



The Scribe

April 2021

Palmerton Area Historical Society
www.palmertonhistorical.org

knee-deep in history

Palmerton – Home of Sports Legends *Heritage Center Displays Local Heroes*

Palmerton lore says that Jack Kelly - father of Princess Grace Kelly of Monaco – introduced basketball into Palmerton a century ago while he was contracted for the brickwork on the NJZ administration building.

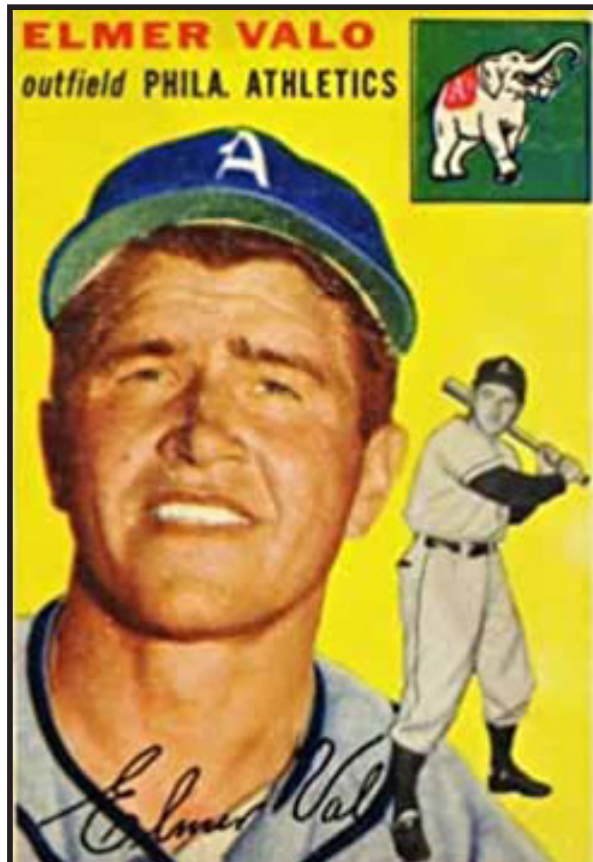
The connection to Palmerton was enhanced when Jack went on to win the 1920 Olympic rowing gold medal in the single sculls. This was even more noteworthy since Jack had earlier been denied entrance into the prestigious Henley regatta in England because he was a common “labourer.”

True or not, Palmerton has a reputation for producing outstanding athletes in basketball and other sports. The newly renovated Heritage Center at 410 Delaware Avenue now features a rotating display of those who have honored the community through the years with their athletic achievements. Space limitations in *The*

Scribe do not permit each to be mentioned, but the following four are highlighted for their prominence on the national scene.

Elmer Valo

Born in Slovakia in 1921 and raised in Palmerton, Elmer Valo became a prominent major league baseball player. He was signed by the Philadelphia Athletics in 1940 and went on to play 1,806 games with six teams over a career that spanned twenty years. His lifetime batting average of .282 is a borderline Hall of Fame credential – especially today when a player with a .250 batting average will command a salary in the millions of dollars. By comparison, Elmer signed for \$1,800 in 1940 and his best year was 1958 when he earned \$19,500.



Elmer Valo – A true Major League star

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Palmerton Area Historical Society

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Happy Birthday Mary! *Palmerton Artist Turns 100!*

On April 19th Mary Kocher celebrates her 100th birthday.

For the better part of her lifetime, she has captured the beauty of Palmerton and the surrounding communities and she has graciously shared her talent with numerous students who have desired to express themselves through art.

Feel free to share your best wishes with Mary!



Have You Renewed Your Membership?

We don't want to lose you! Please check the mailing label for a RED dot. If it is there it signifies we haven't heard from you. Of course, that could be our mistake – if so let us know.

**Stay in touch and stay
healthy!**

Palmerton – Home of Sports Legends

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Elmer always said he was not a natural athlete, but one that worked hard. Red Smith, the noted New York Times sportswriter penned a lengthy feature in which he concluded “None was ever more sincere than Elmer Valo, none ever tried harder, none was quicker to blame himself for a mistake...” Following his years as a player, Elmer continued his career in baseball as a major league scout and in 1990 he was inducted along with Mike Schmidt into the Philadelphia Baseball Hall of Fame. His passing in Palmerton in 1998 was mourned by the community.

Bill Mlkvy

In 1951, before March Madness had become an annual event, the All-America basketball teams were chosen by consensus of sportswriters from five organizations – the AP, the UP, Look Magazine, Collier’s, and Hearst’s International News Service. Of the five players selected for the first team, only two were unanimous choices – one of whom was Temple University’s Bill Mlkvy, affectionately known as “The Owl Without a Vowel”.

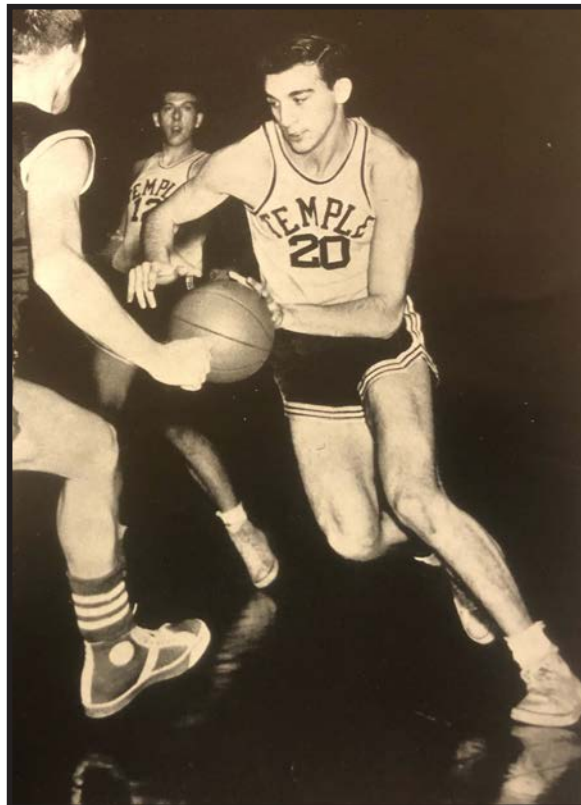
Bill’s credentials as a junior

in the 1950-51 season were beyond compare. He led the nation in scoring and was second nationally in rebounding and assists. Quite an accomplishment for a player considered to be a small forward at 6’4” tall. Among the highlights of his standout year were the 55 consecutive points that he scored against Wilkes College – a Division I record that still stands today.

Bill’s high school career in Palmerton is well known and upon graduation he was sought after by numerous colleges. He tells of having narrowed his choice to a dozen schools that would allow him to fulfill his career goal of becoming a dentist. He relates that his last interview was at Temple University where school officials offered to allow him to juggle his courses and play basketball.

The choice was made and the field of dentistry and the basketball court both benefitted from his decision.

Although Bill was later drafted by the Philadelphia Warriors and played part of one season, he chose instead to fulfill his military obligation and served six years in the US Army where he rose to the rank of Major. He resides in the Philadelphia area and is one of Temple’s most ardent supporters.



Mlkvy in action against LaSalle

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Kathy Beck

In little more than a decade covering 1984 to 1997, Palmerton produced two outstanding female athletes who went on to achieve national recognition. The first of these, Kathy Beck, was a multi-sport standout at Palmerton who achieved her greatest success on the basketball court. Upon her graduation in 1988, she had amassed a then-school record of 1800 points and was twice recognized with District XI All-Star status.

It was Kathy's career at Moravian College that demonstrated her true ability. Twice she was named a Kodak All-American and during the 1991-92 season, she led the Greyhounds to a 31-2 record. Although Moravian lost a 74-71 heartbreaker in the Division III national championship game, Kathy was honored as Kodak Division III Player of the Year. Upon graduation, her 1,936 career points and her 1,014 rebounds set new Moravian records, and she remains the all-time leading scorer in Greyhound history.



Moravian Coach Mary Beth Spirk presents Kathy with MAC award

Perhaps her greatest honor came when she was inducted into the Middle Atlantic Conference Hall of Fame in 2013 along with basketball greats such as Tom Gola, Hal Greer, and Guy Rodgers.

Nicole Levandusky

A review of Nicole's Palmerton High School sports credentials would be sufficient to have her recognized along with the above greats. Upon her graduation in 1997, her achievements in softball were impressive – a school record 122 hits and a career batting average of .526. But even these numbers pale when compared to her school-record 2,662 career points in basketball that brought her recognition as a four-time league all-star and a three-time MVP!

It was not surprising that this talented athlete would have an even more impressive career in the heady atmosphere of Division I basketball at Xavier University in Cincinnati. Not only are her 1,755 career points sixth in the Xavier record book, her 304 three-pointers top that list.

Unlike most high scoring players, Nicole was a force on both ends of the court and was named Atlantic 10 Conference Defensive Player of the Year in 2001. Her 375 career steals at Xavier are not only a school record, they are twice as many as the next player on that list!

ome of Sports Legends

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Nicole felt both the agony of defeat and the thrill of victory in the NCAA Tournament during her career. In 1999, Xavier led the number one seed UConn Huskies with two minutes to go only to have the perennial champions score



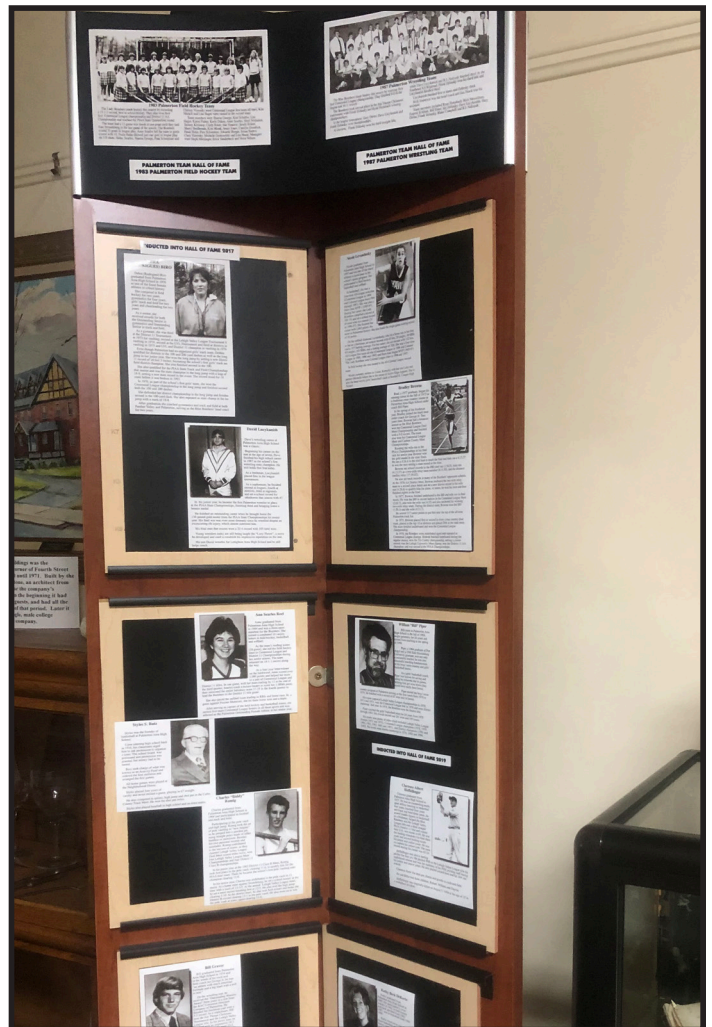
Nicole Levandusky

the last ten points for an 86-84 victory. Two years later, the Musketeers upset number one seed University of Tennessee and legendary head coach Pat Summitt to advance to the Elite Eight. Upon graduation from Xavier, Nicole was drafted in the second round of the WNBA by the Los Angeles Sparks and was a member of the franchise's first WNBA title during her rookie season.

Palmerton has had many extraordinarily talented athletes and space does not allow each one to be highlighted. The Heritage Center now has a unique rotating display created by

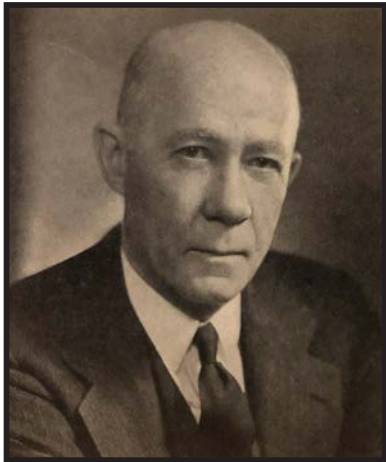
Vinita and Dick Horinko with the invaluable help of the Palmerton High School Sports Hall of Fame Committee. It contains vignettes of noted Palmerton athletes and honors championship teams in sports such as wrestling, cross country, and field hockey.

Although the Covid 19 protocols have limited the number of guests that can be accommodated at the Heritage Center, the sports display will be a permanent fixture to which future athletes can be added and it will remain a focal point for visitors



The Heritage Center rotating display

Seventy Years Ago – A New Path is Taken *R.L. McCann Becomes President of NJZ*

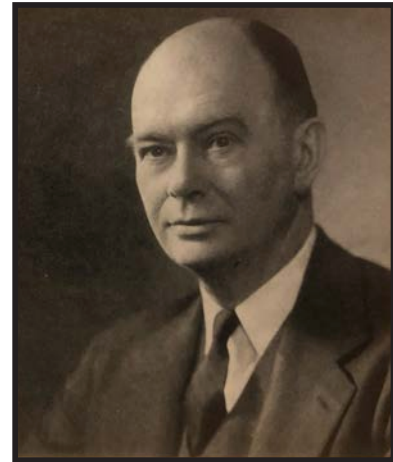


Henry Hardenbergh

Following the death of Edgar Palmer in 1943, New Jersey Zinc would, for the first time in almost fifty years, have someone other than a Palmer at the helm. Inheritance taxes would necessitate the sale of much of the Palmer interest in the Company and the Board chose Henry Hardenbergh as President.

Although Hardenbergh bore the same name as the famous architect who had designed the original Waldorf-Astoria in New York and St. John's Episcopal Church in Palmerton, his entire career had been at NJZ. He started in Palmerton in 1903 as a chemist and quickly rose through the ranks. In 1912 he was Assistant Superintendent and in 1926 he was named General Manager of Mines. Ten years later he moved to New York as Vice President and on Edgar Palmer's death he was named President.

A similar career path was being followed by another young man at the Franklin mine. Ross L. McCann (known simply as "R.L.") started in



R. L. McCann

1917 as a surveyor and in less than two years he was appointed Chief Surveyor. He progressed to Mill Chief at the Sterling mine in 1923 and in 1930 he was named Superintendent of the Franklin-Sterling mines. By the end of the decade, R.L. was General Manager of all NJZ mines in the United States and in 1950 was named Vice President.

The Palmer family need not have worried that NJZ would be run by other than experienced zinc professionals. The future was promising when, on February 28, 1951, the Board of Directors promoted Hardenbergh to Chairman and R.L. McCann to President.

But NJZ was now a public company and the interests of public shareholders can differ from those of the owners of more closely held companies. Over the next 15 years R.L. McCann would have to balance conflicting interests. Like many executives of his generation, R.L. had a conservative approach

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2021 Monthly Program Schedule

*all programs held in the Knight's Gallery of the Palmerton Library at 7pm unless otherwise noted
handicap accessibility*

May 10

The History of the Lehigh River

Louise Bugbee

June 14

Beekeeping & Honey Production

Chris Maxwell
at Little White Church

July 12

***Human powered toys
including the "Slinky"***

*Pennsylvania's official toy that is
manufactured in Hollidaysburg, PA*

Bob Swaim
at the Borough Park

August 9 (5pm)

Annual Society Picnic

Holzman Farm
hosted by Bert Holzman

September 20

***How the Ice Age Impacted the
Lehigh Gap and Stoney Ridge***

Dr. Dru Germanowski, Geologist

October 11

PA German Gravestones

Michael Emery
PA Historical Museum Commission
at Little White Church

November 9

Pennsylvania Tour Photos

Lynn Shupp

December 6

***Ecumenical Service &
Christmas Party***

3pm at Little White Church
Dinner Following at Bert's Steakhouse

Seventy Years Ago – A New Path is Taken

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and wanted to invest profits in the growth and diversification of NJZ. Investment groups, on the other hand, often sought more immediate returns. The tensions that arose led to the acquisition in 1966 of NJZ by Gulf+Western Industries – a story that could only be told in volumes.

The world of business has become much more fluid today than it was 50 years ago. It often seems that change takes place overnight. It would be interesting to speculate on the path New Jersey Zinc might have taken if corporate funds had been used for expansion. Would bankruptcies still have followed? Perhaps – perhaps not.



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Heritage Center**

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**Until Further Notice
Hours By
Special Schedule**

