



# ELMER EBNET

**Holdingford Class of 1947**

Elmer Frank Ebnet was born March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1929 to Frank and Elizabeth (Vos) Ebnet in Holding Township. He was the youngest of 13 children and fought for every ounce of attention he could get, which he believes led to his competitive nature. The Ebnet family farmed just west of Holdingford.

Elmer was one of Holdingford's most ardent athletes and sports fan. His love of sports started at a very young age and continued for the rest of his life. In High School he played football, basketball, baseball and ran track.

The 1946 football season opened up its first post-war season, coached by Mr Norb Vos, with a few hurdles to overcome. Football equipment was hard to come by at that time. Elmer often spoke of the poor equipment the team had to use, "we got all of St John's old football equipment. Guys with size 8 feet got stuck with a size 12 shoe". Despite the disadvantages, the team managed to put together a winning season, 3 wins, 2 losses and 1 tie.

Basketball was played a bit different back in the 40's. "We had a jump ball for every tie ball and there was no such thing as a 3-pointer" Elmer told us. He said that you would never see scores reaching the 70's or 80's back then. He remembered not having busses to get to games with. "We rode to and from games in the back of a cigar truck". There was a man from the area who sold cigars from the back of his truck. When he wasn't using his truck, the team would borrow it, sit in the back and bounce to and from games. The 1947 team ended with a 14-7 record.

Holdingford's first track team was organized in 1947. Elmer juggled time between both baseball and track. He always teased that it wasn't hard to do because he had the same coach for every sport he was in, Norb Vos. He seemed to excel at track somewhat, as his first time jumping the long jump landed him in first place. He also boasted about the time he filled in running the mile and came in second, losing to the person who took first in state.

Elmer was also involved in three school plays and had the lead role in each one, "Hansel & Gretel", "Poor, Dear Edgar", and "Adam's Evening".

Elmer's real passion though, was baseball. His love for this sport was pretty obvious throughout his life. He was a pitcher in High School, pitching one no hitter in his career and still losing 1-0. Elmer went on to play baseball well into his 50's.

After graduating High School, Elmer went on to earn his Barber License in Minneapolis. He had one of the longest running businesses in Holdingford, where he cut hair for over 50 years. If a client couldn't make it to see Elmer, he would travel near and far to their home and make sure they looked good before he left.

On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, Elmer married the love of his life, Mary Ann Guck. Together they raised 7 children; Bev (Russ) Eichten, Jeff (Debbie) Ebnet, Greg (Teresa) Ebnet, Pam (John) Voss, Nick (Peggy) Ebnet, Luke (Terri) Ebnet and Nancy (Dan) Fiedler. Elmer and Mary were also blessed with 20 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

Elmer joined the Marine Corp, proudly serving his country from 1951-1953. He returned to Holdingford, quickly joining the town amateur baseball team which belonged in The Great Soo League. He played amateur ball until 1972, retiring at the age of 43. He came back occasionally to play in a few "Old Timers" games. He hit his last homerun at the age of 50, playing against the high school team, with bases loaded. His last game ever was in 2000, at the age of 71, which landed him in the hospital for back surgery.

He also played on the all Ebnet baseball team which was made up of nine brothers, some cousins and a few nephews. The Ebnet baseball team saw a bit of fame as Garrison Keillor had a documentary done about the team and it aired on PBS and the Disney Channel.

Elmer played adult basketball in Holdingford, starting in 1954 and playing until 1989. Besides the regular teams that they played, Elmer set up games with ex-Vikings players, such as Joe Sensor, and games against the "Sioux City Redheads", which was the women's version of the Globetrotters. He was 60 years old when he finally decided to hang up his basketball shoes for good.

He served on the school board from 1960-1971. He went door to door with Superintendent S.L. Tuchscherer, trying to get families to come to the Holdingford District over the Sartell District when the new school was built. He was also instrumental in helping to get a lighted football field.

After Elmer was done playing sports, he became Holdingford's number one fan, for all sports. He got the pleasure of watching his 7 children play sports, his grandchildren and even got to see some of his great-grandchildren play. He hated to miss any sporting events, whether his family was playing in them or not. Many will remember the sight of Elmer and his donkey at baseball games, or him pacing the sidelines in his coonskin coat and hat at football games. In the later years, when it was hard for Elmer to get around, he was still the first to call and ask what time he was getting picked up.

Elmer was a man who dearly loved his family, his community and sports. His picture is painted on the train car near the Wobegon Trail head, as part of the Ebnet Baseball Team. He will long be remembered for his love of Holdingford, his quick wit, and his sense of humor. You could often hear Elmer on KCLD, trying to find a "clean" joke to tell on air and was sought out for multiple newspaper interviews. Elmer was also featured in author Elaine Davis's book "Minnesota 13". He was a Boy Scout leader, a member of the Holdingford American Legion and involved in the Commercial Club.

Elmer left us on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016. He is dearly missed.