, Burke 5. Subs—Meade 1, Gilmer 1.

St. Charles	8	11	7	11	—37
Nickelsville	5	7	15	6	—33

## St. Charles Defeats Honaker 26-0

### POWELL VALLEY NEWS OCTOBER 22, 1942

The battling St. Charles Midgets got into the win column for their first foot ball victory of the year, they trampled the husky Honaker High School eleven by the score of 26 to 0.

The game was played on about even terms the first quarter. In the second quarter St. Charles drove down to Honaker's seven yard line where Pearl Honeycutt dived through the line for the necessary distance for St. Charles first touchdown. Gene Ely carried the ball over for the extra point, putting the locals out ahead 7 to 0.

In the third period Honeycutt threw Ely a long pass from St. Charles 30, Ely taking it on Honaker's 40, racing for a touchdown. An attempt to convert the extra point failed.

In the fourth period, Honeycutt took a punt and ran it back from Honaker's 40 for a touchdown. A pass for the extra point was good. Later in the fourth period, Earl Maness intercepted a Honaker pass and raced for 64 yards for St. Charles' fourth marker of the day, thus ending the scoring 26 to 0 for St. Charles.

### POWELL VALLEY NEWS JANUARY 1970

Don Williams' St. Charles Midgets broke another record or so the other night on their own court when they broke the one hundred mark while playing Fort Ridge, Tennessee. The Midgets continued with the hot hand even after the coach had cleared the bench.

On Tuesday night the feud between the brothers Williams continued on the Jonesville court with the older brother coming out on top. Here, too, some kind of record must have been broken. During the first quarter St. Charles scored one point and the Bulldogs got five. After that the tempo increased and when the final whistle blew, the score was 42-37 with St. Charles the winner.

## St. Charles Wins From Pennington

POWELL VALLEY NEWS JUNE 22, 1923

Pennington was defeated on the local grounds Saturday in an eleven inning contest which proved to be one of the fastest and most exciting games ever witnessed by local fans. Pennington started a hitting rally in the first; Boren singled, Herndon sacrificed; Stillman's terrific drive across the creek in left and B. Young's triple to right center netted 2 runs.

Another hitting rally started in the third when Hall led off with a double and scored on Boren's line drive to center field. After this it looked like anybody's ball game until the eleventh inning when St. Charles put two runs in.

The feature of the game was the heavy hitting of Stillman and K. Wax and the pitching of Skaggs and J. Young.

St. Charles						
PLAYERS	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Thompson 1b	6	0	1	8	0	0
C. Wax ss	6	0	2	1	2	0
Pierce 2b	6	2	2	3	2	0
Grubb rf	5	0	1	0	1	0
B. Green cf	6	1	1	2	0	2
Mahan lf	6	2	2	0	0	0
K. Wax 3b	6	0	3	1	3	0
W. Green c	6	0	2	0	0	0
* Waters p	1	0	0	0	0	0
J. Young p	3	0	1	0	0	0
Total	51	5	15	15	8	2
Pennington						
PLAYERS	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
Boren c	6	1	2	2	0	2
Herndon 2b	6	0	2	2	3	2
Stillman 1b	6	1	3	12	1	1
Zion ss	6	0	0	1	4	1
B. Young lf	2	0	2	0	0	0
Smalley cf	5	0	1	1	0	1
Keith 3b	4	0	1	1	3	1
X Hall rf	3	1	0	0	0	0
Sewell rf	2	0	1	0	0	0
Skaggs p	5	0	0	0	0	0
Total	48	3	12	20	10	8

\* Waters, unable to cope with Pennington's batting barrage called for help in the third and J. Young took the mound for the visitors.

X Hall was lifted in the 8th and replaced by Sewell who finished the game in right field.

NOTE: The summary of this game is omitted on account of lack of space due to an unusual run of advertising.

## St. Charles Baseball Champs Start Summer Vacations

POWELL VALLEY NEWS JUNE 15, 1950

Harry Fry's St. Charles High School baseball titleist of the Lee County Conference and District 8 of Virginia started on their summer vacations this week after completing two hectic weeks of baseball play and graduation.

The St. Charles Midget Clan, who rambled through the baseball season undefeated, opened the first week of June by winning the Lee County Conference Title over Pennington High then followed by making it full measure by defeating the undefeated Appalachia Bulldogs 5 to 3 at Leeman Field for the District 8 crown.

Fry loses only four of his first stringers by graduation, which leaves him lots of optimism for next year.

St. Charles put five runs across on five hits, three walks, four hit batsmen, and three Bulldog errors while holding the Bulldogs to three runs and six hits. Appalachia got a run in the eighth when they threatened to blow the game apart with a big inning, but St. Charles clipped the rally and went on to add a run in their end of the inning.

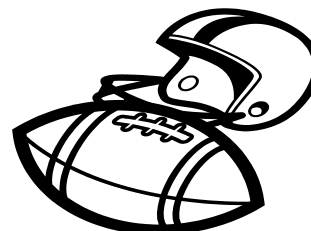
Gamble went all the way for the Bulldogs and threw excellent baseball but wildness and some sloppy fielding gave the Lee County champs the margin of the win. St. Charles scored a run in the first frame, added three in the third on three hits, a hit batsman, and a three base error and added another run in the eighth inning on a hit, a walk, a long fly ball and a two base boot.

POWELL VALLEY NEWS OCTOBER 6, 1955

The St. Charles Midgets copped their first District Eight Conference win last Friday night when they took Ervington for a final tally of 7-2 on their home field.

With a first quarter touchdown the Midgets were threatened by Ervington all through the game, but came out with a 7-2 win over the visitors.

St. Charles scored from four yards out in the first quarter, with Neal Beagle scoring. Bernard Young added the extra point, giving the Midgets a 7-0 scoring margin through the first half. Midway of the third quarter Ervington scored a safety on a bad center which went out of the end zone. Though threatening to score all during the game Ervington could not capitalize.





*Gone But Not Forgotten...*



*The High School*

*The Lee County Legend*  
317 Joslyn Avenue  
Pennington Gap, VA 24277

TO:

**KEEPING THE MEMORIES ALIVE**