



The Pine Knot News is marking 50 years since the first Earth Day in 1970 with special coverage and the activity page on the next page. Look for more environmental stories the next month.

Cloquet made remarkable Earth Day contribution

The SCARE program at Cloquet High School in 1970 was a big deal. For a whole week, students would be immersed only in environmental issues of the day.

It came days before the first Earth Day, 50 years ago this month.

SCARE was an acronym for Students Concerned About a Ravaged Environment. It was the brainchild of Cloquet High School social studies teacher Jack Pichotta. I recently caught up with Jack (he was my Cloquet neighbor not long ago and my teacher at CHS) to reminisce about this groundbreaking event that made state and national news as the environmental movement picked up steam.

Pichotta arrived at teaching after working at the U.S. Steel plant in Morgan Park, like his father. He later joined the Air Force. He started his geography studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth eight years after graduating from high school. When he graduated with a teaching degree, there were two social studies positions open in the region: in Cloquet and Silver Bay. Jack ended up having interviews for both jobs scheduled on the same day. At CHS, school administrators requested he also serve as a student council advisor and junior high football coach. He said he told Fred Wolner as he was about to leave that he would take the Silver Bay job if it was offered to him. Wolner called him back in the room, told him he should call Silver Bay and cancel his appointment, and offered him the job. Jack said he was glad he took it.

A year after Pichotta started, the school board adopted modular scheduling, a new education model that changed the regular school day from five or six hourly classes to shorter, more concentrated sessions with large and small groups having intimate teacher-student interaction. It encouraged teachers to design shorter quarterly classes that still met Minnesota educational standards but dealt with more specific topics and ideas. It replicated, in many ways, how college courses are designed.

In the fall of 1969, Pichotta developed a new course on human ecology, the interaction of humans and the environment. It proved to be a very popular class.

The big idea

He also held a “retreat” for the student councils in the fall to plan the school year schedule of events.

It was only a few months after Neil Armstrong first stepped foot on the moon. It is also when people first viewed Earth from a totally different perspective. From the sky, astronauts could see the land, rivers and oceans and relay those dramatic pictures to all of us on Earth. Some pundits claim this may have been the impetus to what gave rise to a more global view of the earth and our direct impact on the environment.

At the retreat, the student council members proposed doing a full-day program for all students in the spring of 1970 dedicated to the environment and the human impact on it. Pichotta brought the proposal to the Cloquet School Board for approval. It passed.

KORBY'S CONNECTIONS



Steve Korby



Cloquet teacher Jack Pichotta received a bicycle from students, to help him become “pollution free,” as thanks for heading up the weeklong Students Concerned About a Ravaged Environment event in April of 1970. *Contributed photos*



Student coordinator Rick Hagen, Cloquet teacher Bill Kennedy and student Nancy Givens watch former Vice President Hubert Humphrey work on his speech to students in Cloquet as part of the SCARE event.

A few weeks into the planning and after getting some buy-in from Cloquet’s wood product industries and others, organizers determined this was much bigger than a one-day project. A week would do it more justice. So Pichotta went back to the board, asking for one week. It would mean all other student classes — reading, writing, and arithmetic — would be put on hold for the week.

A little surprising and earthshaking, it was approved.

Organizing

They picked April 6-10, 1970, for the event. The co-chairs were seniors Rick Hagen and Sue Hagen (no relation). Now the real work began. The student council’s group plan was to have two keynote speakers each day for all senior high students in a large setting — one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Narrowing down and picking the topics, experts, and potential speakers for each of the days of the week was challenging.

Rick was the left fielder for the Lumber-



Jack Pichotta

jacks baseball team, so I knew him. That helped when I contacted him about his recollections of the SCARE.

“We began by writing hundreds of letters to academic, legislative, business/community, and religious leaders on the chosen topics,” Rick wrote to me. “Of course, this was before word processors, which added to the difficulty. Looking back on the wide array of experts that we brought to Cloquet, I’m still amazed. Jack Pichotta let me work on the project as an independent study credit course, which helped me to devote the time and energy required.”

One of the first confirmed speakers for the April event was former U.S. Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. Pichotta thought Sue wrote the original letter asking Humphrey to come to Cloquet with assistance from Floyd Rudy, a regional Democratic leader.

Pichotta said Rudy and local industries had a significant role in the ability to attract top speakers and experts. It was a big thrill for Pichotta and fellow teacher Bill Kennedy to pick up Humphrey from the Duluth airport.

Another significant keynote speaker confirmed was Minnesota’s Eighth

District Congressman John Blatnik. He was revered as a congressman, having served on Capitol Hill for more than 20 years. Blatnik was also the leader of the powerful House Public Works Committee. Another congressman keynote speaker was Republican Clark McGregor. Viewed as a moderate, McGregor would become the chair of the committee to re-elect President Richard Nixon two years later. This was an example, Pichotta said, where SCARE’s goal was to present both a pro and con view of topics if there were, indeed, dissenting ideas.

In all, 135 speakers accepted invitations from the more than 700 letters sent. The main subjects were scheduled — Monday: Urban Topics, Tuesday: Government Concerns, Wednesday: Conservation, Thursday: Pollution, Friday: Population. Tuesday speakers included Doug Head and David Graven, both candidates for Minnesota governor. Elmer Anderson, who was then the Voyageurs National Park president and a former Minnesota governor, also presented.

SCARE speakers from the region were a collection of movers and shakers, including Fred Weyerhaeuser, Harry Newby, Ed Erickson, Floyd Rudy, Larry Yetka, Phil Budd, Syl Laskin, Ben Boo, Ray Riihiluoma, Glen Maxham, Mace Harris, Dave Zentner, Dr. Fred Witzig and Harris Stillwell.

That week students also had an opportunity to go on field trips to the Northwest Paper Nursery, Conwed plant, Cloquet water treatment facility, and the federal water quality lab.

I asked current Cloquet library board member Mary (DuPont) Hagen, a senior in 1970, what came to mind when mentioning the SCARE program. She said she was in awe when Humphrey reached out his hand, looked her in the eyes, and said “Mary, so very nice to meet you.” Then she recalled she had a name tag on.

She remembered classmates Rick Hagen and Tom Roy dressed in suits, looking and acting like adults. “It was amazing to think this whole program was basically orchestrated by students,” Mary said. She learned a lot about the environment and the positive effects of forest management.

Humphrey was the showstopper. His Monday morning kickoff speech was greeted by a standing ovation both before and after his talk. He was a tremendous orator. I remember he made the hair stand up on the back of my neck. Humphrey called for congressional action to “establish strict standards on all forms of pollution” as well as legislative action in all 50 states for “improvements of the physical environment.”

Busloads of students from all over northeastern Minnesota and beyond attended that first day.

Here are a few related things that happened shortly after SCARE:

- Jack Pichotta resigned in 1974 and established and then became the director of the Environmental Learning Center and Wolf Ridge near Finland on the North Shore. Retired now, his working life was dedicated to teaching kids and adults about the environment.

- Humphrey defeated McGregor for the Minnesota Senate seat vacated by Eugene McCarthy in 1970.

- Blatnik authored the federal Clean Water Act in 1972.

Continued on next page

SCARE ...

Continued from previous page

- The Environmental Protection Agency was created in December 1970.
- The Roe vs. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973. The SCARE program addressed abortion in the "Population" discussion.
- The Cloquet water line to Lake Superior was built just prior to SCARE and Cloquet industries were taking giant steps to clean up the St. Louis River and address air pollution. By 1978, I was fishing for walleyes in Spirit Lake on the St. Louis River.
- The Clean Air Act was amended and strengthened in 1970, including phasing out lead-

based gasoline.
 SCARE was innovative and informative and had a tremendous and immeasurable impact on students and the community. I compare that to what we are facing as a nation and the world with the coronavirus today. Will history teachers 50 years from now be relaying to students how the United States and other countries reacted, took steps and resolved the pandemic of 2020? I hope so.

Steve Korby's interest in writing goes back to when he was in fourth grade and editor of the Scan-Satellite school newspaper in Scanlon. He welcomes human interest story ideas at steve.korby3@gmail.com

REMARKS OF HHH at Cloquet, Minnesota Environmental Symposium, April 6, 1970

Humphrey

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HHH: Sue, I can't properly thank you for your generous introduction. I've said that if a man is going to be introduced, he ought to be introduced by a friend, because truth never stands in the way of a good introduction when a friend talks about you. And Sue has overdone it. But I'm grateful. After you've been Vice President, and almost got elected President, Sue, you have ~~no~~ no idea how good it feels to hear somebody brag on you like you did on me.

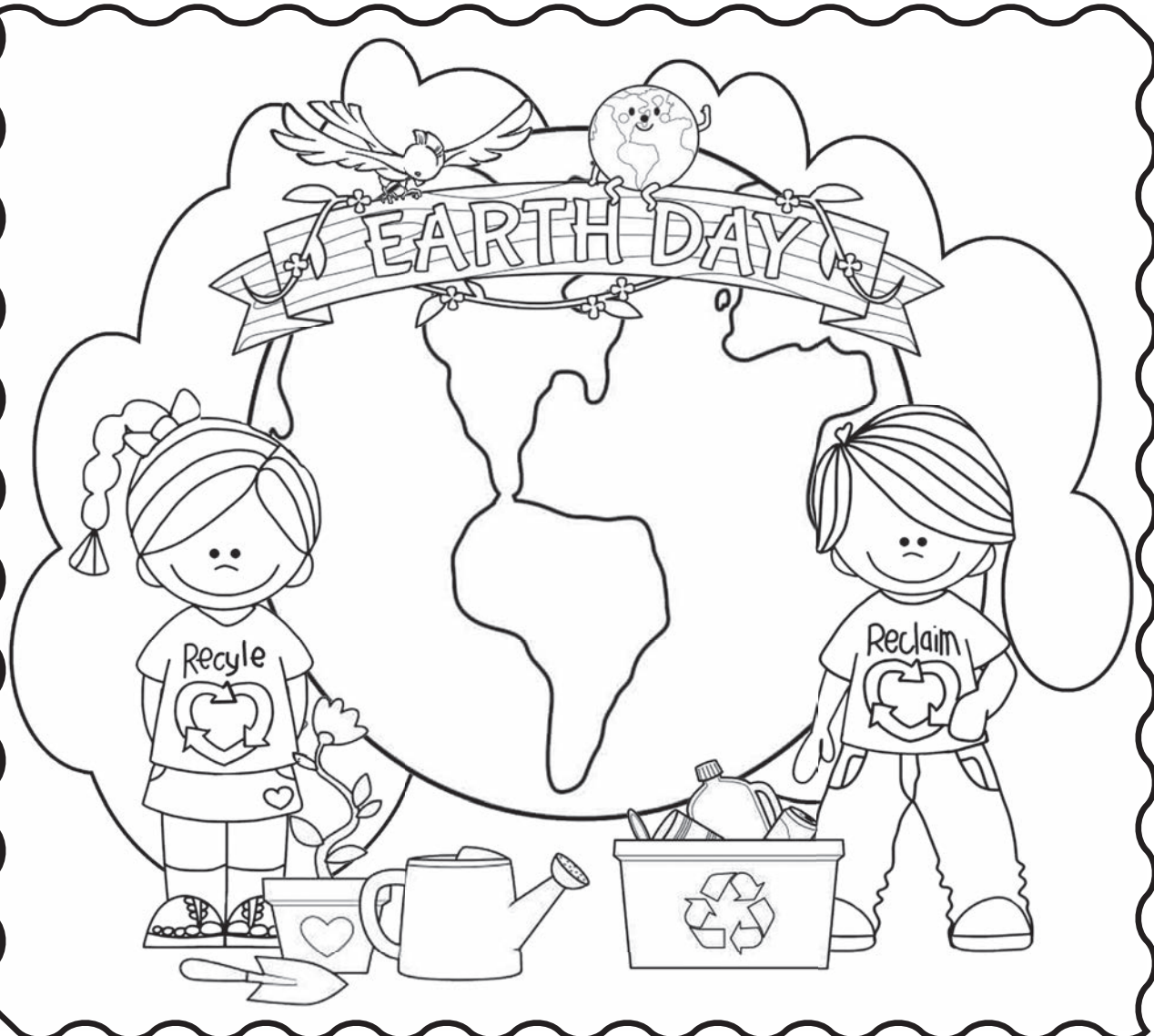
I also want to thank both Sue and Rick Hagen and others that have been so very active in making this program possible,

Hubert Humphrey's speech transcript and notes from his appearance in Cloquet 50 years ago are on file at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Celebrate Earth Day 2020!

Earth Day is April 22 but taking care of the environment is an everyday job. How will you make a difference?

How will you help our planet?



Kids 12 and younger, color the Earth Day page, take a photo of that and your paragraph and text it to 218-213-1231 with your first name and last initial, plus your age. Older kids and adults want to join in the fun? Feel free to send your own design and/or essay for Earth Day via text (above) or email to news@pineknotnews.com. We will run as many photos and writings as we can fit in the April 24 issue of the Pine Knot News. Share your ideas and your love of Mother Nature with everyone!

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Al Finifrock, far left, with his Chistochina kids hockey team in remote Alaska. *Contributed photos*

How a Barnum basketball player ended up with a hockey team in Alaska

This is a tale of a nearly 80-year-old gent who grew up in Barnum on a farm in the 1950s, enlisted in the Army and traveled the world, and managed a working career which included teaching children and building partnerships among various interests and groups. His name is Alan Finifrock. He is back in the area now, living in Cloquet as a retiree and world-class Carlton County tree farmer. Oddly enough, when he taught school in rural Alaska, the nearest tree was 100 miles away.

KORBY'S CONNECTIONS



Steve Korby

Since Al knew that I write articles for the Pine Knot and that I have a penchant for sports stories, he gave me details of a series of events while he was teaching in Alaska which demonstrated some of his Minnesota-born will-power and sports and learning determination.

First, some background on Finifrock. He grew up in the Barnum and Nemadji area and was inspired as a youth by, among others, his Future Farmers of America advisor and Barnum Mayor Bob Johnson and his Methodist minister Ed Rieff. Both had a global view of the world and influenced Al. He enlisted in the U.S. Army when he was 18 and had his basic training assignment in Texas. The Army was racially integrated, which gave Finifrock an opportunity to work with people from all over the country. Al said the Army was a great opportunity to learn from other cultures.

In 1966, the G.I. Bill revision passed and was extended to Cold War and Vietnam War veterans. Al took advantage of this and attended the University of Minnesota Duluth to get a teaching degree. He was married by this time and his wife Sharon was also a teacher. He first taught elementary classes in Hermantown. But Finifrock was always

Former residents coach hockey



The Moose Lake Star Gazette ran a story in April 1974 about the unlikely Alaska hockey game that featured a coach from Barnum (Al Finifrock) and a coach from Moose Lake (Dick Waisanen).

intrigued by the possibility of teaching youth in northern Ontario or other remote areas.

After doing some research, Al and Sharon accepted teaching positions in Alaska. Some of the reasons they chose Alaska over Canada were that their income tripled, plus the Alaskan village wanted couples that were teachers (it saved the school district housing reimbursement costs), and, of course, because Alaska is recognized as a mecca for hunting and fishing.

One of the villages where Al ended up featured a one-room schoolhouse and had a student population that was one-half Athabascan Indian. This would be a very rich diversity opportunity for Al that his upbringing had prepared him for.

Glennallen was 200 miles northeast of Anchorage. In 1969, there was no TV reception there and, of course, there were no cell phones or the internet.

Al was somewhat surprised that the kids there mainly played basketball. He quickly understood that basketball provided



Al Finifrock

a controlled climate in the gymnasium and a lighted place during dark winters. Al played basketball and ran track growing up in Barnum, and he helped referee and coach basketball in Glennallen.

During his first school year there, he decided to build a small skating rink for his 3-year-old daughter outside the duplex where they lived. He used a garden hose to flood the ground and built a rink about 10 feet by 10 feet. Soon, other kids asked if they could skate. It got crowded.

As he contemplated a potential rink location for the following season, he realized removing rocks and making the proposed area level would add tremendously to the ice quality and provide a larger area for the kids. One of the community parents must have heard Al thinking and offered a bulldozer to help. Soon, other students and parents joined in the fun. This was one of the greatest community organizing projects that Al had ever seen. They built a 150-foot long level

skating area. With a grant from an Indian Enrichment program, the school received money to put up hockey boards. Al said the kids assembled and painted the advertisers' names and logos on the boards and couldn't wait for winter to come so they could flood the rink and get out and skate.

With few trees or mountains nearby, the sunrises and sunsets can be spectacular in Glennallen. Usually, the northern lights come during the middle of the night. On one special evening, aurora borealis was in its finest grandeur.

"Everyone, young and old, just laid on their backs on the ice and stared up into the sky," Al said. "The northern lights were so bright that the ice was nearly fluorescent." He said all of them would just "ooh" and "ahh" as the lights danced with various shades of greens, pinks, reds, and purples. He doesn't think a camera could have done justice to the fabulous light display.

"It was as close to magic as you can get. You could hear the northern lights crackle because they were so low and full of electricity."

Al and his wife decided to take a year off from teaching and Alaska so Al could finish his master's in education. He enrolled at Bemidji State University and also signed up for a hockey coaching class. It was taught by the BSU hockey coach and nearly all student participants were college hockey players. Al had never played hockey and wasn't an accomplished skater. The coach took him under his wing, understood Al's purpose, and helped him relate to the basics of skating and coaching hockey.

Returning to Alaska the next year, the Finifrocks lived in a community called Chistochina. They lived there for four years. With his recent training, Al felt comfortable coaching youth hockey. Depending on pipeline or other economic activity, the school usually had couple dozen kids in total in grades 1-6. With the lack of population and

schools, it wasn't uncommon for Al's hockey teams to have to play similar-aged kids from 100 miles away ... or the nearest tree. Al didn't claim to be the next Scotty Bowman, Toe Blake or even Wren Blair, but he could coach the basics and his students loved hockey and often relayed their gratitude to him.

Another twist in the story: Al is teaching and coaching hockey in Alaska — 3,149 miles away from Barnum by car or 2,452 miles as the crow or Arctic tern flies — and he sees the name of a coach on an opposing team. It looked familiar. The name was Dick Waisanen and he was from Moose Lake. Al taught in Chistochina and Waisanen at Kenny Lake schools. Their teams were about 100 miles apart but in the same Copper Basin hockey league. Imagine living and coaching in Alaska against a fellow Carlton County transplant. Amazing. They still stay in touch and are friends.

The Finifrocks moved back to Minnesota and Al began a career in human resources at Georgia-Pacific in Duluth. He also taught classes at local colleges and universities. Furthering his hockey coaching career, he instructed the women's rec sports hockey team at UMD from 1983 through 1989.

It was a tremendous feel-good sports story that I heard from Al, and the "build it and they will come" community development process is uplifting.

But I think there was even a bigger message. Al said that in these days of what seems like intolerance of others, the opposite is what we need to learn, teach, and share. "Maybe we just need to lie on our backs together on the ice and watch for the magic in the night sky."

Ain't that the truth.
Thanks, Al.

Steve Korby welcomes human interest stories and tales regarding Carlton County residents, projects, history, and plans.

Sometimes, sports heroes come to you

Have you ever had the opportunity to meet your childhood or, for that matter, adulthood hero? It could be a political or religious leader, a rock or TV or movie star, a sports legend, or maybe even an astronaut. Someone, if you were to meet face-to-face, you would be so awestruck by that observers would have to tell you to please close your mouth?

What makes a person a hero? Of course, people generally honor their parents and other family members, local clergy and elected officials, and even co-workers and others they consider mentors. We admire them.

But to be put on a pedestal as someone's hero requires a bigger step. I think we try to emulate our hero's words and actions.

In our minds, they can do little wrong. Is it a good thing, and do today's kids have heroes just like adults once did, or still do?

My hero story spans many decades. When I started my Little League baseball career in the early 1960s, the Minnesota Twins were a brand-new Major League franchise. Many in Minnesota, including me, were Mickey Mantle and New York Yankees fans. My friends in the neighborhood collected baseball cards and I had some hand-me-down cards from my brothers, so I started collecting too. One of the first packs I bought, for a nickel in 1962, included a Harmon Killebrew card. I still have that card. Harmon was rather slow running on the bases, struck out a lot, but he hit a lot of home runs. I had two of those three attributes, so it didn't seem like a stretch to adopt Harmon as my baseball hero. It has lasted forever.

I started clipping sports articles from the newspapers that bragged of Harmon's accomplishments for the Twins: "Killebrew hits upper deck in win over Angels," "Harmon smashes 400th home run." My buddies knew I was nuts for Killebrew. Every season thereafter, if they happened to get a Killebrew baseball card before I did, my negotiation skills vanished. Usually, I had to give up a Mantle, Willie Mays and Henry Aaron cards for ONE Killebrew card. Most would not consider this a fair deal, but it didn't matter to me.

Killebrew had a great career and eventually ended up in the Baseball Hall of Fame. I saw him play only a few times in person. My aunt and uncle brought my sister and me to my first Twins game in 1965 — the year the Twins won the pennant, but Killebrew was hurt and did not play. I saw only one of his 573 home runs in person. Very few Twins games were even on TV. You had to listen on KDAL 610 AM radio.

I'd try to see him after he retired, if he came up to Duluth for the TwinsFest in the winter. I did get his autograph, but so did about 500 other people. It wasn't very personal. It was still amazing to see Killebrew; heroes are larger than life.

KORBY'S CONNECTIONS



Steve Korby

Then, in 1986 the Twins were celebrating their 25th year since incorporation. Killebrew was going to be at a bookstore in Duluth to sign Twins history books. I told my wife I was going to go on my lunch break. My wife drove to Duluth and got a picture of Killebrew and me, with him signing some of my fan club

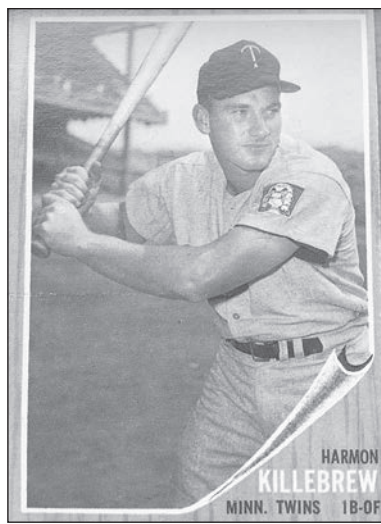
stuff. There was a big line waiting for autographed books. In fact, the bookstore manager tried to shush me along; there was a limit of one autograph each. Then Killebrew said, "Hold on, this guy has been a fan for a long time, I'll sign more." Wow, as if I weren't already a full-fledged Killebrew fan. Later, to top the day off, my friend and Premiere Theatres owner Rick Stowell stopped by my house with a gift. Without my knowledge, and as a surprise knowing how much I liked Killebrew, he had Harmon sign a book, "To Steve, the second-best cleanup hitter in Minnesota ... Harmon Killebrew." Very special. The next morning my picture was in the Duluth News Tribune with Killebrew. Are you kidding me?

The saga continued. In 2004, my son told me about a golf fundraiser in the Twin Cities: "You might want to check this out." In fact, Harmon was the main sponsor for the inaugural Killebrew Classic tourney to benefit the Gillette Children's Hospital. Participating golfers included many current and past Twins and other sports celebrities. My wife and kids encouraged me to go as a 50th birthday present from them. It was a might spendy, but also a chance to see Killebrew, so I signed up for the tourney.

When I arrived at the Legends Golf Club in Prior Lake, I pulled into the parking lot next to a black sports car. Out of that car came 1991 Twins World Series hero Jack Morris.

"Boy is that a nice-looking car, where did you get it?" Morris asked me. When I told him it was a new Oldsmobile Intrigue that was purchased at Cloquet Auto in Cloquet, he seemed less impressed, but I was in celebrity shock and looking forward to a great day.

Since I got to the golf course early, I decided to go hit some practice balls. I went past the bar in the clubhouse and several current and former Twins (Kent Hrbek, Michael Cuddyer, Ron Gardenhire and others) waved at me. They were laughing and



One of the first packs of baseball cards Steve Korby bought — for a nickel in 1962 — included a Harmon Killebrew card. He still has the card.

having fun and, I'm sure, looking forward to a great day. I hit a few drives on the practice tee and then couldn't help but ask the guy hitting balls next to me, "Are you Dick Stigman?" Dick was a pitcher for the Twins in the early 1960s. I had his baseball card, too. He shook my hand and answered yes, but then asked, "How did you ever know?" Stigman grew up in Sebeke, Minnesota. He had Mrs. Marguerite Weiss for a fourth-grade teacher. Well, so did I. Weiss and her husband, Nick (who also worked for the Cloquet school district), moved to Cloquet/Scanlon and told us she had taught Stigman a few years before. She would let us students listen to the radio for a while if Stigman was pitching for the Twins. Dick liked the story.

At the Legends course, I was assigned to the 18th hole. The tourney was a shotgun start, so there were golfers and celebrities on every hole. It was Killebrew's plan to hit shots with each group throughout the day. It just so happened, he started on hole 18. So now, prior to the shotgun going off, I'm getting to chat, mingle, get some photos, and soon golf with my hero. Unbelievable. For the record, Killebrew hit a drive about 300 yards down the middle of the fairway.

At the conclusion of the golf event, I had an opportunity to talk some more with Killebrew, but also to converse with Philadelphia 76ers basketball Hall of Fame guard Hal Greer (he told me some Wilt Chamberlain stories, another of my sports favorites), John Blanchard (third-string catcher for the 1961 World Champion New York Yankees, who happened to hit 20 homers and had five championship rings), Hall of Fame football linebacker Bobby Bell, who played for the Gophers and Chiefs, and Brooks Robinson of the Baltimore Orioles (another Baseball



Korby first met Killebrew at a Duluth bookstore in 1986. Contributed photos



Killebrew and Korby stayed in contact over the years.

Hall of Famer). It was great for a sports enthusiast like me.

After that fundraiser, Killebrew and I exchanged holiday cards every year. In 2008, my family was planning a winter trip to Arizona. I had a family tee time reserved at a championship golf course and knew Harmon lived in nearby Scottsdale, so I figured even though it was a long shot, I would mail him a note asking him to join us. A few days later, when my wife and I came back to the house after snowshoeing, my son told me my cell phone had rung.

"Maybe it was Harmon Killebrew calling you," he said in jest. I listened to the message and, would you believe it, it started out, "Hello Steve, this is Harmon Killebrew" I about dropped the phone and was shaking. It really was him. He apologized that he couldn't golf with us because he was going to help the Twins in spring training in Florida. Amazing, my hero calling me.

Well, Harmon passed away in 2011 from cancer. I received

thoughtful sympathy cards from some of my old Scanlon baseball card buddies who were far from this area by then but knew how much I admired Killebrew. Harmon's wife, Nita, even sent me a copy of his funeral program from Arizona. It was sad and somewhat unexpected, as he was only 74.

Former Twins teammate Rich Reese called Killebrew "one of the classiest people I've ever met in life," adding, "He treated all people with respect, even with the stature he had." Maybe the accolades for my hero were cliché and just niceties, but I can attest he was the real deal and had attributes worth emulating.

Do you have a hero story that you'd like to share with Pine Knot readers? Have you ever sat down and had a cup of coffee with your hero? Did anybody in Carlton County ever date Elvis? Contact me at 218-878-9332 or news@PineKnotNews.com. We'd like to write it down, get some pictures, and share your story.

The bookstore manager tried to shush me along; there was a limit of one autograph each. Then Killebrew said, "Hold on, this guy has been a fan for a long time, I'll sign more." Wow.

PREP SPORTS BROADCAST SCHEDULE

Fri. Dec. 27	4:45 P.M. - Boys Basketball - Wood City Tournament - WKLK 1230 AM
	5:00 P.M. - Boys Hockey - CEC @ Hill Murray - WKLK 96.5
	6:15 P.M. - Girls Basketball - Wood City Tournament - WKLK 1230 AM
Sat. Dec. 28	2:30 P.M. - Boys Hockey - CEC @ Centennial - WKLK 96.5 FM
	4:45 P.M. - Girls Basketball - Wood City Tournament - WKLK 1230 AM
	6:15 P.M. - Boys Basketball - Wood City Tournament - WKLK 1230 AM
Thurs. Jan. 2	7:00 P.M. - Boys Hockey - CEC vs Eagan - WKLK 96.5 FM
	7:15 P.M. - Girls Basketball - Cloquet @ Proctor - WKLK 1230 AM
	7:15 P.M. - Girls Basketball - MLWR @ Esko - WMOZ 106.9 FM
Fri. Jan. 3	7:15 P.M. - Boys Basketball - MLWR vs Esko - WMOZ 106.9 FM
	7:30 P.M. - Boys Hockey - CEC vs Eagan - WKLK 96.5 FM

All games are livestreamed at: NorthwoodsRadio.com