

Dear Editor:

I would like to rekindle some memories of some long-time Grant residents. Does anyone remember that 50 years ago in August, Grant won what may have been the first of many state championships? It was not football, basketball, or track. The 1961 Grant Legion baseball team, sponsored by Bullock Chevrolet, won the State Championship held in Ord, Neb.

The team was comprised of only 11 players who represented Perkins County very well! We had teammates from Venango, Grant, and Madrid. This team played over 40 games that summer. We were in a league with Ogallala, McCook, Holdrege, Kearney, Grand Island, Gering and Sidney.

The Kearney and Grand Island trips were especially grueling. We played a double-header in Kearney Saturday and a double-header in Grand Island on Sunday. After the Sunday night game, we drove back to Grant so we could all go to work Monday morning.

Because of our tough schedule, our record was not particularly good. However, when we dropped down to our own class we had only one close game through the district, regional or state tournaments.

We beat Bennington in our first 1st game at state, 2 to 1 in 10 innings. We beat Auburn in the Championship game 5 to 0. The Championship game was highlighted by the Auburn coach holding his team in the dugout after what he thought was a "bad call."

Bruce Watkins was pitching and threw a curve ball. Auburn's best player thought it was going behind him so he ducked down and got hit in the head with the pitch. Since it was in the strike zone and it was the third strike, he was called "out."

John Mathes and Whitey Kurkowski were our managers and NO ONE knew the rules better than Whitey.

I've been fortunate to talk with most of my old teammates this month and that is the first thing they all mention!

Anyway, just thought this might be a good trivia question— "What team won the first State Championship for Grant?" "Were there any before 1961?"

Team members were: Burl Gengenbach, Roger Russel, Keith Olsen, Fred Nass, Terry Nodlinski, Bruce Watkins, Ron Vlasin, Leonard Johnson, Keith Fidler, and two who are no longer with us, Rusty Sexson and Dick Pruess. Thank you!

Sincerely, Keith Fidler  
Elkhorn, Neb.