Looking Back on 42-Year Career
Tom Kelley Treasures Memories

By PETE ZANARDI

Usually, when a man is "too old to retire," the day in era has passed. This isn't the case with Manchester High's Tom Kelley. The former 42 years at the high school has been filled with several years as a baseball coach, football coach and athletic director.

And to this 15 years service in the Rec Advisory Commission, a coaching stint with the now legendary semi pro football Cubs and an outstanding record as a football coach for 10 years and 10 years it becomes clear that Kelley serves not only his school but the community as well.

"I've been a rewarding career so far," Kelley said. "The people of Manchester have always been real nice to me and I've had to do work with in the 42 years - I've got a real good game." And he does his best at the man's ability.

Tom Kelley was born in March of 1928 as he was teaching at Manchester, Mass. A letter winner in football, baseball and basketball at Manchester High, the kettlebell was once the student's nickname for a time. As he was coaching the late 1950s and early 1960s, he assumed the athletic director's job at Manchester.

In a very real sense, Kelley's career at Manchester is much like the man. The man himself is Manchester High Athletic. Almost all the great events had the Waterville, Maine native playing some part.

From a football mentor, Kelley showed a 10-7-11 mark, winning the OCC four times and posting undefeated seasons in 1958 and 1963, each time the team spilling perfection.

The dean of Connecticut high school baseball coaches, Kelley won 235 games, lost 223 with two ties at Manchester, taking the state crown twice and the OCC nine times. In 1964, he was named the Connecticut High School Coaches Association's coach of the year.

Three players for whom Kelley went on to the major leagues, Tony Lupien, played with the Chicago White Sox, Boston and Philadelphia Phillies. Joe Morhardt, who Morhardt did a stint with the Chicago Cubs and Tom Kelley was presented with the Cleveland Indians' payroll.

Kelley declined to pick at Manchester High all-time, all-star team, but did select a number of players to be honored among the best.

The first pick, in 1960, were Chick Fraser, Ron Simonis, Chuck Smolinski, Doug Ellingsworth, Pete Maggio, Tom Kelley, Fred McCurdy and Marc Scharlean. Catchers Mickey Kaykevich, Tino Bogolu, Dick Avery and Art Pongrand.

The infields featured Dick Dugan, Ed Brown and Joe Votavance at first base, Chuckie Smith, Fred Mone, Roger Maclean and Leo Coy at second. Jim Roach and Gene Johnson at third, and Dave Fraz, Gus Gaudino and Alan Cole at the shortstop.

In the outfield, Kelley lists Ab Lupien, Howard Skinner, Fran Machonkey, Jack Frasor, Joe Morhardt, John Thumser, Bill Gurns, Ennis Dowd, Dick O'Keefe and Bob Smith.

Morhardt gets Kelley's vote as the catch at Manchester. "He was the most natural baseball player I've ever had. He had exceptional speed and power and a truly great arm. He was the outfield hero," Kelley said.

"His swing was his greatest asset," Kelley continued. "He had the 'sweetest' swing, if you will. I've never seen one. You didn't have to touch him."

Morhardt batted .325 for Kelley in 1965, went on to All American honors at UConn and reached the Cubs in 1966.

It was the 1965 squad that Kelley believes to be the best ever at Manchester. "It was the most balanced," Kelley said. "They could do everything well. We had steady hitting and an outstanding pitching, winning the OCC and the state title." Ron Simonis, who pitched the final two tournament games, and Alan Cole, who paced the batters with a 340 mark, led the club which also featured Ed Wolcik, Steve Cooper, Leo Gaudino and Wes Pashley.

Kelley took over a football team that had won only once in three years and in another three seasons built the first of his OCC winning squads. He went on to take league laurels in 1963, 1938 and 1943.

1943 Squad Best
"I'll have to go along with the 1943 team as the best I've had," Kelley said. "That squad had great balance and potential. Only a 7-7 tie with Hartford allowed us to finish unbeaten and untied."

Leading that squad was Ray Semek as he scored 96 points, but one who also took over the melon. In 1938. Of offi-

Kelley worked every New England campus that played football. Included in his list are the now bygone powers at Providence, Providence, Connecticut, St. Bonaventure.

He went as far as Texas and Florida as a coach. In 1962, Kelley was a member of the American Army-Navy game. He was invited up to where President Truman would flip the coin.

"It was the only time I ever shook hands with a president and it remains one of my greatest thrills. Mr. Truman was a very kind fellow."

Officiating also enabled Kel-

ley to view his own players, but to see the greatest athlete he's ever seen.

That honor goes to the 1966 Boston University All American, Harry Agram. "I saw Agram when we worked the BU College of the Pacific game in Bravely Field.

Kelley said, "He did a great job on the block, tackle and intercepting passes. He went on to play base-

ball with the Red Sox but was struck down by pneumonia. Another cause of an all-two early death."

Forty years is a long time to look back at the years and the years, but it has the years of the years, but it has been well

Tom Kelley: 42 years of coaching at Manchester High School.