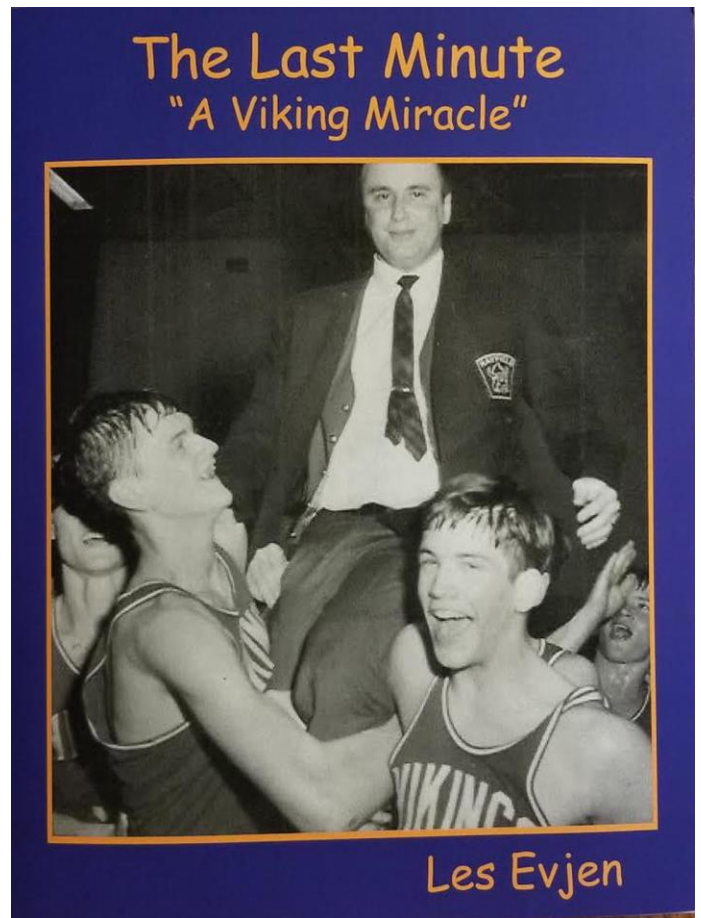


I recently saw an article in the Rochester Post-Bulletin about a book written by 1962 Hayfield High School graduate Les Evjen. Many of you will remember that Hayfield had some outstanding basketball teams in the 60's and 70's. Evjen's book, called 'The Last Minute, A Viking Miracle', chronicles the team of 1967/68 that made it to the state tournament. A tournament that back in the day was one class, eight teams. Hayfield, which beat two of the best teams in the state in Big 9 opponents Austin and Owatonna, was hoping they could forge a similar fate of Edgerton. In 1960, Edgerton, a town of 960 in southwest Minnesota, did the unthinkable and won the state title defeating a heavily favored Richfield team in the semi-finals and then easily getting past Austin for the championship.



But it was not to be for Hayfield as the Vikings first round opponent was heavily favored Edina led by big guys Bob Zender and Bill Fiedler. Going into that game, Hayfield matched up well and many thought they had a chance to upset the favored Hornets. In the end, Hayfield gave Edina the toughest game they had in the state tourney, losing 63-49. Edina's other wins were by 30 points over Duluth Central and by 25 points over Moorhead. Hayfield went on to defeat Granite Falls 79-69 but lost to St Paul Highland Park in the consolation championship 73-66. Hayfield ended the year with a 26-2 record.

Les Evjen did not see any of the 28 games from this season. During this time, he was a commanding officer of an armored cavalry troop in West Germany guarding the East German, West German and Czechoslovakia border. He stated that as he researched and wrote the book and did the interviews with many involved, he got to experience it all 50 years later. Ron Evjen, brother of Les, was the star point guard for the 67/68 team. Les goes into detail about some of the team's players including Ron, Bill Gross and Gary Fritze. Gross went on to be a 4 year starter at Augustana College where he later would be athletic director for 28 years. Ron Evjen was Superintendent at Hayfield from 2005 to 2014 after several years as a principal at Goodhue, Hayfield and Waseca.

The book chronicles the entire season from their Wasioja conference title to the District 2 championship defeating a very good Austin team. The books' title 'The Last Minute, A Viking Miracle' comes from that District 2 championship game where Hayfield played Austin in what

perhaps was one of the most exciting high school basketball games in Minnesota sports history. The Vikings were down by 10 points with less than two minutes to go. Remember there was no 3 point shot during this era. The game ended regulation with a 65-65 tie. Hayfield won in overtime to move on.

Hayfield followed up that big win with victories in Region 1 over Chatfield and Owatonna. West Concord played Hayfield twice that season losing by scores of 77-51 and 75-56. At the end of the conference season, Hayfield had a 33 game conference winning streak.

The book talks about the Hayfield team's first stop on their way to Williams Arena. The bus came into West Concord and pulled up to the A.T. Cafe, owned by Pete and Irene Wilson. Some of the folks who helped sponsor this breakfast sendoff were listed including Robert



Dahms Trucking Service, West Concord Butter and Cheese and Franklin Mathias, Cattle Buyer. Helping serve the breakfast that morning were the West Concord cheerleaders including (left to right in pic) Virginia Wilson, Bonnie Johnston, Phoebe Plevke, Paulette Anderson and Colleen Rasmussen.

Hall of Fame head coach Al Andreotti coached at Hayfield for 4 years leaving after the 1969 season for St Cloud Tech where he coached for 26 years. He ended his long career with 521 career coaching wins. After he left, West Concord Class of 1956 graduate, Doug Matti became the head basketball coach. Doug married Nancy Zeller, who was in the class of 1958 at WCHS. Doug retired after 35 years spent in Hayfield as a teacher and coach.

I had a phone conversation recently with Dennis Matti, captain of the 1967/68 WCHS basketball team. He and Mike Hughes were the only seniors on the team. Dennis would be a 2nd cousin to Doug. Dennis' dad Richard and Doug's dad Vic were 1st cousins. I asked Dennis what he remembers about playing against this Hayfield team. He said they knew it would be tough. They just wanted to hang in there as best they could. As many teams found out, Fritze and Gross were not only tall, there were very athletic. As Edina coach Duane Baglien was quoted as saying before the Hornets faced the Vikings in the state tournament, "Those big guys (of Hayfield) have a lot of spring."

I emailed Les Evjen, who now lives in the Black Hills of South Dakota to get information on the book. I told him I was a freshman during the 67/68 season so did not go up against this team. Larry Bachman, Gordy Peterson, Mike Doty, Mike Bjerke and Dennis Matti had that pleasure. But two years later, as a junior, I had to go up against 6'6" Jim Proeschel who was

the first sub off the bench for the '68' team. Jim's brother, Dan Proeschel, graduated Hayfield High in 1964 and went to play basketball for the Gophers.

West Concord coach Lorry Gunhus had a game plan for the game in January of 1970. He told the big guys on the team including Joe Gillard, Dave Andrews, Mark Gillard and myself to guard Proeschel wherever he goes. If he goes to the water fountain, guard him all the way there and back. The plan worked, we beat Hayfield on their home court that night 51-47. Mike Doty had 31 points that night. I had 1 point. I was busy guarding the water fountain.

It's a good book and it helps stir up good memories. I think you'd like it. The book is \$25 including shipping. All proceeds are going to the Viking Legacy Scholarship Fund for a Hayfield High School boy or girl. You can mail Ron Evjen a check made out to the Viking Legacy Fund and mail to: 711 1st Ave SE, Hayfield, MN 55940.

Pictured below is the West Concord 1967/1968 basketball team.



VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM. Coach L. Gunhus, R. Quimby, D. Andrews, M. Bjerke, F. Loosbrock, M. Hughes, G. Peterson, L. Bachman, M. Miller, D. Matti, J. McMahan, M. Doty, E. Dohrmann, M. Fellows, Manager R. Freerksen.

