

Chandler Panthers, 1949-50

By Dr. Mark Buxton



1950 CHANDLER PANTHERS BASKETBALL SECTIONAL CHAMPS

Coach Kenneth Reed

1st Row Left to Right: Ermil Willis, Bill Davenport, Don Fisher, Larry Granderson, Tom Clark, Don Perigo, Ronnie King and Bill Sodders • 2nd Row Left to Right: Everett Fisher and John Shaw

Chandler is located in Warrick County about five miles west of the county seat Boonville and thirteen miles east of downtown Evansville and today has a population of about 2900. Chandler High School first played in the state tournament in 1925 in the Evansville sectional, the Panthers were matched up with archrival and county foe Boonville, losing 22-19. For all but one of their first fourteen tournaments, Chandler continued to play in the Evansville sectional. As the tournament grew, a new sectional was formed at Boonville with most years nine or ten schools participating. Even still, Chandler rarely won a game and prior to the 1949 sectional only twice had made it to even the Saturday afternoon semi-finals let alone the finals. Fortunes though were starting to brighten for Chandler though as a young group of players developed through the system, most of the players on the 1949 and 1950 teams played together on the 8th grade team in

1946 which went undefeated.

Don Perigo started on the 8th grade team as a fifth-grader. "We had this guy who was a teacher in Evansville, refereed all of our home basketball games (in grade school). He must not have realized I started as a fifth-grader because he once asked me, 'Boy, are they ever going to let you graduate?' He must have thought I was stupid!"

Coach Ken Reed had played for the "gym-less wonders" Tennyson Tigers who won four consecutive Warrick County tourneys between 1929-32 and three straight sectionals in 1930-32. Reed graduated in 1931 and was mentioned as the 6th man on the '31 team, scoring a bucket in the sectional quarterfinal 18-11 win over archrival Boonville. Prior to coming to Chandler, Reed had coached at Tennyson. Joe Willis, brother of starting forward Ermil, said that the township trustee had a lot of power and wanted Reed to coach Chandler and

a swap happened, with Reed coming to Chandler and Chandler's coach going to Tennyson prior to the 1948-49 season.

Chandler opened the 1948-49 winning its first 12 games before losing its opening round game in the county tourney to Elberfeld in an upset, it was the only loss for Chandler going into the sectional where once again, Chandler drew host Boonville for its first game. Boonville led early before Chandler connected on five straight shots to take a 16-13 advantage at the half. Boonville took control in the third quarter and led 28-24 at the end of the period. Chandler could get no closer than three, the final score being 37-34 and once again Chandler had been denied glory. The good news for Chandler was all five starters would return and gain a new man to help in the frontcourt as Tom Clark, a 6'0" forward, moved in from Evansville Central, his parents having purchased a dance hall in Chandler. Clark said he had not played organized basketball prior to moving to Chandler but everyone played in the small town and he was happy to make the team.

Clark talked about Reed's coaching style – "He understood we're not professionals, he'd get a little upset now and then, but he'd move on to something else. If you weren't doing what he wanted, he'd pull you out and sit you down and talk to you a little bit and then put you back in."

Don Perigo described the Chandler gym - "The floor was kind of wavy and had a lot of dead spots in it. I think the gym had three rows on either side that ran the length of the floor. It didn't really have a dressing room, just a room downstairs under the floor of the gym, no showers, kind of a dirt floor and a trough with a little water in it if you had to pee."

Joe Willis, class of '54, described another of the unique features of the gym – "The endline was right up against the wall, you had to take the ball out with one foot against the wall and any time someone drove to the basket, they were likely to smack the wall hard. The wall was so close to the playing floor and it had a manual scoreboard on one end with kind of a loft. The young kids used to argue and fight over who got to keep the score. One night, I'm not sure if was in the 1950 season but it was right around that time, Don Edison, I think he was 15 or 16, was keeping score and he got caught up in the excitement of the game and got some Chandler-itis, reached out and blocked an opponent's shot, cleanest block I ever saw. The referee shook his finger at Don and wanted to have him thrown out of the gym. Don said, 'You can't throw me out, I'm Captain Duke'."

The starter five for most of the season was Everett Fisher at center, Ermil Willis and William Davenport at the forwards and Don Perigo and Don Fisher at the guards. Joe Willis – "Don Perigo was smooth as silk, he could hit from out, they didn't have a three-point shot back then. Don Fisher gave you 150% on the floor, he gave it all he had, (diving on) loose balls, they really complemented each other. The frontcourt had some size, my brother Ermil, William Davenport and Everett Fisher.

Chandler opened the 1949-50 season with a home game against Tennyson on November 2nd and easily handled Coach Reed's alma-mater - "The Chandler Panthers opened their hardwood season Wednesday night by trouncing the Tennyson Tigers 56-22 before an overflow crowd at the Chandler gym" and "... in the Chandler cheesebox Coach Reed's veteran Panthers found Tennyson easy prey and waltzed to a 56-22 win without raising their blood pressure". Don Perigo, "a stellar guard with three years' experience, led the scoring parade for the Panthers as he tossed in eight field goals for a total of 16 points". Everett Fisher, Bill Davenport and Ermil Willis all added eight points in the victory.

Two nights later at home the Panthers romped over the Otwell Millers, 72-40. Chandler jumped out to a 19-4 lead at the end of the first quarter, led 36-10 at the half and cruised home from there with subs playing most of the second half. Perigo led the way with 20 and Clark had 16.

Tuesday November 8th found the Panthers playing their third straight home game, this contest against the Wadesville Red Devils. Chandler got off to a bit of a slow start only leading 8-5 at the first quarter break, but they started finding the mark in the second stanza and broke the game open to lead 28-12 at the half and coasted home from there, winning 49-32. Everett Fisher led the way with 11, Perigo added 10 and Don Fisher chipped in with eight.

The Boonville Enquirer commented on November 11, 1949 – "It's a little too early to tell how our teams are going to shape up this year but from all indications, Chandler is the team to beat. They have the same team as last season to the man and should do big things unless they get the idea that they have it made – then, a repetition of last year – a supposedly weaker county team will trip them when it hurts the most, at tourney time".

Chandler finally took to the road at Corydon KY on Friday November 18th. The Panthers led the whole way with a strong first quarter and at the half, 37-11. The final score over the Corncrackers was 74-39 as "Dashing Don Perigo, the eagle-

eyed Panther guard was loaded, firing 10 bullseyes from the pasture and 3 gratis tosses to the lead the evening's scorers. Don Fisher and Bill Davenport collected 14 and 12 points respectively". Ronnie King added ten, Everett Fisher had nine while Jerry Granderson, Clark and Bill Sodders each had a bucket for two points.

The Panthers had Warrick County foe Millersburg for a Thanksgiving appetizer on Wednesday, November 23rd, rolling to a 68-21 victory over the Millers despite Everett Fisher being out. Ermil Willis scored 20, Don Fisher had 14, Perigo chipped in with 10, Davenport and Sodders both added eight, John Shaw had four while Fred Allen and Bob Chambers rounded out the scoring with two points each. The Evansville Press reported that "the well-balanced had the game well in hand in the first two minutes and coasted in".

Chandler's first real test of the season was Game 6 at Henderson Holy Name on Pearl Harbor Day, Wednesday December 7th. Holy Name was ranked by one Bluegrass pundit as #11 in the state and entered the big game with a 5-1 record. Holy Name's coach commented "I believe they'll be favored to win. Coach Reed thought enough of us though to scout us at Earlington. Then last Friday he and four of his players scouted us when we played Corydon". To compare the two squads, both had smoked Corydon, Holy Name by 40 and Chandler by 35. Chandler got off to its usual fast start with a first quarter lead at 17-8. The Boonville Enquirer reported "Coach Reed's boys in blue set a blistering pace that kept them in front all the way, notching their sixth straight win of the season, 47-40". Chandler steadily increased its lead throughout the game to lead 41-27 at the third quarter stop and "coasted in". Don Perigo led the way with 15 points and Everett Fisher added 11 while Don Fisher chipped in with seven, Davenport and Willis helped with six apiece.

Two nights later Chandler traveled to the west side of Evansville to play Mater Dei, the new Catholic school in the city. The Panthers would have their most difficult game to date. The Evansville Press reported "A more wild manifestation of 'Hoosier hysteria' has seldom been better demonstrated than it was last night at the Mater Dei gymnasium where 800 screaming fanatics watched the Wildcats come heartbreakingly close to scoring an upset over unbeaten Chandler before bowing 42-35 in the final minutes." The Panthers jumped out to a 23-14 halftime lead and then with "Everett Fisher and Ermil Willis standing out on rebounds for Chandler, controlled the boards most of the way". Chandler never had more than that

nine-point lead and when Mater Dei crept to 37-35 with about four minutes to go, the outcome was in doubt. Mater Dei then had two chances to tie the game but failed to score in both instances as the Wildcats missed two free throws and then had a long shot from the field go in and out. Everett Fisher then scored for Chandler by tipping in a rebound and Don Perigo hit a hook shot with a little over a minute left to clinch the seventh straight game for the Panthers. Perigo and Everett Fisher led the way with ten points apiece and Willis added nine.

It was not uncommon in that era that many of the small schools scheduled games against the junior varsity squad of big-city schools such as Evansville Bosse and Evansville Central. In its final game before Christmas, that was the case with Chandler as the Panthers traveled to Evansville to take on the junior varsity of Evansville Central whose JV squad was riding a 22-game winning streak. The varsity Bears had won four consecutive regional titles so the Bear Cubs were expected to have some talent though perhaps young going up against Chandler's veterans. The game was close through the third quarter, Chandler led at the stops 5-4, 20-18 and 24-22 before breaking away in the fourth quarter to win 38-29. Don Fisher scored 13, Willis had 10 and Everett Fisher had nine. The starters played most of the game, Sodders was the only player off the bench and did not score, Davenport chipped in with four points and Jerry Granderson and Perigo had a free throw. It was a tough night for Perigo who did not connect from the field. Still, it was a well-earned Christmas present to stand at 8-0.

Originally Chandler was scheduled to play in the Corydon, Kentucky Holiday Tourney on December 28-29. However, according to The Boonville Enquirer the IHSAA barred schools at that time from participating in out-of-state tournaments and thus the Panthers were left with no games. However, some other nearby schools were not involved in a Holiday Tourney either, so with some fast planning, Chandler, Holland, Lynnville and Evansville Mater Dei signed an agreement to meet on December 27th at Mater Dei's gym with Chandler meeting Holland in the first game at 1:30. Chandler jumped out to a ten-point halftime lead, 27-17, over the Dutchmen, but Holland clawed back. Chandler could only connect on 3-14 attempts in the third quarter while Holland shot 7-23 to close the gap to 35-34 at the stop. With five minutes to play, Holland took the lead, 39-37, on a field goal by Bolling. Don Perigo then hit a long shot to tie the score and Davenport rang up two more field goals to put Chandler up 43-39 with three minutes

to go. Holland came right back with two fielders and a free throw to retake the lead 44-43 with 1:15 remaining. Holland rebounded after a missed Chandler shot and went into a stall. But Don Fisher proved to be the hero as he “smashed in, stole the ball and roared down for a crip”.

There was some controversy though after Fisher had scored, the Boonville Enquirer reported - “A foul was called either seconds before or seconds after it was over which would have given Holland a chance to even up the ball game. The official scorer, after much heated discussion, ruled that the game was over before the foul was called”. None of the surviving players who were interviewed remembered this incident. Evansville Courier reporter and columnist Dan Scism wrote, “Few, if any, of the fans heard the buzzer. I was on the end of the bench and didn’t hear it. When informed of what had happened, the Chandler boys let out a whoop”. Perigo led the way with 13, Everett Fisher added 11 and Davenport chipped in with 10. Had Chandler made its free throws though, the game would not have come down to such a disputed finish, the Panthers only connected on 5-22 charity tosses. Nevertheless, Chandler remained undefeated and advanced into the finals against Lynnville, the defending sectional champion.

The championship game was not nearly as tense as Ronnie King, filling in for Ermil Willis, sank six field goals and five freebies to lead the way with 17 points. The Panthers led 15-13 at the first quarter stop and then Lynnville went ice-cold from the field over quarters two and three, making only four of 31 attempts and trailed after three quarters 43-23. Chandler bounced back at the free throw line sinking 15 of 24 attempts for the game and coasted in the fourth quarter to win 53-38. Everett Fisher and Don Perigo backed King with 14 and 10 respectively as the Panthers won their 10th straight. Knocking off the defending sectional champions gave the Chandler faithful more reason to think this might finally be their year.

Chandler opened the second half of the campaign with another game against Corydon, Ken-

tucky, on the road on December 30th. Though tournament games outside of the state were prohibited, regular season games apparently were acceptable. The Panthers didn’t blow out Corydon this time but steadily increased its lead throughout the game and won 55-39. Everett Fisher led the scoring with 18, Davenport had 12, Perigo 11, King seven, Don Fisher four, Jerry Granderson two and Clark one point as Chandler upped its mark to 11-0.

Chandler broke in 1950 traveling to Evansville on Saturday January 7th to play Bosse’s JVs. However, “it seemed as if Chandler’s fine Panther team was playing the wrong opponent last Saturday evening at Bosse. They played, or rather loafed through, a poor Bosse reserve squad in the preliminary bout” defeating the Bull pups 42-18 “even though Coach Reed had his first stringers riding the bench most of the time”. The Boonville Enquirer reported, “Devastating Don Perigo was in his usual dead-shot form dropping in seven from the field before Coach Reed benched him to let a second-stringer get in on the killing.” In all, nine different players scored for Chandler in the easy win. Perigo paced the

Panthers with 14 and Everett and Don Fisher backed Perigo with six apiece.

On January 11th in a complete mismatch against another school from Warrick County, Chandler destroyed the Folsomville Eagles 97-13 in a game moved from January 6th. The Boonville Enquirer reported, “Folsomville could do nothing more than stand by and watch the show that increased and increased on the scoreboard until the boys on the counter began wondering how they would mark up a three-digit score. However, they didn’t have to use them for the Panthers didn’t quite make the grade – they fell short three points, romping through the unfortunate Folsomville lads, 97-13”. All ten players scored at least two buckets for Chandler as Perigo led the way with 19 points. Backing Perigo were Don Fisher with 15, Davenport 14, Clark had 11, King had nine, Shaw had seven points, Everett Fisher, Willis and Jerry Granderson all scored six each while Chambers rounded out the barrage



1950 Chandler Panthers

with four points as the Panthers moved to 13-0.

Their next game was against Warrick County foe Elberfeld on January 20th. For one of the few times thus far in the season, Chandler got off to a slow start. Elberfeld had beaten Chandler the prior year in the county tourney, so the Elites were expected to put up a decent fight against the Panthers. The Boonville Enquirer reported - "Bucking the height of rangy Everett Fisher and big, husky Ermil Willis, (Elberfeld) Coach Bill Dauby prodded his charges into a fast-driving and deceptive club that made more than a game of it" as Elberfeld fought its way to a 12-11 lead at the first quarter stop. "But from then on out the Panthers turned on the steam and blew Elberfeld away from the threatening zone". "Everett Fisher and Ermil Willis were the unconquerable twins of the evening - controlling both the backboards" to lead the way in a 53-33 victory. Everett Fisher scored 19 and Willis had 17, enough to outscore Elberfeld as a whole as Chandler stayed undefeated, raising its record to 14-0. Don Fisher chipped in with 11 while Davenport, Clark and King rounded out the scoring two points each. Perigo was saddled with foul trouble and did not score.

Chandler was scheduled for another contest with Lynnville but the game was canceled because Chandler would have had too many games because of the Christmas Tourney that was put together. So next up was the County Tourney at Boonville on January 27th and 28th and for some reason Lynnville did not participate. In game one against Newburgh, the Panthers thumped the Wildcats, 54-36. The Evansville Press reported, "Everett Fisher, Chandler's 6-4 senior center, paced the Panthers to their 15th successive triumph as he hit six times from the field and six times from the foul line for 18 points" and "Don Perigo hit five baskets for the winners, who went ahead early in the game and set the pace the rest of the way". Perigo had 13, Davenport added nine and Willis chipped in with six. Chandler led 12-5, 27-17 and 42-27 at the quarter breaks.

In the Saturday semi-final game Chandler was matched up with the host Pioneers. Chandler had not beaten Boonville in twenty years, not since the 1930 Warrick County Tourney, and with Chandler being undefeated, The Boonville Enquirer reported the scalpers were getting three dollars per ticket. Boonville led 15-12 after the first quarter, 29-21 at halftime and 35-29 heading to the final period. Boonville pushed the lead to 40-30 early in the fourth quarter and once again it looked like Chandler would come up short against Boonville and also lose the dream of an undefeated regular

season. The Panthers though fought back, scoring five straight points to slice the lead to 40-35 with three minutes remaining. Everett Fisher continued the comeback with two free throws and then hit a field goal from the pivot to pull Chandler within one. With 50 seconds remaining, Ronnie King tied the game with a free throw. Chandler then got the ball back and was holding for a final shot "when a Chandler guard, over-eager to protect a teammate from a Boonville player, was caught backing into his own guard" and called for a pushing foul. Boonville's Don Nonweiler connected on a free throw to give the Pioneers the lead they would not relinquish. Freshman Don Gore followed with two buckets for Boonville, a layup and an outside shot. Nonweiler finished out the scoring for the contest by sinking his 13th free throw in 16 attempts, the final score being 46-40, snapping the chance of an undefeated season for Chandler. Free throws were the difference in the game as Boonville sank 18 of 25 while Chandler only made 14-31. Chandler also struggled from the field converting only 20% of its shots though Boonville wasn't much better at 22%. Everett Fisher led the Panthers with 16 and Ermil Willis, the only Panther not to have a poor night shooting, scored eight points on 4-7 shooting.

The Panthers were not expected to have any trouble with the Chrisney Wildcats in their next game on February 3rd and Chandler jumped out to a 10-4 lead by the end of the first quarter. But Chrisney pulled within one point by halftime and the lead was still one point for Chandler, 25-24, entering the fourth quarter. In the end Chrisney was able to pull out the major upset victory, 38-36.

The Boonville Enquirer reported, "In this season of surprises, the grandpappy of them all happened last Friday night when Chrisney's low-rated Wildcat quint stopped mighty Chandler, 38-36, in an upset that had even the 'Cats wondering what had happened". "Did the 'Cats use blackjacks, chloroform or maybe hypnotic black magic on the Warrick Wonders?" Coach Reed however had none of that, he said simply, "We were beaten". The recap in the Boonville Enquirer further stated, "But delving deeper into the workings of the game you'll find the usual in upsets - Chrisney blew hotter than hades and Chandler iced up like a gambler's heart. It's an old plot in the dribble dramas". Ronnie King led Chandler with 11 points, but Don Perigo "had troubles to spare and managed only a lone 2-pointer". Everett Fisher scored six points but fouled out while Willis added five.

The Chandler team, needing to rebound with a good game to boost its confidence and spirit, headed west to play the Griffin Tornadoes on Fri-

day February 10th. The Panthers got the tonic they needed as Ermil Willis poured in eleven field goals for a game-high 22 points to lead Chandler past Griffin, 64-27. The Panthers jumped out to a 7-1 lead at the first quarter break though Griffin managed to close to 11-9 at the half. The action picked up considerably in the second half as Chandler pushed its lead out to 31-18 at the end of three quarters and then really went wild in the fourth quarter. Everett Fisher added 18, Don Fisher chipped in with seven, Perigo had six, King and Sodders had four, Davenport had two while Jerry Granderson added a free throw as the Panthers upped their record 16-2.

The Chandler offense had a lovefest with the scoreboard on Valentine's Day and "practically tore off the nets", blasting the Poseyville Posies, 101-40, breaking the school record for points previously established in the 97-13 win over Folsomville. Everett Fisher poured in 31, Perigo had 24, Don Fisher scored 11, Willis chipped in with nine, Davenport and Sodders added seven, Jerry Granderson had six, King followed with four and Clark had two free throws for the 101.

The Panthers closed out the regular season on February 17th with another matchup against the Elberfeld Elites, at Elberfeld. The Boonville Enquirer reported, "Chandler won their last game of their 1949-50 schedule last Friday night and without the services of their ace underbasket giant Everett Fisher, out due to sickness". Elberfeld led 12-8 at the end of the first quarter but "faltered in the middle of the second frame when Ronnie King and Donnie Fisher began to tickle the meshes with tip-ins". Chandler held a 24-21 lead at the intermission.

"Panther Ermil Willis worked the slot in the absence of his towering teammate and was the playmaker deluxe. His feeding of the ball off to Fisher and King was the nucleus of the Chandler scorework." Donnie Fisher led the way with 13 and Ronnie King added 12 as it was tight most of the way, Chandler leading 31-29 entering the final stanza and the Panthers hung on for 40-35 victory.

With the regular season concluded, Chandler went into sectionals with an 18-2 record and was picked by the Associated Press to win the sectional. Defending champion Lynnville had a record of 13-5 while Boonville was 11-9. It was reported in the Boonville Enquirer that Evansville College was interested in Everett Fisher.

When the sectional pairings were announced in the nine-team field at Boonville, Chandler and Boonville were matched up right away in the Friday night quarterfinals. In describing the bitterness

Chandler fans had due to the one-sided rivalry against Boonville, the Boonville Enquirer related a story from a few years earlier told by Boonville coach, Glenn Ricketts – while driving back from Evansville, Coach Ricketts picked up a youth wearing a Chandler sweater who was hitch-hiking. The topic turned to basketball and the young man expressed his opinion that Boonville was not to be among the favorites of the upcoming sectional, in fact, the young man placed Boonville as the fifth best team. When Ricketts asked if the young man knew who he was, the Chandler enthusiast replied no. When Ricketts told him that he was the coach for Boonville, the young man replied, "And I ain't takin' back a word of it".

Sectionals

The quarterfinal game against Boonville was played Friday night at 7pm in the Boonville Clark gym with Newburgh and Millersburg to follow. The first half was nip-and-tuck, Chandler led 8-7 at the first quarter stop and 16-15 at the half. The Panthers managed to get the lead to 28-24 entering the fourth quarter and with five minutes left, the long-sought victory over Boonville was in Chandler's grasp, 37-30. But then the Pioneers got going. First Aylsworth hit a long shot and then added a free throw followed by Jack Stover popping in a one-hander with two minutes remaining to narrow Chandler's lead to 37-35. After a Chandler free throw, Boonville scored two more buckets to grab a 39-38 advantage. Everett Fisher tied the game for Chandler with a free throw but Boonville took the lead again with a tip-in bucket by Byron Carter. Chandler came right back to tie on free throws after Boonville's leading scorer, Nonweiler, fouled out. None of the game recounts in the Evansville or Boonville newspapers state how Chandler scored to take a 43-41 lead, but then Boonville failed to tie the game and was forced to foul with four seconds remaining. As Davenport toe'd the line to attempt his free throw which would clinch the game for Chandler, Boonville Coach Glenn Ricketts strode over to Coach Reed to congratulate him on the victory. But Davenport missed, missed everything, an air-ball, and no time ran off the clock. Boonville threw the ball into Jack Stover who let fly from just beyond half court and "the ball ripped the nets as the gun sounded, sending the game into overtime".

With the devastation of having the victory snatched away so suddenly, it would not have been surprising had Chandler come out glassy-eyed in the overtime. But give the Panthers credit as they jumped quickly into the lead as Everett

Fisher hit a hook shot and then added two free throws. Boonville didn't give up either and was able to come back to tie on a field goal and two free throws. Chandler held the ball and was attacking when Everett Fisher was fouled with eight seconds left and dropped in his free throw to give Chandler the advantage. This time Boonville was not able to score and Chandler had finally buried twenty years of crawling to Boonville and again Ricketts congratulated Reed, saying, "This time I know it's so".

Tom Clark – "My girlfriend was a cheerleader for Boonville, right after the game was over I was trying to chase her down and she was trying to run away from me". Tom, were you chasing her because you wanted a hug and kiss from your girlfriend or were you going to rub it in? "Maybe a little of both".

Bill Robertson in the Evansville Press reported something a little differently than what Tom Clark remembers – "As Timer Felix Trader's gun barked finality to the Boonville defeat, Tom Clark, a Chandler sub who did not get into the heated melee, leaped from the bench and kissed Patty McGary, a Boonville cheerleader, so long and so well that the fathers of that Oklahoma town that frowns on such things must still be burning".

For the Panthers Everett Fisher had poured in 26 points, hitting 11 field goals, Davenport added 10 points, Perigo had nine, Willis hit two freebies though he was 0-11 from the field. Don Fisher added one freebie but he too struggled from the field, shooting 0-7 as well as fouling out. This game was a bit of a reversal from the contest in the county tourney as Boonville struggled at the line connecting on only 7-18, potentially costing the Pioneers the game. After the sectional win, there were accusations from fans on both sides that eggs were tossed. Chandler student Doris Jean Sutton - "We didn't throw eggs at Boonville students after the game Saturday night. Instead, Boonville students bombarded us. We still got marks on our cars to prove it". Regardless of who threw eggs at whom, all that mattered was Chandler had won and would play Newburgh the next afternoon in the semifinals.

Chandler had spanked Newburgh by eighteen in the county tourney but the first quarter saw the game tied five times. Chandler took a 12-11 advantage at the first quarter stop and increased the lead to 20-14 at the halftime break. Chandler led by as many as 14 in the third quarter before Coach Reed ordered a stall. The Evansville Sunday Courier and Press reported that "they almost stalled themselves out of the victory by not shooting until

halfway through the final chucker" by which time Newburgh had closed the gap all the way down to four points. The Panthers managed to hang on and win 45-40. Everett Fisher was the big gun with 19, Perigo and Willis had 10 each while Davenport, Don Fisher and Granderson each had two as Chandler won its 20th game of the season and earned the right to play for the sectional championship against Lynnville who had cast aside Tennyson in the other semi-final.

The championship game was not the nail-biter that many final contests are as Don Fisher opened the scoring with a shot in the pivot, Everett Fisher connected from the lane and when Don Fisher drove the lane, the lead was 6-0. Lynnville finally got on the board with a basket but then Everett Fisher knocked down two more buckets and Davenport followed with two free throws to up the lead to ten, 12-2. The score at the first quarter stop was 15-6. The squads played a nearly even second period with the lead never deviating beyond a narrow range of six to nine points. Perigo hit two long shots, Willis drove for a bucket and then tipped in a miss. Davenport made a free throw and Everett Fisher closed out the first-half scoring with a basket from underneath the hoop, 26-18 being the count. The first couple of minutes of the second half were going to be crucial if Lynnville were to get back into the game. But when Willis drilled one in from the circle and Davenport connected from a similar spot, the lead was 30-18 and the defending sectional champs were on the ropes and the Chandler boosters could smell blood, the title belt in their grasp. Lynnville made a small run to cut the lead to 33-26 late in the third quarter but Davenport made another shot from the circle. Following a Lynnville free throw, freebies from Willis and Davenport had the lead at ten, 37-27, entering the final eight minutes. The teams traded baskets and free throws for four minutes, Don Fisher, Willis and Davenport connecting from the field along with free throws by Perigo, Davenport, Don Fisher and another from Davenport. As the combatants came out of the official time out, Chandler led 47-38. The Panthers quickly dashed any last hopes of the Lindies when Don Fisher made a shot from the lane, Perigo hit one of his patented long shots, Davenport made two more charity tosses, Perigo sank another long one and then made a fast-break layup as the score grew to 57-39. Lynnville made the final score a little more respectable but Chandler had captured its first and only sectional championship 57-44. Everett Fisher led the way with 14, Perigo had 13, Davenport had 11, Willis 10 and Don Fisher had nine for the 57 points.

The Chandler News reported – “An oil boom in Chandler could not have brought the excitement that the Panthers brought last Saturday when they came home with the net they had cut from the Boonville gym after defeating Lynnville to win the sectional crown”.

The Boonville Enquirer reported, “To say the Chandler fans painted the town Saturday night is literally speaking for about every corner in Boonville carries a lasting ‘CHS’ painted on the sidewalk, signifying the spirit of conquest. This ancient traditional symbol of ‘we came, we played, we conquered all’ will stay to remind local losers that a new king is born”.

Sixty plus years later Ronnie King stated, “I’m the guy who wrote ‘Chandler High School’ on all the corners in Boonville. After we beat Boonville I went up there and wrote on the corners. After they beat us (in the county tourney), they came down and rampaged Chandler. And I went back up there by myself and painted the corners. I didn’t know anybody knew that I did it, I never told anybody about it and then the police came down looking to see who had done it. When they done all that crap to Chandler, nobody called the police. Anyway, when it got through, a guy called me up and had me paint some signs on his truck ‘cause I was such a good painter! I didn’t paint anything ugly (in Boonville), just a little kickback”. Not even Perigo or Clark had known King had been the culprit.

On Monday the students reported to school and were surprised when the principal dismissed school. A caravan of three buses and about twenty cars drove through the vanquished towns, first Boonville, and celebrated at the town square. Then they drove south to Newburgh and finally backtracked north through Boonville to Lynnville where the scene was repeated. Coach Reed then took the team to Agoga Tabernacle in Evansville to practice while about a dozen ladies stayed behind in Chandler to help prepare food for a community-wide banquet that night at the Chandler Gym where close to 400 people took part in the feast which was followed by a square dance

The Evansville Press reported about the town feast - “That feed by Chandler ardent boosters began the week of celebration and toasting. It looked like every citizen able to navigate was there. It was the first time I’d seen the Panthers without passwork – it was every man for himself. Tom Clark won scoring honors going around the laden tables four times. And then when Principal Williams asked what next, Tom wanted to know, ‘When do we eat again?’ “

Boonville Enquirer columnist Russ Metz wrote

in his column “Smoky Sez” that – “Don Fisher’s dad in anticipation of winning the sectional in both 1949 and 1950 – ‘Last year we bought a turkey for the boys and groomed him for the occasion but that gobbler was too timid. We lost the sectional. This year we got another – a big, tough rascal with plenty of fight. That’s just what the boys needed.’ At the town social on Monday night following the sectional win, the team polished off that bird in real style”.

The Newburgh Kiwanis followed by honoring the team with a banquet on Tuesday night and then the businessmen of Chandler hosted the squad at the Belvedere Café on Wednesday night. With all of the celebrating, Coach Reed had a big task keeping his players focused on beating Evansville Bosse in the regionals, but he seemed to have succeeded.

Chandler had 94 students and received 554 tickets to the regional. Jimmy Patterson of Katie’s Lunch Room, a favorite hang-out of the students was quoted in the Evansville Press – “We’ll need every last one of them – this town has a bigger basketball following than most towns twice this size”. Coach Reed echoed that sentiment, “I don’t believe that there is a better backed team in the state”.

The Evansville regionals were played downtown at Evansville Central’s gymnasium with a capacity of about 4600. Evansville Central had won four straight regional titles and finished the season ranked 10th by the AP and 13th by the UPI. However, but the Bears had been upset by Evansville Bosse, 57-46, so it was the Bulldogs at 14-9 who advanced out of the tough Evansville sectional to face 21-2 Chandler in the second game of the regionals. The 1pm matchup would pit the unbeaten and sixth-ranked Tell City Marksmen at 23-0 against the 19-2 Princeton Tigers. Tell City had spanked Princeton late in the regular season 71-50 and they handled the Tigers again in the first game of the regionals, 61-45.

Coach Reed on the Panthers’ regional matchup against Evansville Bosse – “We’re just a little school. We were very happy to be able to win the sectional, something Chandler had never done before. We can hardly hope to beat Bosse if it’s playing good ball. But, I’ve seen Bosse this year when it wasn’t so hot. If we catch them on a day like that, or if they’re thinking too much about Tell City, we might be able to pull a surprise”.

Bosse had some height and experience as its starters were 6’4” Carl Niedermeier, 6’3” Bernie Connolly, 6’0” Tom MacKenzie, 5’11½” Claude Wertz and 5’9” Bill Kanipe, all except Kanipe were



Don Perigo and Joe Willis (l-r) with Chandler memorabilia

seniors. The game with Bosse was back-and-forth in the early going, each team led five times and the score was tied nine times until Chandler took the lead at 22-20 when Bill Davenport made a hook shot with about five minutes to play in the first half. Everett Fisher fired in four more buckets to help the Panthers surge out to a 35-26 lead at the half. The only worry Chandler had as it happily jogged to the dressing room was Ermil Willis had picked up his fourth foul at the two-minute mark as the Panthers were pushing out to their nine-point lead. That only worry was quickly compounded when the team reached their dressing room and realized it had been ransacked during the first half. Ronnie King tells the story – “At halftime they took all of our goddamn clothes, we didn’t have nothin’ but what we was wearing. Pretty shitty, we had a bus ride home freezing our balls off. You’re all sweaty from a ball game and come out and get into an old, cold bus that didn’t have any heat in it, pretty tough they stole watches, they stole everything we had which wasn’t much, billfolds or whatever, they stole it all. And they had a guard at the door.”

The Evansville papers reported that a window had been jimmed and the thief had entered from the street. Did the theft play a part in the team losing its focus? King, “Oh, hell yes, absolutely, absolutely. We’re young guys, had we been a little older, it would have went the other way. But you’re in high school, had you been in college, it would have been a totally different animal.”

Bosse quickly took charge in the third quarter as the Panthers were still thinking about the theft. Chandler made only 2-20 field goals in the third quarter while Bosse drilled 8-20 to lead 44-41 at the end of the third quarter. Ermil Willis returned to the game in the fourth quarter but fouled out seven seconds later to seal Chandler’s fate. The Pan-

thers connected on only 3-18 field goal attempts in the fourth quarter while Bosse shot 9-21 to win the game going away, 69-51. Final stats were Chandler hitting 20-81 (25%) from the field and only 11-27 at the free throw line. Bosse recovered from hitting 4-20 in the second quarter to finish the game shooting 27-77 (35%) from the field while sinking 15-22 at the charity line. Everett and Don Fisher each scored 13 to lead Chandler, Willis and Perigo added eight, Davenport chipped in with seven and King rounded out the Panther scoring with a field goal. Ermil Willis and Don Fisher made the Sunday Evansville Courier and Press’ 8-man all-regional team. Evansville Bosse would upset Tell City in the regional finals before falling to Winslow in the first game at semi-state.

Don Perigo – “I thought we had a chance against Bosse, you’re beat if you don’t think you have a chance, but they just had too many horses. It was kind of a hard game for me. While we were playing basketball, funeral services were being held for my grandmother back home here. It was a hard game for me, I really wasn’t up to par, my mind wasn’t really there.”

For Chandler, Ken Reed later left coaching to open a bar and grill in Evansville. Five players – Everett Fisher, Bob Chambers, John Shaw, Jerry and Larry Granderson – became teachers though Larry Granderson later left teaching and worked in the insurance business.

John Shaw’s widow, Phyllis, related that Shaw taught 34 years at Dexter Elementary in Evansville and taught in the same room the entire time. Phyllis was a freshman at Bosse in 1950, “Oh, I was at the regional games in the Central Gym. We beat Tell City later that night, they had beaten us in double overtime in the season.” She said her family moved from Evansville to Warrick County while she was in college, one summer night she was in Boonville where she met John, “There he was!”

Don Fisher worked in the family lumber yard business in Chandler, Ermil Willis worked in a Chevrolet factory in Missouri, William Davenport worked for IBM and Bill Soddors worked at the nearby Alcoa plant in Warrick County.

Walter “Ronnie” King had many different careers including owning his own commercial fishing boat in Texas before retiring in 1994. At the time of the first phone interview in 2012 for this story he still fished recreationally three or four times a week, he had not been back to Chandler since his 50th class reunion in 2001. When attempting to contact King one last time before this story was finished, the previous phone number was no longer in service and this author is unsure of King’s whereabouts

or fate.

After graduating from high school, Don Perigo played one year of professional baseball in the St. Louis Browns' organization in the Alabama-Florida League and then served in the Marines. Upon being discharged, he went to mortuary school and opened his own funeral home in Newburgh. He also was elected Warrick County Coroner five times, serving twenty years. Today Don lives in Newburgh and still proudly flies his United States Marines flag in his front yard.



Tom and Patty Clark

Figuring he was going to be drafted anyway because of the Korean War, Tom Clark joined the Navy in 1950 and served for four years. Two years after the sectional victory over Boonville when he chased his girlfriend Patty McGary, she flew to Hawaii where Tom was stationed and they were married. After being discharged he worked in the Evansville area and ended up working at the nearby Alcoa plant for twenty-seven years, retiring in 1993. Today, he and Patty live in Boonville and on April 9th celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary.

Chandler High School was consolidated with Newburgh after the 1958-59 school year to form Castle High School. Most of the students at Chandler went to the new school though a few students who lived north and east of town would attend Boonville. The only sectional championship in school history was special for Don Perigo, Tom Clark, and all of the other graduates of Chandler High School. Perhaps Phyllis Shaw summed it up best when she said her husband "was mighty proud of that team."

Tournament Roster

Everett Fisher	6'4"	senior
Ermil Willis	6'2 1/2"	senior
William Davenport	6'0"	senior
Don Perigo	5'9 1/2"	senior
Don Fisher	5'11"	junior
Ronnie King	5'11"	junior
Tom Clark	6'0"	senior
John Shaw	5'9"	junior
William Sodders	5'7"	junior
Jerry Granderson	5'10"	junior

Other players who saw action during the season were Robert Chambers, 6'1" junior; Larry Granderson, 5'10" junior and Fred Allen, 6'0" junior.

Regular Season

Chandler 56	Tennyson 22, 1-0
Chandler 72	Otwell 40, 2-0
Chandler 49	Wadesville 32, 3-0
Chandler 74	Corydon KY 39, 4-0
Chandler 68	Millersburg 21, 5-0
Chandler 47	Henderson (KY) Holy Name 40, 6-0
Chandler 42	Evansville Mater Dei 35, 7-0
Chandler 38	Evansville Central JV 29, 8-0
Chandler 45	Holland 44, 9-0 (Holiday Tourney)
Chandler 53	Lynnville 38, 10-0 (Holiday Tourney)
Chandler 55	Corydon KY 39, 11-0
Chandler 42	Evansville Bosse JV 18, 12-0
Chandler 97	Folsomville 13, 13-0
Chandler 53	Elberfeld 33, 14-0
Chandler 54	Newburgh 36, 15-0 (County Tourney)
Boonville 46	Chandler 40, 15-1 (County Tourney)
Chrisney 38	Chandler 36, 15-2
Chandler 64	Griffin 27, 16-2
Chandler 101	Poseyville 40, 17-2
Chandler 40	Elberfeld 35, 18-2
Sectional (at Boonville)	
Chandler 48	Boonville 47 (ot), 19-2
Chandler 45	Newburgh 40, 20-2
Chandler 57	Lynnville 44, 21-2
Regional (at Evansville)	
Evansville Bosse 69	Chandler 51, 21-3

Sources:

Evansville Courier, Evansville Press, Evansville Sunday Courier and Press, Boonville Enquirer, Boonville Standard, "Tourney Time: The Indiana High School Athletic Association Boys Basketball Tournament" by Bill May, Phone interview with Don Perigo, Ronnie King, Tom Clark, and Joe Willis, Personal Interview with Don Perigo and Joe Willis and Tom and Patty Clark, Personal interview with Phyllis Shaw, US Census Bureau, 2010

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Present-day photos by Mark Buxton

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