

50th
Anniversary/Reunion

T H E R O D S F O O T B A L L C L U B

"The Way We Were"
1946 – 1996

S E C O N D A L U M N I R E U N I O N D I N N E R

The Delta Ballroom

Delta Winnipeg

Saturday, September 7, 1996





THE RODS "TWO-FISTER" TRIBUTE



ARTHUR J. CERETTI – "THE BOSS"

Arthur J. Ceretti – Age - 84 years (August 13th, 1994). Wife – Morna (Married 51 years).
Son – Douglas and Family.

Along with partner Dave Archer, Art ran their own business – "Archer-Ceretti Sheet Metal Ltd." at Notre Dame and Langside for 30 years before retiring.

A great "people person", Art was a member of the Meridian Lodge, Scottish Rite and the Khartum Temple.

Art's love for community amateur sports dates back to the late 1920's, when as a teenager himself, participated with friends to build a hockey rink at Notre Dame and Sherbrook, later organizing a bantam-aged team that starred – Danny Summers, Bill Mortimer and a future Ranger Scout, Dennis Ball.

Art's interest in the Rods Junior Football began in the late 1940's and by 1952, Art became Team Manager. For the next 12 years until 1964, Ceretti's Rods would appear in 5 Championship Games winning 3 of those Championships. The **only** Manitoba Junior football team to ever win the Canadian Championship **to this day!**

Art joined the crosstown rivals, Weston Wildcats in 1964 but in 1971 he became a Director of the Bombers. Although his brother Bill "Red Dog" Ceretti, holds the longevity record as a Bomber for 18 years and as a member of the Football Hall of Fame, Art holds the record for the most Bomber Dinner Tickets sold by a Director. The club honored Art in 1991 with a special award, and in 1992 he was named on the Bomber Honorary Council.

CERETTI "THE MAN" – No doubt about who "The Boss" was. "Arturo" was "The Man"! There was no such word as "can't" in his vocabulary. His energy levels were awesome, whether he was selling tickets, button-holing innocent "prey" for donations or talking corporate sponsors into that "extra yard" for the Rods! If a player needed a job, Art was instrumental in finding one, if he was broke, Art always looked after things. One story has it that Art personally guaranteed a Jewish player's parents that their son would visit the Synagogue for Rosh Hashanah on Saturday in order for them to let him make the trip to Saskatoon!

First impression was he had a gruff demeanor, but as you got to know him, you found him to be a big softy - one with a **heart of gold!** To us, the "Rods" survivors, who had the pleasure to be next to "Arturo" as a player, a coach, or just an ordinary person, are enriched for having the opportunity to know this gentleman.



RON F. MOORE – "A PROUD ROD"

Ron F. Moore – Age - 57 years (October 21st, 1993). Wife – Doreen (married 32 years).
Daughters –Lori and Colleen and Son – Jeff.

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Ron graduated from Daniel MacIntyre Collegiate, where he was part of the Maroons Football Team. Ron joined the Rods for the 1956 season anchoring the offensive line at center to the Canadian Junior Championship. In 1957 following his final year as a player, Ron stayed on with the Rods as Team Manager until the 1964 season, nailing down another Championship ring with the St. James Rods in 1961.

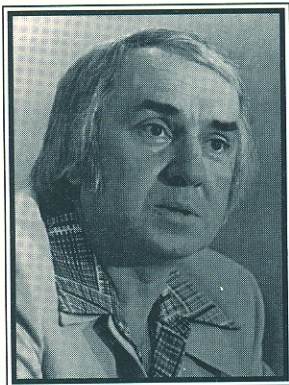
A great family man, adored by his close-knit family, Ron spent his leisure time at the family cottage at West Hawk Lake, puttering, fishing, fixing, pausing daily at high noon for a "brown pop" which he never indulged in before 12:00.

A dedicated man, not only to his family and the Rods Football Club, but also to 3M Canada Ltd. as a territory manager in the automotive abrasive division. For over 27 years, he projected his pride to his career at 3M receiving numerous awards for his dedicated achievements. Ron's last task on behalf of the Rods Football Club was as a very active member of the 1991 Rods Reunion Organizing Committee, heading up the media/promotion function.

To his three children, Ron was "Just Dad" – The Greatest Man on Earth, and to us a proud "Rodney".



THE RODS STORY AS REMEMBERED BY JOHN ROBERTSON



THE GREATEST ROD VICTORY I'VE NEVER SEEN!

If you were a CKRC listener back in 1961, you probably still don't know that the St. James Rods won the first ever Canadian Junior Football Shrine Bowl in Calgary that year.

Hell, I was there, helping play-by-play man, Ron Oakes, broadcast the game and I'm still not sure how it all came out.

All I know is that when the final gun sounded, I was sprawled on the floor of the visitors' radio booth...unable to speak or even sit up. (Or roll over. Or fetch. Or shake a paw!)

Okay, you mugs, I know what you're thinking.

"So what else is new, Robertson?"

"Didn't you leave every Rod game feet-first?", Like Stanley Holloway being lugged out of that bar in Covent Garden, in My Fair Lady, warbling: "Get me to the church on time!"

But this time it was different. By the start of the fourth quarter, I'd only had seven or eight drinks – hardly enough to wash the trail dust off the old tonsils.

Still it lubricated the pipes until we weren't really broadcasting the game. We were crooning it – hitting notes that even Jeep Woolley couldn't reach with a triple strength truss, when Gordie Irwin hit Gary Robson with a touchdown pass midway through the fourth quarter, to put the Rods ahead of Montreal's Rosemount Bombers, 16-13.

Our spotter was Ramsay MacIver, who unerringly fleshed out each play with such edifying comments as: "Hey check out the size of the bazoombahs on that hefty rascal in the pink pantsuit!"

But with Rosemount marching inexorably into Rod territory in the dying minutes, for what appeared to be at least a shot at a game-tying field goal, Old Ramsay was getting rope burns from saying the beads.

It obviously worked, because Brian Hammerton barged into the Rosemount backfield on two consecutive plays to hurl quarterback Brian Murray for huge losses – knocking the Easterners out of scoring range.

So now the Rods had the ball back, with only a couple of minutes left, as Gordie Irwin rallied the offence to try and run out the clock.

"Second and long," warbled Oakes, "and I'm going to put you on the spot, Robertson. If you're the Rod quarterback, what do you do now?"

Poised old professional that I am I leaned over into the microphone and bellowed: "I'd hold onto the ball...like it was one of my own!"

"You'd WHAT?????" exclaimed Oakes.

"I mean. I'd...errr...hold onto it, like it BELONGED to me, Ron," I blurted.

That tore it. Oakes broke up completely and buried his head in the crook of his arm, unable to speak for the rest of the game without lapsing into convulsive laughter.

And for the next minute and a half while the Rods ran out the clock to nail down the Canadian championship, not one intelligible word was uttered on CKRC. No final score. Nothing but hysterical laughter...punctuated by the final gun...and a studio announcer in Winnipeg signing off with the words:

"...and that's the story from Calgary. This has been a Johnny Esaw production."



THE RODS ALUMNI ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

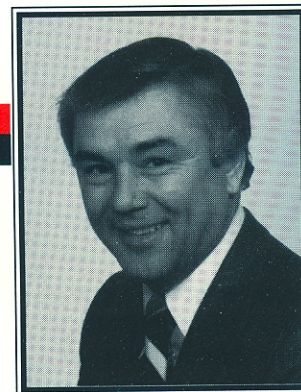
Brian Irwin, Jim MacMillan, Arnie Harbour, Barry Wall, Lou Spado, Mike McKee, Ross MacIver, Wade Christainsen, Denis Shpak, Bill Holte, Stu Anderson, Jeep Woolley, George Depres.

NEWS FLASH – JUNE 6TH, 1996

The 1955 Rods inducted into Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame!

Along with notable sports legends such as Ab McDonald, Kenny Reardon and Billy Reay of hockey fame, Al Sparks of boxing and other well known Manitoba sports icons, the 1955 Winnipeg Rods, Canadian Junior Football Champions will be inducted into the "Hall" in the team category, appropriately on their 50th Anniversary. The 1996 inductees became the first Manitoba team to capture a National Junior Football Championship when they defeated the Windsor AKO's 19-13 at the Winnipeg Stadium.

The 10 year era (1952-1962) was truly the Rods "Wall of Fame" with 5 appearances in the National Final and 2 more (1956-1961) National Titles.



Arnie Harbour, Alumni Chairman and Nominator





THE RODS STORY AS REMEMBERED BY HAL SIGURDSON



This is the night old Rods get together to swap lies and celebrate 50 years of guts and glory. What they will all have in common is incredible wealth. Not in money, perhaps, but in a slice of personal history that has created memories more valuable than mere money can buy.

Its ingredients could be a span of years or a single play; a George Depres speech or the forging of a lifelong friendship. Whatever its contents, their memories are one investment that will never depreciate in value.

I never had the privilege of playing for the Rods. I just spent a few, brief years reporting their exploits for the Free Press. Fortunately the Rods I got to know best were a generous, rollicking crew. They treated a rookie reporter still wet behind the ears as an equal and allowed him to share in future memories just as if he had earned them. I'll always be grateful.

The memories I enjoy most arrived early in the team's colorful history. The Rod's were playing only their ninth season that November night in 1954 when we boarded the Soo Line rail car that would eventually get us to Windsor, Ont. With Bruce Palmer at the controls and with human wedges named Cornel Piper and Eddie Kotowich to open up holes for Gene Wlasiuk and Ron Latourelle the Rods had captured the Western Canadian junior title after subduing a very good Weston team in their own league. Now they were ready to challenge the Eastern champion Windsor AKO for the Canadian crown.

If you judge only by the score board which revealed a narrow win for Windsor, their mission was a failure. But don't believe that for a second. The Rods of '54 gained far more than they lost. That team had only one missing ingredient – the quiet feeling of cocky confidence every championship team must have. So despite the score, the Rods came away winners that year. They proved to themselves they had the ability to dance with the best teams in the country and win. In the next few years that knowledge would carry them to four more national finals. They would win three of them.

The key to all that was the team that lost in Windsor. Today, nearly 42 years later, the events that unfolded during that memorable trip are still a treasure that can be brought out of storage on special occasions, carefully unwrapped and enjoyed all over again. I'll be bringing them out of storage tonight. My only regret is I can't be with you in person to share them, but rest assured at least one old goat will raise a clenched fist in White Rock, B.C.

It's funny. I don't remember too many details of the game itself, apart from the fact it was close and the Rods could easily have won. What I do remember is Buffy Gray and George Depres; Harry Cholakis and Ross MacIvor; Art Ceretti and Arnie Harbour; Lou Spado And Ray Sherratt...

I remember a tiny pair of brass crutches that sit in a Rods' mug on a shelf in my den. MacIvor presented them to me in a tongue-in-cheek ceremony on the first night of the trip. After Ceretti had bullied me into helping load equipment from the dressing room to a waiting truck a bench got knocked over and landed on my toe. A loud bellow and a big play for sympathy followed. Ross's brass crutches, carefully fashioned at the CN shops, were all I got.

I remember Gene Ross. Gene never played a down for the Rods or anyone else as far as I know. He was the steward on the bar car when the train left Winnipeg for St. Paul. Even as a rookie I knew it was important to be on good terms with the people who ran bar cars and Gene would be an important ally. First I was able to persuade him to re-open the bar after hours and keep serving beer to our table. That convinced my table mates I had at least one redeeming feature. I can still see Eddie Kotowich crunching each drained can in his powerful mitts.

Gene did something else important for me on that trip, too. He told me he was the agent for the best college running back to come along since Red Grange. Then he brought out a sheaf of clippings that told how his client had broken many of Grange's records. What he wanted to know was who to contact to get his boy a tryout with the Blue Bombers. I gave him the name and address of Bomber general manager Bill Boivin. Leo Lewis is now in the Winnipeg and CFL Hall of Fame. That's a good memory.

Who could ever forget spending a night with Eddie Kotowich in the women's john on the Soo Line Railway? Nothing kinky, understand, but certainly different. Gray was president of the Rods in '54 and in the best tradition of the team he was a feisty cuss. He didn't like the travel arrangements the CRU-Football Canada was known as the Canadian Rugby Union in those days—had made for his team. They wanted him to travel via CN and Buffy worked for the Soo Line, an affiliate of the CPR. So he made his own arrangements and we travelled to Windsor via Detroit. He got us our own private car, but it didn't come equipped with berths. When the bar car closed for good, Eddie and I went looking for a place to sleep. The women's john with two narrow, padded benches, was a choice location.

Later I was able to watch the Rods win back-to-back national titles in 1955 and 1956. Those were memorable years, too, but how do you top spending the night in a women's john with Eddie Kotowich?



THE RODS STORY AS REMEMBERED BY JACK MATHESON

Arnie Harbour doesn't know me as well as he thinks. If he did, he'd know I can't say hello in a third of a page.

Imagine that, the guy wants me to chronicle a love affair with the Rodneys that goes back almost 50 years, and in 150 words, or less. Hell, I could dash off a six-part series on that bunch of rascals and I wouldn't even be scratching the surface.

Oh, well, I learned a long, long time ago never, ever to disagree with your editor. Even if he is a donkey.

No, not you, Arnie. You want a condensed, thumbnail stroll down memory lane, that is what you're going to get.

I was in on the ground floor with the Rods, you understand. They were a brand new football team and I was a brand new sports writer. The Rods were the first team I ever covered in my so-called career, so I loved everyone of them.

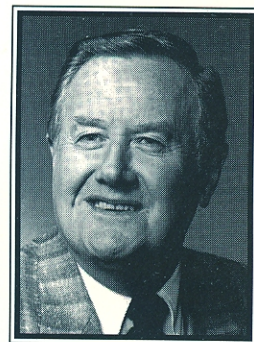
Ah, yes, how well I remember how it all started, and who started it. Chico and Buffy and Bebee and Deeps and old Hap. Come to think of it, nobody had real first names in those days, I often wondered why not.

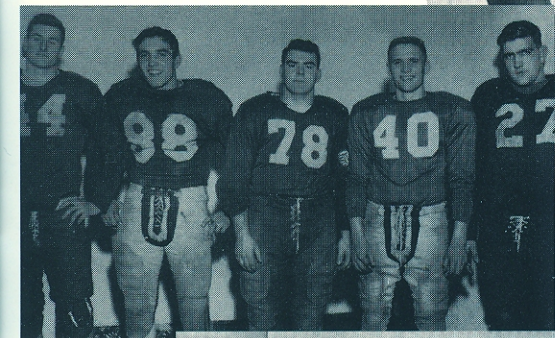
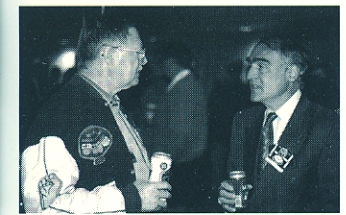
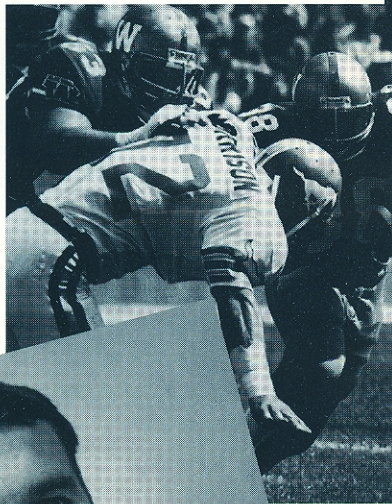
Actually, I lie. They never hung a label on Art Ceretti, even Wellsy couldn't find one that would fit. Same old thing with Leo Dadalt and Harry Cholakis and Gordie Osler. They tell me Gordie Osler was one of the builders but I don't believe it. The guy had breeding, family, money and he even went to university. How did he ever become a Rod anyway?

Everybody knows about the Rods powerhouse that won the whole bundle, the junior football championship of the land, three times—1955, 1956 and 1961. Memories to be treasured, of course, but by then I had graduated, I guess you could say, to the Blue Bombers.

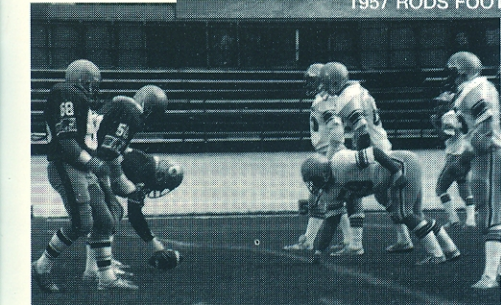
That's why I cling to the early, early days, when the Rods were lucky to have jerseys and pants that matched. When Cam Doherty coached them and couldn't stop wiping his eyes; the great windup parties at the Marlborough (have the bills been paid yet?); the Touchdown Twins, Cholakis and Depres, and I still count them as close buddies half a century later.

All hail to the Rods, then, especially the winners. I'm a sucker for pioneers, though, and I'd rather remember the good old days. With the emphasis on OLD.

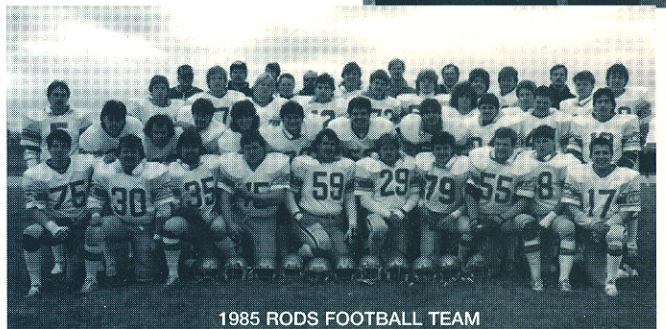




1957 RODS FOOTBALL TEAM



STAFFORD DENTAL GROUP
Dr. Les Allen



1985 RODS FOOTBALL TEAM