

# TC football legends honor Waldo Keating

By Jacquie Thomas  
Herald Editor

It was the 'Good ol' boys', roasting and toasting one of their own.

When the fledgling chapter of the TC Football Club met last week it was for tall tales and comradery-the kind that can only be had by multi-generations of men sharing a common bond-football; Traverse City football; 100 years of Traverse City football.

It was also to pay tribute to one of their own, one whose life's threads wove throughout the history of football in the region: Muskegon Catholic, Petoskey, Traverse City Central High School, St. Francis High School and Traverse City West Senior High School.

It was about Waldo Keating, as only his comrades could share.

"100 years of football in TC-seemed like alot when I heard it, but I've been here for 33 of those years," began John Sonneman, Athletic Director of Traverse City Central High School.

"I started out by carrying chains until Irv Menza got me by the neck and told me I was going to announce and I've been doing it every since. I appreciate him finding a job for me that I've been able to enjoy so much for so long."

"What we've said around the office for so long is 'Where's Waldo??', especially since he left us a couple of months ago when he went over to TC West to get it started."

"When he retired, we immediately recruited him into the athletic office to be my colleague. I feel very fortunate for all of this time to have also called him my friend. He is one of the most caring and most calm individuals I know," continued Sonneman.

"Another thing I need to mention is his thoroughness. If it were not for Waldo, West High School would not have the facilities, equipment and staff that they have. I couldn't run two high schools, so Waldo took over and made it happen-he made sure it had the equipment, he made sure it had the facilities, he made sure it had the coaches, he made sure that athletics at West Senior High happened. When can we have Waldo back in our office?"

Pat Wilson, local attorney, long time football enthusiast and Master of Ceremonies for the evening spliced in a few memories and comments of his own throughout the evening.

"I was trying to hold together the shared time program at St. Francis and TCAPS, and Waldo was the link that made that happen. Why we have such good relations today between TCAPS and GTACS is people like Waldo who value scholarship and athletics."

Budd Tompkins, currently on the coaching staff for the Central Trojans added some Waldo comments as well as an update on the 1998 Trojan team.

"I really don't know why I'm here honoring Waldo-why any of us are here honoring Waldo," began Tompkins. " 'Cause the sucker played at Petoskey and beat us 1947-48. He played for Petoskey High School and was rather rude to the Trojans."

"Then he goes down to Muskegon and he's rude to the Trojans again and now were honoring him at a dinner? I don't know."

"Talking about this year-those of you who are Trojan supporters-this year's version of the Trojans is a decent football team. One never knows how or for sure but there are a few things I do know for sure-they are a terrific bunch of kids and the person in charge of them is doing a great job. If you had a son or grandson on the team this year-you'd be very proud that he is there."

"There are some terrific things being done and I think there is going to be some good football. There are some young guys this year, for example, in key positions-I tried to remember when the last time a freshman started for the Traverse City Trojans and as far as I can remember, it was Eric Sleder in 1928-well, we have a freshman starting, we have sophomores starting and we have some juniors starting-we are a young ball club with some fantastic kids. I think they are going to give you a good show-in fact I know they are going to give you a good show. I do not know what the scores will be , but I know you'll be proud of the Trojans."

He then switched to the topic of the book being put together by former Trojan Coach and Athletic Director Jim Ooley to be used as a fund raiser to benefit Between the Fences. "If you have stories and pictures of football-get them to Jim (Ooley) so we can get them all in this book-it's going to be a dandy."

"Another thing is that old brick building at Thirlby (Field). It has to be preserved for the three schools to have as a football hall of fame with trophies, pictures and old uniforms. It can be opened before the game and at half time for people to go through it-a perfect project for the old, original field house."

Pat Wilson added some comments on the subject of the field renovations. "Harry Running, my partner, left \$750,000 so that Thirlby Field would be completed. It is beautiful but there is a lot of work still to be done and this is the kind of group to get behind the project and provide some motivation."

"I feel a little angel up there telling me 'Hey, Wilson, you were supposed to make sure the money was in place before you spent my money on that field. We don't want it to be so- so-we want it to be, and it can be spectacular."

Mark Spencer, former Trojan who went on to be "All Everything" at Hope College concurred with Wilson. "We at Between the Fences would like to finish by the spring of 2000."

"We need another \$250,000 to do it right and that's the way we want to do it-for all three schools to enjoy."

Matt Prisk, Head Coach for the new TC West Titans had nothing but the best for Waldo. "If it wasn't for Coach Ooley and Waldo, I wouldn't be here today. To lose your job 2 weeks after you get it-well-that was an interesting experience. But Waldo made sure it all happened."

"I have an awful lot of respect for Waldo and for the legends that have been established in Traverse City athletics. We plan to carry out the great football traditions that have been started."

Next on the podium was Ken May, current head coach for the Trojan football team. "Waldo's been my principal, and Assistant Athletic Director for years. He always gets the job done."

Larry Sellers shared the most history with Waldo Keating. From his student days at Muskegon Catholic Central where Waldo was his biology teacher, JV football coach and baseball coach to his invitation to take the helm as varsity football coach at St. Francis High School, his career and life have been intertwined with Waldo's.

"When I took over as varsity coach he said, 'Sels, I give you 3 years.' Well, Waldo, I've been here 25 years!"

"At St. Francis we have the Gladiator award that stands for character, compassion and commitment-that's Waldo Keating. He's top notch. I call him 'Peppy' and I love him to death."

Ken Knudsen, former St. Francis football great and now a GTACS principal paid tribute as well, comparing him with his dad.

"Waldo Keating is loyal; he always kept his promise; he could point out the obvious without putting down the players and he made us feel special. We always knew he believed in us."

Last on the stage was Coach Jim Ooley who laid out future plans for the TC Football Club. Of the book to document the heritage of a century of good football, of a scholarship fund to provide a scholarship for an athlete at each of the three high schools and of fundraising to finish Thirlby Field. The next event will be a tailgate to be held at Thirlby during the double header football night Friday with Central playing at 5:00 and West playing at 8:00. Any one who has played or is playing football should plan to attend and be on the field for a special tribute during the game. For more information, call Jim Ooley at 946-4386.