

'THE PRIDE OF DOUGLAS'

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One by one they slip away and take their stories with them. When we realize our neglect we find it is to late, and so we fill-in the details as best we can and the stories become partly fiction. Our neglect robs us of a rich story of factual history of this area.

Very few persons have ever had a greater opportunity to pick up and record the history of Gastineau Channel area than I have had. I knew every Tom, Dick and Harry or at least someone who knew them since Juneau and Douglas began. As a kid I listened to stories by the hour, only remembering those that appealed the most. Being a boy and interested in sports, I best remember Jimmy.

Jimmy was a hero in my mind before I ever saw him, mainly because the older folks were always talking of his latest accomplishment in sports. Everyone looked up to Jimmy — his fame in track and field spread far and wide. His accomplishments in school sports are on record with the Douglas High School and in the memories of the old-timers and especially his competitors.

An Iron Man

The first of many stories I heard about Jimmy and there are old-timers around to verify this, is that he pitched 3 nine-inning ball games over the weekend and won them all. Two of the games were played on the Douglass ball park on Saturday and the third game was in Juneau on Sunday up in Silver Bowl basin where they now play "Hoochinoo and Hotcakes." Not many people around who remember the ball park up there. Jimmy was truly an iron man in those days and his feat of winning 3 games in the span of a day is still talked about. Incidentally, I might mention that he struck out 27 batters in those three games.

The second story came from his catcher Bobby Coughlin. Jimmy's natural ability was recognized and nurtured to near perfection by Bobby who was one of the smartest little catchers who ever donned a mask on the channel. If any catcher could get the most out of a pitcher, Bobby could, and I'm sure that Jimmy felt 10 feet tall when Bobby was behind the plate. Bobby's confidence in Jimmy was mutual and he expressed that confidence by making a fifty dollar bet that he would sit behind the plate blindfolded and that Jimmy could pitch the ball into his mitt so accurately that the ball would not be dropped. Bobby must have had a magnet in his mitt when Jimmy made the pitch for the ball plunked into the heart of the mitt and Bobby was 50 dollars richer.

Whitehorse Bet

Up in Whitehorse a soldier team wagered Bobby that Jimmy couldn't throw five pitches without Bobby moving his mitt. Bobby said, "I'll bet \$25 he can throw ten perfect pitches." Jimmy not only threw ten but he made it to 12. Yes, Bobby had confidence in Jimmy.

Knowing Jimmy in later years when he was past his prime but still playing good ball, I'm not surprised at the skill he must have had. Like Walter Johnson, his weapon was a blinding fast ball and deadly accuracy. This was in the days when the baseball competition between Juneau and Douglas was a do-or-die matter and even professional ball players were imported from the States by both sides to tip the scales in their favor, for at times, hundreds of dollars rode on a single pitch. The miners had the money to bet on these games and they did.

When I came onto the scene, Jimmy was on the decline but he was still good. To make up for the loss of his blazing fast ball he was trying to develop a curve ball, but at his age it was difficult. His reputation, however, was enough to keep the batters from taking a toe-hold for fear that he might unwind that lightning fast ball under their

chin. Even with the loss of his fast ball he excelled in other positions and at bat.

I witnessed this game from the bench of the Elks team. The headlines read, "Manning Wins For Elks With Three Homers," sub-headline, "Last Circuit Smash Came In Seventh With Three On And Two Out."

Out of the shadows of final defeat in the Little World Series, the Elks last night were brought back to even terms with the American Legion by the big bat of Jimmy Manning who hit three home runs to win for his team almost single-handed. The Elks won 9 to 3 and of its 9 scores Manning drove in five and scored three himself. The finish was dramatic, one of those situations that baseball fans read about but seldom see. The Elks had been behind since the first inning as many as six runs. It was the last of the seventh inning, the final frame of what looked like the closing game of the series, for the score stood at 3 to 5 for the Legion. Three runners were perched on bases, watchful, hopeful, but not too expectant. There were two out. Two strikes and two balls had been craved on the batter, Jimmy Manning.

Twice before Manning had kept the Elks in the running with terrific home run clouts. The first was in the second inning, when, with two men out and none on base, he smashed the ball high to the top of the little green house. Again in the sixth, with Boyd and Andrews on base he blasted his second circuit blow bringing in three more runs.

Now he was facing the greatest test of a batter. One strike left, the tying runs on bases, and upon him rested the only hope for his team to win the game and to stay in the series picture. The Elks fans pleaded for a homer and the opposition called, strike him out Claude. Claude wound up and delivered a fast ball waist high, almost exactly the same as the two Jimmy had clouted out of the park before. With perfect timing, he swung hard and put the whole weight of his body into the swing. The crash of the bat against the ball tells the story. It rises on a graceful act, descends back of left center to the top of the little green house, only inches away from the spot where his first homer landed, giving the Elks a 9 to 3 victory.

Manning was given a great ovation by the fans, backers of both teams and players themselves. Joining in the recognition of the feat, the first time in the history of the league that any batter had homered three times in a single game, "Iron Man" Junge who pitched for the Elks trotted around the bases with Jimmy, his arms enfolding him. There were tears in the crowd.

Jimmy Manning was a local Indian boy, tall, athletically built, straight as an arrow — a gentleman at all times and a real credit to his people.

I intend to ask Jimmy about the early day sports on the Channel, but I find that this is now impossible since Jimmy's body was found on the rock dump where it had floated last Friday.

Within earshot of the ball parks on both sides of the channel where he had received the loud acclaim of thousands, he slipped away and has taken his story with him.

Douglas should be proud of their boy Jimmy. I am.



With fewer women in sewing circles and more in bowling alleys, it looks like the gals have changed from needles to pins.