

**James Johnson**

**Tackle #48**

**Class of 1956**

James W. Johnson passed away Dec. 6, 2007 of lung cancer. His wife, Tina, will be at the Anniversary Game to represent James. James played for Coloma the year they won the Little 8 Championship.

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**Randy Enders**

Eugene, OR

My ancestors and relatives were residents of the Watervliet and Coloma area since the 1840's. While searching genealogical articles, I have found many references to my Enders family and other family names that have played in this great rivalry.

As a football fan, I tip my hat to the 100<sup>th</sup> game between these two high schools, to the enthusiasm of the fans, and to the pride of the players who have played over the long history of the rivalry.

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In memory of:

**Thomas Rodriguez**

**Guard #64**

**Class of 1975**

**William "Gonzo" Rodriguez**

**Tackle #33**

Rodriguez brothers, Panther vs. Comet history: 1970, Joe lost to Coloma. 1971 to 1974, Bill beat Coloma 4 straight years. 1975, Tom lost to Coloma.

The best backfield in Panther history:  
Chuck Andrews, Jimmy Bolin & Bill Rodriguez.

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**Nadine (Miller) Dietrich**

**Class of 1942**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I was a cheerleader during the 1940 - 42 years. I remember that every Armistice Day we had very little school. We had wonderful programs honoring WWI veterans (names like Rockwell and DeFields are two that come to mind). I wonder how many students know that Veteran's Day began as Armistice Day. The Coloma / Watervliet game was always held on Armistice Day (Nov. 11) in the afternoon.

# 100 Anniversary

## Coloma / Watervliet Football Game



*100 Years of History  
Player Profiles*

Friday, August 28, 2009

**COACHES HALL OF FAME****COLOMA HEAD COACHES**

Wright	???? - 1927
S.L. McDaniels	1928 - 1958
Lyle Patterson	1959 - 1962
Bob Stambek	1963 - 1965
Jerry Hauch	1966 - 1969
Robert Rakauski	1970 - 1973
Robert Irvin	1973 - 1978 & 1981 - 1988
Tim Bergan	1979
Dave Price	1980
Bruce Dings	1989 - 1993
Mark Morris	1994 - 1995
Dave Stowers	1996 - 2002
Bob Welton	2003
Mark Eddy	2004 - Current

**WATERVLIET HEAD COACHES**

Unknown	pre-1930
George Hackett	1930 - 1932 & 1936 - 1945
Harold Crocker	1933 - 1935
Don Burnison	1946 - 1950
Don Rose	1951 - 1953
Maynard Day	1954 - 1958
Robert Grimes	1959 - 1961
Gerald Barchett	1962 - 1976 & 1978 - 1982
Doug Borsum	1977
Dave Hemminger	1983
Ron Farac	1984 - 1994 & 2002 - 2005
Scott Millin	1995 - 1996
Richard Ambrosino	1997 - 1998
Brad Hessler	1999 - 2001
Jeremy Andrews	2006 - Current

**Phil Joslyn****Tackle #64****Class of 1984**

Now in: Hudsonville, MI

I remember family, friends, fans coming out, not matter the weather, cheering for us and getting us pumped up during the game. COWBELLS!

**Edward Nash****Tackle #64**

Now in: Camarillo, CA

My favorite memory was after our first loss to Berrien Springs, we went undefeated until LMC and played for the Conference Championship. (Unfortunately, we lost at the last second.) I remember growing up, it was such a great thing to look forward to making Varsity because of the tradition of Watervliet Football.

**Joseph Nash****Tackle #71****Class of 1985**

Now in: Rock Island, IL

The whole Senior year was a great year. We had only 15 players and we finished 7 - 2. We had the most All-Conference players that year than any other team in the Red Arrow Conference, even though we didn't win conference. We also had the biggest line for many years.

**John Flaherty****Tackle #71**

Now in: Porter, IN

Favorite memories: Coming from behind, driving 60 years, scoring with 33 seconds left in the game to beat Decatur 20 - 14...Beating the "crap" out of heavily favored Coloma physically, running all over them, but losing the game 12 - 6 in the first "Snow Bowl" held at Panther Stadium, Nov. 14, 1969. Watervliet Football means to me: hard-hitting, never give up, touch nosed football - experiences I draw on to this day.

**Jamie Riley****Tackle #74**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My favorite part of Watervliet football was playing at Panther Stadium.

**James Ishmael**      **End #86**      **Class of 1959**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

The games were very special as I had many friends that played for Coloma and it was always a big game.

**Frank Zvonar**      **Tackle #5**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I remember... Playing and running the ball in the SilverDome... Slamming that Ispaming runner down near the end of the game out of bounds... Having a 14-yard carry my Senior year (top of all runners that year)... Having over 100 yards in only a quarter and a half of playing time against my cousin vs. Bridgman... My JV coach James Keach having a talk with me one day in his office, wishing all of his players had my heart and love for the game that I did... Best of all: having the same teammates every year from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to the SilverDome.

**David Burtchett**      **Tackle #84**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I got that feelin! Oh yeah! That soul feelin! Oh yeah! 90 degree double day practice and running up the green monster.

**Patrick Iliff**      **Linebacker #84**      **Class of 1978**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The ties between the 2 communities are very strong. This leads to very strong rivalry between the 2 teams. I played for Coloma the first 2 weeks of my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year, before moving to Watervliet, where I played all 6 years against Coloma. I also coached for 10 years in Waterliet at all levels, including starting Watervliet's Rocket program in 1994... I feel I have a unique perspective on the rivalry.

Each team hates to lose to the other. The towns are so close; the people are so intertwined. Many families have relatives in each town. Years ago, the rivalry was not as lopsided as it is now, and most of the games were very close, regardless of who won... We took to the field expecting to win every game. Sure, we didn't do it, but we believed we could, and we won far more than we lost.

Watervliet football to me means: respect everyone, FEAR NO ONE. Expect to win every game. Please bring back Watervliet Football!

## COLOMA COMETS REMEMBER

**Nicholas Page**      **Tackle #2**

PSC 819 Box 9 FPO AE 09645

My favorite memory is seeing everyone from both towns in the stands cheering and screaming.

**Robert Molter, Jr.**      **Halfback #41**      **Class of 1979**

Now in: Charlevoix, MI

Beating Watervliet in both my Jr. and Sr. years was one of the highlights of my HS football experience (sorry, you Panthers!). I appreciated Coach Irvin nominating me to the all-conference team.

**Alvin Brewer**      **Tackle #66**      **Class of 1997**

Now in: Redford, MI

Favorite memory: Beating Watervliet in 1995 and 1996.

**Mark Coble**      **Tackle #78**      **Class of 1999**

Now in: Coloma, MI

We shut the Watervliet Panthers down. They did not score a touchdown.

**David Coble**      **End #81**      **Class of 1970**

Now in: Stevensville, MI

November 14, 1969: Too late in the season. It was cold. It had snowed the night before, and they had to plow the field because it was frozen.

**Billy Allen**      **Tackle #56**

Now in: Belleville, MI

This is a true rivalry. I loved having the bragging rights.

**Roy Kinzler**      **Middle Guard #58**      **Class of 1940**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember playing for Coloma in 1939 and 1940.

**Bob Baiers**      **Quarterback #45**      **Class of 1960**

Now in: Grand Rapids, MI

My favorite memories: Coach Patterson's leadership in inspiring our Coloma football team to not just win the game but to play as a team.

**Jerry Pryor**      **Halfback #4**      **Class of 1997**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

The Coloma Watervliet game is an example of two cities that know each other well coming together to pay some good smash mouth football, the way the game should be played! My favorite memory would be having a 2 - 0 record against Watervliet. Another great memory from the Coloma / Watervliet game happened during my junior year. I came off the bench to score the first TD of the game, which led to a big win for Coloma's Seniors!

I remember it like yesterday, but do we ever forget?

**Ron Cooper**      **Tackle #12**

Now in: Clinton, CT

I remember: playing in the snow for pride and bragging rights against neighbors.

**Neil Vitale**      **Fullback #30**      **Class of 1979**

Now in: Coloma, MI

We won!

**Joseph Rodriguez**      **Linebacker #64**      **Class of 1970**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Butt the ball!

**Don Finnefrock**      **Halfback #77**      **Class of 1951**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

In 1948, I scored 2 TD's and beat Coloma 12 - 0. In 1949, we beat Coloma 26 - 25 for the Little 8 Championship. In 1950, we lost to Coloma 19 - 18, when their extra point hit the cross bar and went over, costing us the championship.

**Caleb Wendzel**      **Cornerback #88**      **Class of 2009**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

My favorite memory was when our team beat Bloomingdale 40 - 0, and I finally got to play for more than 30 seconds! My fondest memories are the times we spent together as a team through the ups and downs of practice, and sharing the happy winning games - and the sad times when we lost. Go Panthers!

**Gary Hurst**      **Tackle #0**

Now in: Belton, TX

Favorite memory: bringing the community together. It was great in 1979 when we went to State, to see everyone pull together.

**Kyle Freed**      **Tackle #5**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The Watervliet vs. Coloma rivalry is by the best rivalry out there. It is the biggest game of the year EVERY season, no matter what.

**Donald Benjamin**      **Tackle #70**      **Class of 1969**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember: beating Coloma. Go Panthers!

**Dan Hutchinson**      **Quarterback #7**      **Class of 1983**

Now in: Naperville, IL

My Junior year we were down 9 to 8 to Coloma. We drove 85 yards and won on the last play of the game. Kevin Schultz and Bob Marvin caught 4 crucial passes to keep the drive going. I believe we had a 3<sup>rd</sup> and long and a 4<sup>th</sup> and long during the drive that made it kind of nerve-wracking. Bobby Marvin had the game of his life running and catching the ball.

I remember saying "hut!" with one second left on the clock and Jay Dannefel scoring from about 2 yards out. Good thing the scoreboard was in the direction we were driving (otherwise I would have had to guess how much time was left...).

Watervliet fans mobbed us after the game. Watervliet football means dedication, hard work, perseverance, maintaining a very strong work ethic, and putting the betterment of the team above all else.

**Ben Bobay**      **Tackle #7**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

I remember: Beating Coloma in Coloma in 1994.

**James McVay**      **Linebacker #42**      **Class of 1975**

Now in: Snoqualmie, WA

I coached and played for both Coloma and Watervliet. I played on winning teams 72 - 75 ('74 & '75 teams were Conference Champions!). I coached in Coloma in '81 & Watervliet in '82. Playing for Gerry prepared me for a great future playing division 1 football at Western Mich. U. where I lettered all 4 years.

**Howard Fish**      **Tackle #22**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember never losing to Coloma.

**Allen Crumb**      **End #82**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

I remember the time in 1946 when we beat Cass. They had 4 or 5 servicemen on their team, and no one could beat them. They were undefeated. They brought their own PA system to broadcast the game. By halftime, we were winning and they shut the PA system down. We went on to win the game.

**Fred Reeves**      **Fullback #21**      **Class of 1959**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I played in several Coloma / Watervliet games. I could barely walk for a couple days afterward. The contact in those games had no comparison! The great part of it all was the friendships you developed with the Watervliet players. Fifty years later, we still have those friendships!

**Andrew Saltzman**      **Halfback #15**      **Class of 2009**

Now in: Coloma, MI

Dominating Watervliet 52 - 6 my junior year. I had 120 yards with two TD's and it was my first varsity game.

**Ken Umphrey**      **Tackle #85**

Now in: Sylvania, OH

My favorite memory: Holding the ball for the kicker for the extra point, making it, and winning by one point!

**Ryan Saltzman**      **Guard #58**      **Class of 2005**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My favorite memory occurred during my Junior year when we went 9 - 0 during the regular football season and won our first playoff game in Coloma football history! We opened the year off beating the kitty cats 44 - 8.

**Terry Ridge**      **Halfback #22**

Now in: Coloma, MI

The Coloma / Watervliet game was the one with the most rivalry. It was always the last game of the year! I remember the last game that Mac coached, but we lost the game in the last minute.

**Graydon Eltzroth**      **Linebacker #60**      **Class of 1963**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I remember beating Watervliet my senior year and the photographer getting his leg broken.

**Jeff Jackson**      **Cornerback #10**      **Class of 1980**

Now in: Portage, MI

Coloma and Watervliet: tradition, pride, and hard-hitting football! I remember that emotions ran high all week long.

**Roger Smith**      **Tackle #22**

Now in: Coloma, MI

The game was special at the end of the season. We beat Watervliet 20 - 13 my Senior year in 1959. Rain, sleet, snow, and cold! I scored 3 of Coloma's TD's, giving me 39 TD's for 2 years, making All State Class C.

**Richard Timm**      **Halfback #21**      **Class of 1961**

Now in: Coloma, MI

Coloma Watervliet game in 1960 was the only game we won that season.

**Gary Stainbrook**      **Guard #61**      **Class of 1964**

Now in: Fennville, MI

Coloma beat Watervliet my senior year. I was team captain in the 1963 - 1964 season. I never lost to Watervliet any of my 4 high school years in football.

**Robert Schultz**      **Tackle #74**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

There are too many memories to just pick one.

**Alfred Shrosbree**      **Halfback #57**      **Class of 1946**

Now in: Bingham Farms, MI

Armistice Day, 1945: I was initially impressed by the size of the crowd, for we had never played before so many. Proof positive of the interest and support of both the gold and green *and* maroon and White. Coloma gained more yardage than Watervliet, but Watervliet did not allow them to score. Until the final minutes, it was possible to win or lose the game. The contest was that close.

My personal remembrance is still vivid. I ran around the right end from the 19 yard line to what I and everyone else thought was a TD. However, the official did not raise his hand with the touchdown sign, but rather took the football and pointed toward the ground. And there it was: my footprint in the snow, six inches from the goal line. The fullback carried the ball for a TD and Watervliet won the game: 13 - 0.

**Ronald Bohn**      **Tackle #70**      **Class of 1983**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

Going 17 and 1 with one of the best defenses this area has ever had.

**LaVon (Spike) LaVanway**      **Tackle #65**      **Class of 1956**

Now in: Hartford, MI

I enjoyed playing with teammates and representing Watervliet.

**Travis McKinney**      **Guard #60**      **Class of 1990**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember the 1988 Coloma / Watervliet football game. Watervliet beat Coloma 26 - 12. After 6 seasons of losses to Coloma, Watervliet got the "W." The game was called with 1:00 left because a brawl broke out that cleared both benches.

**Bob Hutchins**      **Halfback #41**      **Class of 1970**

Now in: Portage, MI

I was lucky enough to play football on the old field at Hays Park and the new field when the new high school was built. Not many players had the chance to do that.

**Jeff Riley****Guard #65****Class of 1992**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My Sophomore year (1989 - week 8), we had to go out at lunch to roll snowballs in order to clean the field off so we could play that night.

**Dennis Hingst****Halfback #31****Class of 1959**

Now in: Clinton Twp., MI

I played football at Watervliet all 4 years of high school. Great group of guys and lots of good memories. I have even been able to stay in touch with a few of the players.

**Terry Harris****Tackle #6**

Now in: Chicago, IL

My favorite memory is defeating Coloma 3 out of the 4 years I played on the Varsity. I remember the game day atmosphere at school, in the community, and in the stadium. And I remember hearing Mr. Keech's voice over the PA system...

**John Tucker, III****Quarterback #6****Class of 1981**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember... The 1979 game: catching a Coloma player from behind to save a touchdown. Watervliet ended up winning. And in the 1980 game, beating Coloma 30 - 5.

**Bill Jones****Guard #23****Class of 1950**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

I was captain of the 1949 Little 8 Championship Team, which was the first undefeated team in Watervliet history.

**Gordie Cartwright****Tackle #21**

Now in: Coloma, MI

Too many favorite memories, from winning the first game against Bridgman in '97 after two 0 - 9 seasons, to being undefeated and going to the district game in '99. Most of all, I LOVED the feeling I got right before running onto the field every Friday night...

**David Smith****End #87****Class of 1988**

Now in: Bridgman, MI

My favorite memory would have to be my senior year game in '87 that took 3 overtimes to decide. I had the pleasure to catch the last touchdown pass to tie us up in O.T. number 3, and the extra point put Coloma on top. The best part of the game is the bond that was built with teammates. To this day, the guys on the field that night are like family.

It doesn't matter which side you're on, when it comes to the Coloma / Watervliet game, nothing else matters. This is the game that you prepare for from the first day you lace up the pads. This is "The Game," and no one will ever forget the night they played it.

As for what this game means to me, I can sum it up in one word: *Everything.*

**Ed Messal****Guard #62****Class of 1961**

Now in: Evansville, IN

In the '59 - '60 season, as a Junior Coloma player, we lost only 2 games. In the '60 - '61 season as a Senior, we won only 1 game: Coloma 27 / Watervliet 13.

Coach Patterson had a perfect game plan to stop Roger Hardy. Three players, myself included, had one assignment: tackle Roger Hardy, every play, no matter where the ball went on the field. It worked! We slowed him down and we won!

(Roger later married my cousin!)

**Richard Messal****Tackle #50****Class of 1963**

Now in: Dowagiac, MI

Never losing to Watervliet in 4 years of high school!

**Rick Stevens**      **Tackle #77**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

One of my favorite memories was leaving the Coloma / Watervliet rivalry with a goose egg for Watervliet my senior year. Coloma won 35 - 0, if I remember correctly. I believe I had about 12 tackles that game. It was the perfect end of a fun-filled career as a Comet.

**Jeff Faultersack**      **Cornerback #40**      **Class of 1980**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I remember playing in the Coloma / Watervliet game in the fall of '79 on my birthday. Ironically, 30 years later, my son is playing in the 100<sup>th</sup> game. GO COMETS!

**Greg Dabicci**      **Tackle #83**

Now in: Indianapolis, IN

Lots of excellent competition, not just football, but also during my many track & field seasons.

**Robert Corbett**      **Guard #82**      **Class of 1953**

Now in: Normal, IL

This was the big one. I remember Coloma victories in hard-fought games.

My teammates warned me of my opponent on the field my Senior year, so I avoided his efforts at smashing my face by slightly adjusting my body position just before contact. Near the end of the game he had a mishap and was taken to the hospital - not through any conscious effort on my part. However, my teammates thought that I had laid the fellow low... and I didn't dissuade them of that.

In Loving Memory of:

**R.J. Lefor**      **Quarterback #15**      **Class of 2001**

Our favorite memory of R.J. is how amazing he played as the Watervliet Quarterback. R.J. only played his Senior season for Watervliet, but was able to throw for 2,400 yards that single season, ranking him in the Top 25 in Michigan record books.

On a personal note, a loving memory is of how he would pick up his cousins after each home game, give them the biggest hug, and carry them off the field with the rest of the team.

**Matthew Quinn**      **Tackle #82**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The years I played, we were a young team with minimal experience. We lost every game, but the pride and fight within our team showed every game. We never stopped trying. We never gave up.

**Trent McKinney**      **Cornerback #40**      **Class of 1986**

Now in: Portage, MI

Playing Watervliet football separated the men from the boys.

**Greg Krell**      **Tackle #67**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I only was in the "Neighborhood Battle" in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We lost the game 16 - 6. The game was at Coloma, and I played offensive guard in the game. I was a 98 lb. weakling back then. I remember being run over and through every play. The other 2 games we had that season, I was on "Special Teams."

**Daniel Iliff**      **Cornerback #6**      **Class of 2001**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

My favorite memory is being a part of the undefeated 1999 team. We had a great group of guys and an unbelievable season. That success is what Watervliet football is... or at least what it used to be: great teams, hardworking players, and quality coaching... My hope is that the program we all played so hard for will soon return to prominence. Watervliet football should be the perennial power it once was.

**Tony Gray****Tackle #63**

Now in: Gilbert, AZ

We never lost to Coloma!

**Matt Clay****Linebacker #52****Class of 1995**

Now in: Coloma, MI

Favorite memory: going to play at Eastern Mich. U. against River Rouge. They were bigger, faster, stronger, and just more athletic. But when all was said and done, we beat them: 28 - 8. After the game, they came over and told us they had never been hit like that before. That is what Watervliet football is all about: making people remember who they played... Go Panthers!

**Frank Simanton****Guard #65****Class of 1970**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

Being a farm kid, we usually were harvesting apples in the Fall, but my Senior year, I convinced my father to let me play football. Since I was a first year player, I didn't get to play all that much. But on that cold and snowy day in 1969 (da Snow Bowl), we all got out of school to clear off the field. I didn't play much that night, but it was one of the most memorable times of my high school career.

In Loving Memory of:

**Jim Olmsted****Tackle #42**

Jim was very proud of playing football for WHS. He would tell many stories about the good old days when he played, about how hard they worked and what that hard work gave him later in life. He had a very social relationship with Mr. Keech that lasted until long after high school. It was also something he and his future son-in-law both loved talking about and taking pride in what they accomplished as Panthers.

**Scott Isbrecht****Tackle #63**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

I remember holding Coloma on the 1 yard line for a full set of downs...

**Rick Sabadin****Quarterback #7****Class of 1976**

Now in: Henderson, NV

Two-A-Days and Friday nights...

**Brandon Howell****Tackle #70****Class of 2006**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I'll never forget the first football game I ever played: my freshman year we beat Watervliet at Panther Stadium, 35 - 0. I'll carry with me the sense of pride that was instilled in me by my JV coach Bruce Dings for the rest of my life.

The Coloma / Watervliet rivalry is something that I learned to take very seriously because of football. I will never forget how much it meant to our team and to our school to beat them as badly as we could.

**Alex Garrod****Quarterback #7****Class of 2008**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My favorite memory: beating Watervliet 55 - 6 my senior year.

**John Cunningham, Sr.****Guard #78****Class of 1951**

Now in: Thamesville, Ontario, Canada

I obviously have very favorable memories of Coloma football, since I am planning on returning for this event.

**Nick Mannino****Halfback #27****Class of 2008**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My favorite memory was back in Rocket football. We first played Watervliet and our coach was cousins with their coach. He made it a big game for us and we won 50 - 0. Also, both my Junior and Senior years, we always started off the season right with blow out victories.

**Ron Cooper****Tackle #12**

Now in: Clinton, CT

I always looked forward to playing the last game - even with snow.

**Nick Garrod****Guard #61****Class of 2006**

Now in: Coloma, MI

The best memory is from my senior year. It was my brother's (Alex Garrod) first game as a varsity QB. As a guard, it was my job to protect him and make sure that he could do his job. He was very nervous, but eventually calmed down as the game went on. It was a great game and thanks to Senior leadership and Alex finally finding his groove, we were able to keep the winning streak alive.

**Ken Hosang****Halfback #52****Class of 1954**

Now in: Canyon Lake, TX

I played left halfback for Coloma varsity for 3 years. We won all three years, if my memory is correct. The games were always tough and highly competitive. I seem to remember that this game was broadcast on radio and cars were parked all the way into town, it was so crowded.

I knew and respected several players from Watervliet, and looked forward to competing with them.

**Shawn Sarters****Linebacker #84****Class of 1994**

Now in: Niles, MI

I am the grandson of James Johnson, who played in the Little 8 Championship. I attended Watervliet school on and off for 3 years, and went to Coloma for 6 years. Each year of the rivalry I played with friends and against friends on both sides of the gridiron. My Junior and Senior years, I started at wide receiver / tight end and starting outside linebacker.

**Michael Thumm****Fullback #42****Class of 1986**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Watervliet football was an honor to play on Friday nights in front of supportive Watervliet fans! Many friendships were formed on and off the field.

**Rick Liles****End #60****Class of 1985**

Now in: Coloma, MI

Too many memories to list!

**George Krieger****Tackle #41****Class of 1938**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I played many different positions during the games. I remember helping Coach Crocker teach the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders on Saturday mornings when he did not have to work.

**Kevin Schultz****Tackle #42**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

3:26 left in the game; 86 yards to go. Best final drive in the history of this great rivalry. Still listening to them whine about the last snap. PRICELESS.

**Matthew Winnell****Tackle #72**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

When Coach Farac was around, we played for him. He knew how to make us feel like we were representing the city. I give him and his staff all the credit in the world. I'll always remember wearing maroon & white.

**Tom Golden****Tackle #72**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

I remember: Beating Coloma 20 - 14 in my final football game.

**Hazel Dougherty****Cheerleader**

Now in: Oswego, IL

I was a cheerleader for the Panthers until I graduated in 1962 and remember most the Snake Dance down the middle of Main Street.

**Michael McVay      Tackle #67**

The years playing football for the Panthers will always hold a special place within my heart. I think it was the spirit and the winning that made us all feel like a family. I grew closer to my twin brother, Jim. We always looked forward to our next game just to see if anyone could run the ball on us.

It was a pride thing that brought the community together. It was team spirit and the support of all those who lived in our community working together to be #1. After all it was their support and dedication that brought out the best in all of us.

**Allen Nilson      Guard #54      Class of 1966**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

In 1965, Watervliet was undefeated. We beat Coloma!

**Kevin Adams      Quarterback #6      Class of 2003**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

My favorite memory was seeing Panther Stadium completely packed for the 2 playoff games we hosted in 1999.

**Jim Woodruff      Tackle #62      Class of 1981**

Now in: Lansing, MI

My mother, Genevieve Woodruff, attended every game at home or away and comforted me when we lost to Coloma.

**Roger Hiler      Tackle #82**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

I remember the 1979 SilverDome run and the 1981 undefeated season.

**Devin Davis      End #44      Class of 2009**

Now in: Coloma, MI

It's been an awesome opportunity to have played against Watervliet during my high school football career. I always looked forward to playing the Panthers and will continue to watch the great game every year.

**Bruce Owen      Tackle #50      Class of 1960**

Now in: Coloma, MI

Fall, 1974: Watervliet is 8 - 0 and Coloma is 7 - 1. It was the BIG game, and there was a lot of electricity in the air that whole week before the game. The newspaper dubbed it as the "Super Bowl of SW Michigan: Blossomland Champs vs. the Red Arrow Champs."

Coloma won the game 7 - 0 on a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter drive that used up most of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter clock and covered more than 80 yards. That drive was a thing of beauty, if you liked old-fashioned Coloma / Watervliet smash mouth football!

As the clock wound down on the last play of the game, I anticipated the fight that had traditionally ended a lot of Coloma / Watervliet games would be starting as I snapped the ball for the last time in my high school career. I was prepared for something bad to happen - like a foot in my face.

As both teams lined up at the line of scrimmage for that last play, Bob Young, a defensive back for the Panthers, hollered out to his team-mates to be cool, and reinforced that this was one of the best games ever played. He told them not to do something stupid. Thanks, Bob.

As much as both teams wanted that "W," that team from Watervliet was not only very talented, but also a bunch of stand up guys. Both teams played a heck of a game. I have always held that Panther team in high regard. They kept their emotional energy focused on the game and did not let their pride trick them into kicking somebody's butt with a cheap shot. All the hitting in that game was clean and was delivered as hard as it could be. That's how this game is supposed to be played: as hard as you can, but clean.

A lot of those guys on that Panther team are good friends of mine today. 1974 was the Fall when both Comet and Panther teams got to see a lot of wins. Kudos to both squads for jobs well done, and to the coaches - Barchett and Irvin, and their staffs -- that made all of us better men than we might have been had they not been willing to give heir time to our cause. Thanks.

**Jim Cottier****Tackle #44**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My Junior year we played Buchanan. They were #1 in the state in Class B. We held them scoreless in the first half at home. It's the first time I can remember that the crowd went crazy on every play. The score became 7 - 0 in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, with Buchanan in the lead. We drove the ball down to their 2-yard line.

We had 4 tries to get it in the end zone. We made it down to the 1-inch line on the 3<sup>rd</sup> down, and we thought we were in the end zone, but the refs saw it differently. On the 4<sup>th</sup> down, it was a fake to me, up the middle, & an end run pass option for our all-state QB Joel Carlson.

The end stayed at home and stopped Joel again on the half-yard line. Although it was a terrific disappointment, it's a game and memory I will never forget. It was a real team effort.

**Marc Hettig****Tackle #73**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I played in 3 Coloma / Watervliet games & coached as varsity assistant in one after that. I have many fond memories of the contest. One is when I put my hand down for my 3-point stance on the snow & sleet-covered field at Watervliet and my yellow handy Andy gloves froze and stuck to the field. I also remember playing at the Coloma field in 1974, and the crowd noise was so loud, I could not hear the QB bark signals at my right offensive tackle position.

The game was always the biggest thing in our football schedule. If you beat Watervliet, you had a successful season.

**Robert Molter****Tackle #50**

Now in: Coloma, MI

The Nov., 1954 game at Hays Field: Coloma won by a very small margin, and there were 3 - 4 foot snowbanks around the field. Life was good if Coloma beat Watervliet. Free pizza at Luigi's if we won!

**Randy Schultz****Tackle #10**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

My favorite memory was Watervliet going to the SilverDome.

**Jason Forrester****End #7****Class of 1992**

Now in: Baroda, MI

My favorite memory was beating Coloma in a blizzard.

**Bob Koshar****Halfback #11****Class of 1968**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember beating St. Joe Catholic in 1967 and winning the Red Arrow Conference. The low point was being beaten by Coloma - our only loss that year.

**Troy Cowsert****Halfback #22****Class of 1987**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Watervliet football was very intense for all of the players on our team. Winning was the only thing and losing was not acceptable. I remember many quiet bus rides as we prepared ourselves for an important game. Watervliet football was a tradition we felt needed to be carried on.

**Fred Knight****Tackle #50**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember being part of the team in 1979 and 1980, and the good memories and friendships that last a lifetime.

**David Baiers****Defensive & Offensive Tackle #72**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

When I was a Sophomore, Coach Barchett brought me up to Varsity and I worked my way into a starter position... The day before the game, Coach tells us it's going to be on the new local cable station. We had to go in front of a camera and give our name, grade and position. That sure gave this Bainbridge farmboy a "deer in the headlight" look. To this day, I still get the same chill up and down my spine when they play the National Anthem.

**Marc Willmeng**      **Quarterback #5**      **Class of 1992**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember beating Coloma on a cold, windy night that started a 4-year winning streak for Watervliet. I also remember throwing a touchdown pass in my last game vs. Coloma my Senior year.

**Arnold Malin**      **Halfback #24**      **Class of 1960**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

I remember taking the other players home, if they gave me a push to start my car. I needed a lot of help to roll my 1940 Ford fast enough to start it. What a great group of friends we became...

**Jimi Keech**      **Tackle #71**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

Watervliet football is about tradition and pride. For everyone who played in Panther Stadium, there will always be a link to the generations of players who left everything they had on the field.

**Thomas Cleary**      **Tackle #72**

Now in: Edinburg, TX

In 1958, my dad was out of town during our game. That night was father/son night during halftime. I didn't even feel like playing because I was very disappointed. Coach Day told me that when they called my name, he would come out and stand with me. It meant a great deal to me because Coach at times was like a dad to me.

**Dick Nybro**      **Tackle #31**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember: tough practices.

**James Herman**      **Tackle #32**

Now in: Southlake, TX

My best game memory was vs. Buchanan. I had an 88 yard TD run. Unfortunately, we still lost that game. I still love the sport and never miss one of my nephews' games. Football in Texas is not just a game. It shuts down entire towns! You've got to see it to believe it. Go Comets!

**Virgil Umphrey**      **Tackle #58**

Now in: Spring Lake, MI

Little 8 Champs, 1942! We played against Watervliet on Armistice Day, which was the most important game of the season. I remember Hayes Field had 3" of wet snow. Only the yard stripes were cleared off, so the first time you hit the turf, you were wet and stayed wet. We had to drive back to Coloma after the game to shower. We ended up riding on the front of a green & gold convertible - our uniforms were frozen!

**Jordan Boven**      **Tackle #74**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

I remember going undefeated in the regular season and being conference champions.

**LeAndre Archibald**      **Tackle #70**

Now in: Coloma, MI

It meant a lot when Watervliet played Coloma for bragging rights!

**Alex Garrod**

**Tackle #7**

**Class of 2008**

Now in: Coloma, MI

This is the biggest game for both teams. Starts the season either in a sour note or off to a great start. I am 3 - 0 against Watervliet with a combined score of 121 - 32.

## WATERVLIET PANTHERS DON'T FORGET

**Joe Frontczak**      **Guard #65**      **Class of 1969**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember walking from the old high school to the football field with cleats. The smell of the paper mill, running around the cannon, "Butt the ball!" And the cheerleaders that made it all worthwhile.

**Dan Duffield**      **Tackle #73**      **Class of 1982**

Now in: Coloma, MI

The last drive of my career at Watervliet against Coloma we scored on the last play of the game and go undefeated for the year. A lot of good memories!

**John Tucker**      **Fullback #6**      **Class of 1981**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I played QB, FB, and DB, and played for the runner-up for the State Championship. We beat Coloma both years I played. I saved the game for the team to make the playoff in 1979. We beat them in 1980 35 - 0

**Bill Beverly**      **Tackle #74**      **Class of 1960**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

My favorite memory: The Joe Barnak to Pete Kobe pass that beat Coloma in the closing seconds of the 1957 game.

**Evans Costner, III**      **Cornerback #21**      **Class of 2009**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Favorite memory: My Senior year during the Fennville game, catching an interception and running it back 34 yards for a TD to make the game 20 - 8 just before halftime.

**Mike Hutchins**      **Tackle #74**

Now in: Grand Haven, MI

Good Times... Good People!

**Eric Leith**      **Tackle #15**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

Beating Coloma and going undefeated during the regular season.

**Scott Tatter**      **Tackle #7**

Now in: St. Augustine, FL

Watervliet football wasn't just about winning. It was about outworking everybody else so we were prepared not to lose. If we worked hard enough, winning took care of itself. The mental toughness required in the Watervliet football era I played in was at least as important as the physical demands.

We were young and hungry to win. We did whatever our coaches told us to do. Parents or "outsiders" would have never dreamed of sticking their noses in one of Jerry Barchett's practices. It wasn't for the faint of heart. The mental toughness and the preparation it takes to be successful have served me well over these last 30 years. When I don't feel like doing something, or am just feeling a bit lazy, I remember running up those hills, and running sprints, and blood and guts in those Panther practices - and the task at hand no longer feels all that daunting. I loved being part of Watervliet football. I still do.

**Thomas Gargano**      **Tackle #31**

Now in: Watervliet

My favorite memory is playing at the SilverDome.

**Adam Costner**      **Tackle #61**      **Class of 2004**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Watervliet football was always about Discipline, Pride, and Glory. It was about being the best player you could be for the team you loved. My favorite memory was receiving the Panther Award my Senior Year.

**Kim Yancich**      **Tackle #60**

Now in: Traverse City, MI

Lots of fun!

**Michael Emery**      **Tackle #86**

Now in: Coloma, MI

My favorite memory: Beating Coloma all 4 years!

**Kyle Garland**      **Tackle #63**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

My favorite memory of Watervliet football was when we ended our season by defeating Bloomingdale 40 - 0. I don't think there is a better way to end the season!

**Mark Reeves**      **End #8**      **Class of 1995**

Now in: Dowagiac, MI

Best memory: Beating Hartford my Senior year at Panther Stadium. Both teams were ranked in the top 10 in the state going into that game. Go Panthers!

**Ron LoPresti**      **Tackle #44**

Now in: Holland, MI

I remember the joy of listening to the coaches share encouragement and explain teamwork with thought provoking questions such as, "Is that as fast as you can run? Pretend there's a beer on the other end of the field."

Seriously, it was a good time, with many great memories like the game with Hartford in the blizzard. You could not see more than 10 feet ahead. Ah, yes... The good old days.

**John Hinkelman**      **Linebacker #30**      **Class of 2005**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Winning isn't the only thing... It's everything!

**Jody Halamka**      **Tackle #66**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The 1999 season: beating every team we played, including Coloma. That was the year we broke the school record in scoring, defense, and wins.

**Jay Danneffel**      **Halfback #41**      **Class of 1982**

Now in: Holland, MI

Scoring the last second TD to beat Coloma and remain undefeated for the 1981 season.

**Geof Kiekenapp**      **Tackle #20**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The last play of the 1981 game... Remember.

**John "Jack" VanDrasek**      **Fullback #55**      **Class of 1946**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I played football for Watervliet during WW II. Gas was rationed, so the schools could not provide bus service for the players to the away games. Our parents and other fans drove us to the away games in their cars and trucks, and we had to be fully dressed in our uniforms, pads, cleats, etc.! We were lucky the school system didn't cancel the football program entirely because of the war. I am grateful to the school, our families, and the community for allowing us to keep playing.

**Julian Fotre**      **Tackle #10**

Now in: Nashville, TN

It was quite a thrill to go 5 - 3 - 1 in the fall of 1966 after going 0 - 9 the year before. Then winning the conference championship in 1967 with an 8 - 1 record was satisfying (though losing to Coloma was tough.) My coaches and teammates made for great memories.

**Larry Adams**      **Halfback #6**      **Class of 1983**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember: Being mobbed by the crowd after beating Coloma in the last second to go 9 - 0 in 1981.

**Chad Worl**      **Tackle #75**      **Class of 2000**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Just playing football for Watervliet was great!

**Jon Hinkelman Tackle #30**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

It was all good!

**Mark Fluga End #84 Class of 1968**

Now in: Manistee, MI

I played as a Freshman on the undefeated 1964 Watervliet Panthers Red Arrow Conference Championship team who were ranked #2 in the state for Class B. I got to play on the kickoff team in five games. On two occasions, I tackled the kick receiver just as he caught the ball and caused them to fumble. We recovered the ball both times!

**Edward Youdell Tackle #70 Class of 1981**

Now in: Lake Bluff, IL

In the '79 Coloma game, Henry Bomke recovered a fumble in the end zone. I could immediately hear Henry yelling, "Did I score? Did I score?"

When the ref raised his arms to give the touchdown signal, I thought Henry's eyes were going to pop out of his head. We could all see Henry had only one thing on his mind: Spike the ball. No one could stop him. First came the spike. Then came the penalty flag. Then came the chat with Coach Barchett. Way to go, Henry!

**Abdullah Ali Tackle #28**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

Watervliet football taught me to never give up. We may not have had the best overall record on Varsity, but we played hard till the end.

**Arnold Malin Halfback #24 Class of 1960**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

I remember: Watervliet going to the SilverDome!

**Jerry Partee Tackle #9**

The memories that I have are special because I attended both schools and developed great relationships on both sides. I remember being a water boy along with my brother for Watervliet.

**Joseph Wheeler Tackle #44**

Now in: Bloomfield Hills, MI

My fondest memory of Watervliet football is the game against Hartford in my Senior year. We were down for most of the game, but we fought hard and came back to take the victory in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter on the Indian's home turf. It was a prime example of Watervliet football: confidence, dedication, and execution. But most of all, we were fueled by the swell of hometown cries that would never allow us to give up.

**Alfredo Rosas Tackle #66**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Watervliet football was the greatest thing I ever tried. I definitely wish I played all 4 years...

**Joshua Matthias Tackle #58**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The bus ride home from the last game of the 2009 season. We had just blown out Bloomingdale and we all celebrated like it was the Championship game. We pulled into the school parking lot with a police escort as we were met by the welcoming party of fans, parents, and cheerleaders. The only thing louder than the noise club that awaited us was the bus full of Panthers as we gave one more cheer to the '09 season of Watervliet Football.

**Patrick Lynch Tackle #100**

Now in: Paw Paw, MI

I loved playing with all you guys. I mostly remember we usually had a lot of snow before the season was over.

**Pete Mannino**      **Tackle #30**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

The Dome!

**William Olmstead**      **Tackle #18**

Now in: Green River, WY

Memories of life: Some of the best things to carry with you. Especially the people you were there with. The lasting friendships. And it all come from Panther football.

**Barry Nilson**      **Guard #53?**      **Class of 1965**

Now in: Hartford, MI

I remember: Ending St. Joseph Catholic's 33-game winning streak!

**Scott Schnebly**      **Tackle #60**

Now in: Cabot, AR

The SilverDome!

**Daniel Tyler**      **End #81**      **Class of 1979**

Now in: Watervliet

I loved Watervliet Football. I lived Watervliet Football.  
I still have my SilverDome ticket...

**Bill Fizzell**      **Tackle #60**      **Class of 1965**

Now in: Streamwood, IL

I remember: Practicing and playing at Hays Park across from the paper mill (when there was still a pulp mill & SMELL!)... Coach Keech kicking me in the butt, calling me "PotBilly" and telling me to "Take a cannon!"  
Undeclared 1964 season: beating the St. Joe Poiners and ending their 34-game winning streak in St. Joe. Beating Coloma Comets (THE rivalry at that time)!

**Frank Pflugradt**      **Quarterback #15**      **Class of 1956**

Now in: Elsinore, CA

I remember always looking forward to playing Coloma in front of a large crowd. And playing around Veteran's Day. I can't wait to see everyone...

**Jim Baiers**      **Tackle #21**      **Class of 1972**

Now in: Royal Oak, MI

In the Fall of 1971, I was a Senior and we had just won the Red Arrow Conference by beating Lake Michigan Catholic 14 - 12. We all really wanted a victory over Coloma in the last game of the year.

Somewhere in the first half, I ended up face down on the bottom of a mass of players and heard my left arm snap! I had broken the bone above the elbow completely I half. 38 years ago, real men didn't wait to be carried off on a stretcher, so I pushed myself off the turf with my good arm and jogged to the sideline with my left arm flopping around, since the only thing holding it on was the skin and muscle.

I can still remember Coach Barchett's face as he screamed, "Baiers, what the hell are you doing?"

I said, "I broke my %&\*(# arm!"

Coach Overweg took one look at it... turned pale... and yelled to Barchett, "He broke his %&\*(# arm!"

I'm sure that inspired my teammates, who went on to win 28 - 8.

**Fabian Hohne**      **Tackle #64**      **Class of 2006**

Now in: Streamwood, IL

I was an exchange student in Watervliet for the season 2005 - 2006. I can't recall any explicit memory, but I remember that the football season was one of the best times in my life! I remember how we were ready to go out and beat Coloma, and every other team... I remember the team spirit, the atmosphere, the fans... As I said: one of the best times in my life!

**Mark Russell      Tackle #30**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

Watervliet football taught me the meaning of hard work and determination, even in the face of adversity. It taught me that I could not only be good at what I do, but I could also lead other people in that direction.

My favorite memory is scoring 2 TD's in the Watervliet / Coloma game. We won the game that year, but we *do* have about 2 minutes left to play. That year, the game was ended because both benches cleared and a fight broke out... Rough year to be a Coloma Comet.

**Mark Lambrecht      Linebacker #31      Class of 1990**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember beating Coloma in 1988; the game ended in a brawl!

**David Jinks      Linebacker #30      Class of 1965**

Now in: Grand Rapids, MI

Like all of the WHS experience, it was challenging and enjoyable. Our team was excellent in the classroom and on the field. The teachers, students, parents, and town merchants were all supportive of the team.

Winning the Little 8 Conference, going undefeated, and winning the Class C Championship were all memorable. I remember the good friends, good teachers, and good times. Thanks to all those who helped make this event happen. Go Panthers!

**Chris Jackson      Tackle #80      Class of 1984**

Now in: Olathe, KS

I remember Jay Danneffel diving into the endzone with no time left on the clock to win the '81 Watervliet / Coloma Game! It was an honor to play 3 years of Varsity football at WHS, including being part of Coach Barchett's last undefeated team in '81 and his final team with Watervliet in '82.

**Ronald Bohn      Tackle #70      Class of 1983**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

My favorite memory is when we beat LMC 32 - 0 the year they had Blough at Quarterback and they were supposed to win the Red Arrow.

**Daryl Tackett      Tackle #85**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember: The fight breaking out with about 2 minutes to go, and Watervliet leading. The game was called and Watervliet won for the first time in a few years.

**Lynn Parker      Halfback #24      Class of 1957**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

My favorite memory is just the honor of being able to play sports as a Watervliet Panther.

**Eric Stuch      Tackle #22**

Now in: Travis AFB, CA

Coach Farac and football gave me family, structure, and discipline in my life. I wouldn't be here without it.

**Leonard Meagher      Tackle #70**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

It was real easy to get pumped up for the Coloma game...

**Shawn Campbell      Linebacker #80      Class of 2008**

Now in: East Lansing, MI

My Sophomore year we won the SAC by beating Bloomingdale 27 - 0. We were always the underdogs... but that season we proved the world wrong. To this day, I would not trade a day to be a part of any other football program. We are a family - not just teammates. That will stick with me forever.

**Mark Epple      Tackle #84**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

In 1985, at the age of 9, Coach Farac allowed me to join the Varsity team as a manager. During double days, I wondered what I was doing out on the football practice field at 7:00 a.m. in 90 degree heat. Coach Farac promised me that if I stuck it out... I would get a football jersey. I will never forget the first time Cach gave me a jersey to wear. At that point, I was hooked. I was a Panther for life, and it was the start of something very special.

In 1989, as a 7<sup>th</sup> grader, I remember walking onto the field for our very first game at Bridgman: the smell of green grass... Chills ran through my body. Later that night, the Watervliet 7<sup>th</sup> graders walked off the field victors, 56 - 0.

I had the pleasure of playing Varsity football for Coach Farac at WHS from 1991 - 1994, and beating Coloma 4 straight years!! 1991: 20 - 4. 1992: 37 - 6. 1993: 47 - 6. 1994: 28 - 6.

The most memorable moment of my career: In 1994 at Panther Stadium, against reigning Class C State Champs Hartford, in front of 5,000 fans, late in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, on the Hartford 40-yard line... We had the ball, 4<sup>th</sup> down, and about 3. No one in the stadium thought we were going to throw the ball, but that is exactly what we did. *Rock Right Gold 46* was the call. Quarterback Dan Pfeffer hit split-end Tim Reeves for an 8-yard pick-up along the Panther sideline and - more importantly - a first down. Punched it in to the endzone a few plays later and handed Hartford its first loss of the season: 35 - 12.

**Al Mainwaring, III      Guard #51      Class of 1975**

Now in: Kingwood, TX

For 6 years, starting in Jr. high, we ate, drank, and slept football. Every year from the first practice in August, we yelled "Beat Coloma!" Turned out, they were a good bunch of guys who beat us 7 - 0 in a great battle to end the '74 season. I also remember as a small child freezing in the snow as the Panthers and Comets fought it out on numerous occasions. "Panther Power" was build on hard work and constant "stickling" to details. Nothing fancy: just hard nosed football. It was a lot of fun. I say it's high time we return to the glory days of Panther football. Bring back the Power! Go Panthers!

**Brad Phillips      Guard #63      Class of 2007**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

My favorite memory during my Watervliet football career was starting in the 2005 playoff game against Constantine. Even though we lost the game, just being there on the field, knowing that your team was one of the elite in the state was a real gratifying experience.

**Joseph Nash      Tackle #71      Class of 1985**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

Our Senior year, we were a small team, but even then we were the terrors of the midway, because of our dedication and the leadership our coaches gave us.

**Andy Y.      Tackle #61**

Now in: Grand Rapids, MI

My favorite memory: the LMC Game.

**David Teunissen      Guard #62      Class of 1980**

Now in: Middlebury, IN

Favorite memory: We beat Bangor the first game of the Championship year in the last seconds of the game to give Coach Barchett his 100<sup>th</sup> victory. I also remember walking onto the football field at the SilverDome to play for the State Championship. It's a feeling I will never forget.

**David Flaherty      Tackle #84      Class of 1974**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Winning the Red Arrow Conference and beating Coloma all in the same year (1972 - 1973).

**Bill Spaulding Tackle #41**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Memory... Singular? Can't pick 1. How about these:

Two decades of dominance (1964 - 1984) with the best program in SW Michigan PERIOD.... Beating LMC 2 of my 4 years in high school, including their 1978 team, ranked #2 in the state, and averaging over 30 points per game. We beat 'em 8 - 0 - DEFENSE, Baby!... Beating Coloma in '79 when they were the best Class B team in the area, to go 9 - 0 - and that put us in the playoffs.... Beating Manchester in overtime on a goal line stand against a 200 lb. fullback.... Beating Detroit Lutheran West in Jackson and going to the Dome. We ran 42 blast 9 times in a row to score a touchdown with 2:00 left and took the lead. Ate the majority of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter on 1 drive.

What does Panther Football mean to me? It was built on DEFENSE. A swarming, attacking, ball pursuing defense that would come right at you... Our kids laid lumber on EVERY opponent, win or lose. If you moved the ball on Watervliet, you did it by passing - period.

Our passion for excellence manifested itself in our conditioning. Our team asked for more hills from Gerry, more blood & guts from Gerry - please? If we did play a more talented opponent, they could not stay with us in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Panther football was a great way to prepare a young man for his life ahead. You found out what was buried deep inside you... I have drawn on my Panther football experiences throughout my life and they have fueled me.

**Christopher Willamsen Guard #61 Class of 2008**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

My favorite memory is doing the all-out drill to see what you are made of. You go one on one to see who is the better man. This constant battle of other schools to see who is better with sportsmanship and hard dedication is what Watervliet football means to me.

**Ben Iliff Tackle #30**

Now in: Coloma, MI

A winning tradition that we must not let slip away!

**Forrest Halamka Tackle #31**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Favorite memory: Starting all 4 Watervliet / Coloma Varsity games while I was in high school.

**Kevin Adams Quarterback #6 Class of 1985**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

I remember: Seeing Panther Stadium packed for the second round playoff game in 1999. Every bleacher seat was full and hundreds of others were standing in the bowl. I was fortunate enough to be in the stadium, but I know the roars could be heard for miles.

**John Epple Linebacker #83 Class of 1986**

Now in: Schoolcraft, MI

Conference Championships!

**Larry Nelson Fullback #43 Class of 1967**

Now in: Coloma, MI

I only played my Freshman year before my parents moves us to Decatur, MI. I played on the Junior Varsity and tried to increase my skill level to match the Varsity players who later won the mythical State Championship.

Even though at Decatur I played against the Panthers, I was still very proud to have been a part of that team. I regret that I couldn't have played out my high school career as a Panther...

**Jim Flaherty Tackle #50**

Now in: Oswego, IL

The Watervliet / Coloma game was the game that everyone wanted to win. It was the last game I played as a Senior and it was the worst game we played as a team.

**Gary Nelson**      **Tackle #70**

Now in: Benton Harbor, MI

I transferred to Watervliet my Senior year after playing for Decatur (and against Watervliet) the previous 3 years. I think I got the "kinder & gentler" side of Barchett because I was the "new kid."

My fondest memory was playing against my old teammates. Unfortunately, that year Decatur transferred out of the Red Arrow and into the SAC. Being a non-conference game, it didn't have quite the level of importance as the next week's conference game. We lost that game... but we did win the Conference title.

In addition, my future (and current) wife was a cheerleader for Decatur. I enjoyed winning the Conference Championship, but it would have been nice beating my buddies. I'm thankful my family moved back my Senior year. It was a great experience and I met many new friends.

**Chuck Andrews**      **Tackle #42**

Now in: Cheyenne, WY

Beating Coloma 3 years straight!

**Don Finnefrock**      **Tackle #77**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

In 1949 we beat Coloma 26 - 25 to seal the Little 8 Championship and an undefeated season. In 1948 (Sophomore season), I scored 2 TD's for a 12 - 0 win over the Comets.

**Bill Furlan**      **Tackle #33**

Now in: Kalamazoo, MI

I blocked 2 punt my Senior year, and both resulted in touchdowns. I fell on one blocked punt in the endzone. We beat Coloma 13 - 0. The only school that beat us that year was Buchanan (7 - 19).

**James Kolenko**      **Halfback #43**      **Class of 1969**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Senior year we beat Coloma!

**Robert Puckett**      **Linebacker #64**      **Class of 1973**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

We beat our old rival, Coloma, and the upstart giants, LMC, all 4 years I played Varsity football (1969 - 1972). Beating LMC was sweet every time. It seemed like they had 75 players on the sideline. We were always the underdog. They were close games, but we seemed to win them all with one or two big plays...

We also beat Coloma every year, but I don't know how. Those guys knocked the stuffing out of me time after time. I'm sure I suffered memory loss from being hit so hard... Two or three guys hit me every play. I was always glad that was the last game of the year. I couldn't have played another.

Nevertheless, I'd rather play Coloma than anyone else. That was old-fashioned football. The way it was meant to be played. A couple of small town teams with communities that lived and died along with the fortunes of their high school football teams.

**Rex Stickney**      **Tackle #64**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

Watching Coach Ambrosino toss his clipboard out on the field in one piece and bringing it back in two! Great times!

**Rex Stickney**      **Tackle #64**

Now in: St. Joseph, MI

I remember: Going undefeated and getting Monday off school after beating the St. Joe Ponies. It was the Best of Times.

**Rev. Melvin Hiler**      **Tackle #7**      **Class of 1960**

Now in: Chesterfield Twp., MI

We only won 2 games that year ('59 / '60), but we had Coloma beat 14 - 0 at halftime. BUT they still came back and beat us 28 - 14. The weather was bad: half rain, half snow, and our white uniforms looked anything but white by halftime...

**Bruce Kibler**      **Middle Guard #50**      **Class of 1975**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Tenacity and perseverance made us strong. As Coach Barchett preached, "YOU MAKE YOUR OWN BREAKS," made us Great.

**Bill Olmstead**      **Tackle #18**

Now in: Green River, WY

I remember: a 9 - 0 season. My friends and classmates and team members. Coach Keech. Beating Coloma and everyone else. That's a good way to finish off a Senior year.

**D. Bruce Emerson**      **Halfback #25**      **Class of 1957**

Now in: Adrian, MI

Watervliet football proved to me that facemasks were really needed.

**Ted Olmsted**      **Tackle #71**      **Class of 1969**

Now in: Allegan, MI

1968: The year we beat Coloma on their field.

**Troy Ballard**      **Halfback #40**      **Class of 1989**

Now in: Stevensville, MI

Favorite memories were getting moved up to Varsity as a Sophomore and winning Offensive Player of the Year as a Junior.

**Jason Winnell**      **Tackle #84**

Now in: Watervliet, MI

Favorite memory: Beating Hartford!

**Kim Weber**      **Quarterback #11**      **Class of 1964**

Now in: Three Oaks, MI

Football is the epitome of life: the victories were great, but the losses are what truly establish one's true character.

**Robert Forgia**      **Tackle #42**

Now in: Henderson, NV

Playing football for the Panthers was the reason I remained in school. It meant everything to be able to play each Friday during the season!

**David Emerson**      **Tackle #61**

Now in: Sodus, MI

Even though we were not really very successful (15 - 15 - 2) during my 4 years in high school, the team spirit was never lacking and I am glad I was a member of the team. The down side was that we lost all 4 years to Coloma, but only by a small total. The experience and memories are priceless.

**Rick Sprague**      **Tackle #56**

Now in: The Woodlands, TX

In the '63 game at Watervliet, we had freezing rain, snow, then rain. We couldn't make out each other's jersey numbers nor where the yard markers were. Coloma beat us with the Coloma twins (halfbacks, and they were *fast...*) Concerning Coloma, my best memory is when we beat them in '64 on their home field, 20 - 18. Toughest game I can remember. Hazen about killed me, and Van ran over me twice. All time best memory, though, is when we beat St. Joe Ponies on their own turf, 20 - 12. Broke their all-time winning streak. The whole town of Watervliet showed up that night.

**Nathan Bobay**      **Tackle #6**

Now in: Riverside, MI

Favorite memory: Starting at OLB in 1994. Beating Coloma and securing a playoff berth. Watervliet football to me mean a brotherhood and friendships I made for life.