**THE SERIES: HONORING COACH JAMES T. STEHLIN**

**World War Memorial Stadium gridiron named for legendary football coach Stehlin ­**

By Dan Harrison sports editor – Newburyport Daily News

Nobody can bring the Newburyport community together quite like James T. Stehlin. A massive crowd came out to World War Memorial Stadium last night when former, current and future players, coaches and fans honored the legendary head football coach as the newly renovated gridiron was named James T. Stehlin Field. Stehlin, who had his family with him, spoke about the special night. “I really was overwhelmed. I never thought that it’d be anything like this. I credit that to so many people who restored the stadium and the players who worked so hard so they could put my name on this field,” said Stehlin. “For my family, it’s just amazing and there’s so many of them here tonight. We’re going to enjoy it and I’m looking forward to tomorrow morning.” The evening kicked off with all of the Newburyport football players, both past and present, coming out of the tunnel, followed by coach Stehlin and his loving wife, Beverly, as well as their children, Kara, Kelley and Kevin. His brother, Jack, was also in attendance. After the national anthem, Newburyport Mayor Donna Holaday thanked all the people who made last night possible, like Mary Anne Clancy, who worked for 15 years on the renovation product. Holaday also thanked Institution For Savings President Michael Jones, who gave up the rights of the field name to coach Stehlin after the bank donated $650,000 toward the renovation product. A number of people came to the microphone to talk about the event and the impact coach Stehlin has had, and continues to have, on the Newburyport community. Then, the 2015 Clipper captains Nick Toolan, Brian Toolan and Jimmy Gallo, unveiled the sign above the tunnel that read “James T. Stehlin Field.” One of Stehlin’s former players, Bob “Bino” Earabino, then came up to the podium to speak about his coach. “Tonight meant so much to me as the dedication itself because coach had the influence and the direction to give us class, pride and respect,” said Earabino. “It’s beautiful. You can’t get over how nice it is.” Earabino recalled how after away games, coach Stehlin would order the bus to drive through the center of Newburyport and he’d have his players cheer. It was about engaging the community. And just as it did last night, the community responded. After Earabino, it was time for the coach to address the huge crowd. Stehlin touched on a number of topics as he thanked everyone for making the night possible. He spoke about what it was like to represent Newburyport football and how he wanted his players to always exhibit class and respect no matter the outcome of the game. He also spoke about how lucky he was to have such a great staff of coaches. After his speech, Stehlin talked about how lucky he was to land in Newburyport. “It was really the best time of my life. It was a time that I was really looking for a place, not only to coach but a place to raise a family,” said Stehlin. “The people of Newburyport, the fans of Newburyport and the following, to be able to come out in this stadium on a Friday night and be anywhere from 7,000 to 10,000 people here. And to go on the road and they’d follow you.” Stehlin told the crowd about how he grew up in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and meeting his wife, who he said at the time was the most beautiful woman in Connecticut. Toward the end of his speech, Stehlin noted that Newburyport was the perfect fit for him. “When I first came up the driveway and looked at the high school and saw that golden dome, walked into the stadium, I knew this is what I had waited for,” Stehlin told the crowd. “NHS is my Notre Dame and this field is my Field of Dreams.” The coach spoke for nearly 10 minutes, and then he was presented with a plaque, done by renowned sculptor Bob Shure, that will now be on display at the stadium. Current Clipper head coach Ed Gaudiano gave Stehlin a framed Newburyport jersey with the No. 21 in honor of the number Stehlin wore when he was an All­American at Brandeis. Now, every future Newburyport football player will come out of the storied tunnel with James T. Stehlin above their heads. It’s fitting, as the coach has always watched over everyone in the Newburyport football family.

**Newburyport's Coach Stehlin all about 'pride and class' By Kevin Lucy NHS Class of 1967** |

Posted: Thursday, November 12, 2015

*Editor’s note: On Thanksgiving Eve, Newburyport will officially name the high school football field in honor of Jim Stehlin, who served as head coach from 1964­1983, and as athletic director until 1993. Coach Stehlin’s influence on his players transcended the football field and served as life lessons for many. Leading up to the dedication ceremony, The Daily News is presenting a series of columns written by his former players, sharing their personal stories of the coach. This is the first in the series.*

Growing up in Newburyport as a young boy in the 1950s, we had nothing; but we had everything. Newburyport was a place where everyone knew your name, where you lived, who your parents were, and what grammar school you went to. If you got into mischief, the last thing you wanted to hear was an adult saying, “I’m going to tell your father!” The YMCA on State Street, where the new wing of the library now resides, was an important and fun place for young men to grow up. It was there that you learned pretty much everything from sports to life in general. As you got older, you would meet your buddies at the “Y,” and in the fall the destination on Friday night was always World War Memorial Stadium to watch the Clippers play under the lights. It was a special and important part of our lives then. Which brings me to my story about Coach Jim Stehlin. After some down seasons with losing records, a new coach was hired in the spring of 1964. I was a sophomore that spring. On a typical afternoon after school, while hanging out at the “Y,” we heard that the School Committee was selecting the new football coach that afternoon up at the high school. The hallway outside the School Committee room was packed with people of all ages, including curious players awaiting the results. The anticipation and excitement were extremely high. Three local former assistant coaches in the program were all worthy, and support for each of them was genuine. It appeared equally divided. Everyone expected one of them to be elected for the fall season. But after three separate votes ended up in a deadlock, a School Committee member finally emerged to announce that the new coach was a guy named “Stalin!” Everyone in the room seemed to simultaneously shout, “Who the hell is Stalin?” To which the response came, “Some guy from Natick.” And so began the legendary career at Newburyport High of the incomparable Jim Stehlin, who would never again be confused with Joe Stalin. Off and running After a transitional year in 1964, the Clippers were off and running in the fall of 1965. Lofty goals were set and the team posted an 8­1 record, winning the Northeast Conference title. But something else was happening. The stadium would be filled to capacity at every home game with cars lined up on both sides of High Street from State Street to Atkinson Common. Away games were equally supported with buses of kids and families following the team wherever they would go. It seemed like overnight that the football program became a powerhouse. But those of us that were part of it realized over the years that something bigger was happening. We were learning about life and personal conduct. We were in an environment where excellence was born out of approaching situations with pride and class. The way we wore our uniforms. The way we carried ourselves off the field. Along with pride and class, the coach emphasized life lessons of hard work, teamwork, responsibility, respect and doing your best. All of this personified the culture that Coach Stehlin built. We even wore ties when we marched in city parades to show respect for the city and be “good examples.” As we approach the 50th anniversary of the 1966 undefeated championship that occurred in my senior year, there are so many memories, but here are a couple of my favorites. After dominating all opponents in our first six games of that magical year, we faced a very good Marblehead team at their field. Again, we had thousands of Newburyporters who had traveled to the game and as anticipated, we quickly had a 21­0 lead. But in the second quarter, Marblehead scored 20 unanswered points and we found our confidence challenged, as we had not been in this situation before. It proved to be one of the important moments of our year. Coach Stehlin remained poised and calm. He worked with the coaching staff on adjustments and didn’t yell or get excited. But before we took the field for the second half, he gathered us around him and said the following. “I want to tell you one thing — you’re the greatest team that’s ever played here and probably ever will … and now go show them.” Final score 53­28, Newburyport. 1966 Thanksgiving game But when Newburyport High School football is discussed, there is nothing more important than winning on Thanksgiving. For many, it is the last time they will play football, and our rivalry with Amesbury uniquely went back before the turn of the century. Color Days and an annual buildup to this annual contest preceded us for generations and it continues today. But in 1966, our team may have been the best in the state with an 8­0 record, and Amesbury, well, let’s just say they were 0­8. In 1951, Amesbury had defeated the Clippers 99­6, a game that had left scars for years in Newburyport. To this day, that game is remembered for various reasons depending on what side of the river your loyalties lie. So to many, the 1966 game represented the opportunity to finally return the favor to Amesbury. For weeks, the buzz in the community was dominated by the predictable lopsided contest that everyone was about to witness. Whether you were on that team, at Color Day as a student of NHS, or a Newburyport family at the dinner table, talk of a 100­point scoring goal was everywhere. And payback would finally happen. Once the game began, it developed exactly like everyone thought it would; and the Clippers were ahead 42­0 at halftime. Many of us were so excited in the locker room we started to chant “99­6 … 99­6.” Coach Stehlin grabbed a chair and stood on it and got our attention and said what I will never forget. “Hey, we don’t do stuff like that around here. Those kids have had a tough year. None of them were here then. We have had a great year. We have too much class and pride.” And I remember thinking at the time that it was the first thing he said to us when he became our coach only a few years earlier. The first string started the second half, and on one play scored to make it 49­0. The crowd went nuts. But it was our last play as starting seniors. The rest of the game was played by the junior varsity and second­string seniors who had not enjoyed a lot of playing time during our championship run. Final score: 49­0. I will always remember that game and that moment in the locker room. We know we could have scored 100, but I’m glad we didn’t. The decision to name the football field “The James T. Stehlin Field” does not diminish or take away the historic tribute to our veterans at World War Memorial Stadium. But it is to honor a man who has touched so many lives in our city as an administrator, teacher, coach and friend. Future generations of athletes from various youth sports will now be able to enjoy the expanded field that will bear Coach Stehlin’s name. And for those of us who know him so well, we could not be happier or more proud.

**Living legacy: Jim Stehlin's football teams uplifted Port**

By Charlie Cullen NHS Class of 1969

Posted: Tuesday, November 17, 2015

*Editor’s note: On Thanksgiving Eve, Newburyport will officially name the high school football field in honor of Jim Stehlin, who served as head coach from 1964­1983, and as athletic director until 1993. Stehlin still resides in greater Newburyport, and through the years his influence on his players transcended the football field and served as life lessons for many. Leading up to the dedication ceremony, The Daily News is presenting a series of columns written by his former players, sharing their personal stories of the coach. This is the second in the series.*

I wasn’t a football player. I was too small, but like everyone in the community in 1966, I was drawn into wanting to be part of the success, fun, excitement and winning attitude that personified Jim Stehlin during his early years at NHS. So I found a way to be part of the team by helping out as one of the equipment managers. Over the next few years I witnessed up close the way Coach Stehlin inspired all of us to be the best we could be. That didn’t mean only with performance on the field, but more importantly how to have respect for others, pride in the school and the city we represented, and to be accountable for our actions on and off the field. He set a tone of excellence, and he was dogged in his emphasis on teamwork. We all learned life lessons from the coach in those years that have stayed with many, if not most, of us for half a century. Coach Stehlin was tough and uncompromising when it came to game day. But the rest of his essence as a man was demonstrated in his gestures of lifelong dedication to his players, whom he treated like family. It is truly remarkable that so many people who played for Coach Stehlin remain close with him today. It wasn’t too well known at the time, but the coach welcomed one of his players into his home for a year due to the individual’s difficult family circumstances. This selfless act by the coach and his wonderful wife, Bev, allowed this individual to experience the success and joy of his senior year both on the football field and in the classroom with all the friends he grew up with. Without this opportunity, he would have missed out on a very important year in this young man’s life. This person still lives in our community and has remained forever grateful to the coach, whom he describes as the “most important and influential person in my life.” Jim Stehlin’s touch and personal connection to his players was authentic and significant. Jim eulogized some of his players who passed away long before their time. The families of those players knew how important the coach was to their loved one’s life. There was no one more fitting to do this, and he always said the perfect thing. All­American I know many in the community who were not here during the “Stehlin years” are asking, “Who is Jim Stehlin, and what was his background before he came on the scene?” Jim was originally from Pennsylvania. After being a three­sport star athlete in high school, he was given a full scholarship to play football and attend Georgetown University. But after arriving, the school eliminated the football program there and Jim transferred to Brandeis University, where he became an All­American quarterback and captain of the baseball team, before being drafted by a team in the Canadian Football League. His life and career would be defined by his 30 years as a teacher, athletic director and legendary coach of Newburyport High, where he went on to win three state championships, eight league championships, and winning streaks of 20 and 38 games while producing an incredible winning record of 126­64­3. And yet today, those that have known him since his retirement in 1994 know him mostly as a friend, mentor and father figure. In addition to being a wonderful husband, father and grandfather, his extended family remains a significant part of his life. For example, the 1966 state championship team still meets twice a year at the Park Lunch during Yankee Homecoming week and during the holiday season. The coach always attends. Reliving the victories and accomplishments on the field creep back into these gatherings; but mostly the conversation turns to family updates, life challenges and current events. It was a few of the guys from that historic team that first approached Institution for Savings President Mike Jones to ask him to consider relinquishing the naming rights for the field, which had been granted by the city after the bank’s generous donation. Mike and the bank’s board enthusiastically supported the idea. ‘Make yourself proud’ Mayor Byron Matthews, who along with Jim would certainly occupy a spot on Newburyport’s Mount Rushmore, was always fond of telling the stories of the early years of his administration. Byron was elected in 1968 and served for 10 years. Those years were characterized by the challenges of urban renewal to address a city that was in physical disrepair. Byron was also aware that the spirit and pride in the city was in need of a boost and wasn’t exactly sure how to turn this around as quickly as he wanted. The restoration of the downtown would take more than a decade. But along came Jim Stehlin. Those teams in the ’60s filled the stadium, and the community was uplifted. When the team buses returned from away games, the coach would direct the buses to go downtown, honking the horn after victories before returning to the high school so we could share the excitement and fun with the community. The coach always reminded us that we represented the city and “giving back” was important, and to never forget “where we came from.” I don’t remember him ever saying “make me proud.” I always remember him saying “make yourself proud.” It was very difficult for the coach to leave the sidelines in 1984. Yet being true to himself, he knew it was time. In Jean Foley Doyle’s book “Life in Newburyport 1950-­1985, the coach was quoted about stepping down. “It’s emotional, a hard thing to do because it has been so much a part of my life (but) I’m really concerned whether or not I could continue at this pace. I expect a certain caliber of performance from myself … I’ve never been under any pressure because I have had an extremely cooperative superintendent, School Committee, fans, and an incredible loyal staff. Paul Kolman has been with me all the way and we have been intact as a staff since 1968. I don’t know of another that’s been together that long.” At the time, Superintendent Francis Bresnahan said; “Obviously, I’m very sad we’ve received Jim’s resignation, though I understand fully his reasons. For 20 years, this man has absolutely personified the whole concept of excellence both as a coach and as a teacher of young men and women. There is absolutely no way we are going to be able to replace that kind of excellence. What he has done for this city is beyond calculation.” Newburyport is very fortunate to have had Jim Stehlin teach and motivate students and athletes for the 30 years he was at NHS. I know it was a long time ago and many today did not have the opportunity to witness and see firsthand how he influenced so many of us and made a difference. But be assured, those of us who lived here during those magical years are thrilled to be able to give a glimpse to the readers of this very special man. And by the way, I may have carried water buckets and fetched football tees after kick­offs; but I always felt part of the team, and I still do today. So congratulations, Coach. Your legacy is secure forever at Mount Rural. From now on, every time a team with those gold helmets runs out from the tunnel under the sign “James T. Stehlin Field,” I am very sure that those kids, along with future generations of athletes, will understand that you dedicated your life work toward instilling pride and class on the field and in the classroom. Such a perfect tribute and honor from a grateful community to you and your family.

**More than a coach**

By Steve Hines NHS Class of 1974

Posted: Wednesday, November 18, 2015

*Editor’s note: On Thanksgiving Eve, Newburyport will of icially name the high school football field in honor of Jim Stehlin, who served as head coach from 1964­1983, and as athletic director until 1993. Coach Stehlin, who still lives in the greater Newburyport area, has had a lifelong influence on his players that transcended the football field and served as life lessons for many. Leading up to the dedication ceremony, The Daily News is presenting a series of columns written by his former players, sharing their personal stories of the coach. This is the third in the series.*

I was pleased this past May when I received a call from Charlie Cullen telling me that the new turf field would be named after Coach Jim Stehlin. It is truly a fitting tribute to someone who has influenced so many people in his lifetime. Charlie also asked me who had done my son Derek’s plaque for the bridge named in his memory, and if I would be interested in coordinating this task for the committee. I told him I would be honored, as Coach Stehlin has been a mentor, friend and inspiration for me throughout my life. Growing up in Newburyport in’ the ’60s and ’70s was different from the way it is now. Children didn’t have the Internet and video games. Your parents would tell you to go outside and play, so children in neighborhoods throughout Newburyport would pick teams and play the appropriate sport for the season. In the fall, you couldn’t wait to go to NHS football games, dreaming of someday being able to play in World War Memorial Stadium — especially under the lights on a Friday night. I was fortunate to play on the varsity for coach Stehlin my sophomore, junior and senior years, working hard each year with the hope of getting playing time or a starting position. I realize now those years are when I learned that there is no substitution for hard work. Coach Stehlin inspired me to work hard at whatever I did, not only in high school football, but, more importantly, in life. Coach Stehlin taught us so much that I have carried with me to this day: Win with pride, and lose with pride; be a team player; and, still my favorite quote, “If you make it to the end zone, act like you’ve been there before.” Team pride Coach paid attention to detail, ensuring the whole team, not just the starters, had clean uniforms, helmets shining, and he made sure the grass field was always perfectly manicured. You were always well prepared for whatever team you were playing against, with thorough scouting reports and countless hours of practice until you ran the play just perfectly. It wasn’t until 10 years later when I joined the state police that I learned how important paying attention to detail was going to be in my life. It was then that I realized coach Stehlin had taught us this lesson a decade earlier. In July 1994, 20 years since I had graduated from NHS, I was surprised one day to receive an envelope in the mail with a photo taken during my senior year along with this note: “I’m cleaning out the office as I finish final day. Thought you might like this photo.” It was signed, “Coach.” On the photo he wrote, “You’re probably telling me, ‘Put me in, Coach. I’ll score!’” The photo is of me talking to coach Stehlin on the sidelines during the 1973 season. My senior year we had several good running backs, and we would relay the plays from the coach to the quarterback as we rotated through. I remember saying this to him, and then quickly realized from the look he gave me, that I may have just made a mistake. Much to my surprise, he said all right and gave me the ball. Lucky for me, I did score. I shouldn’t have been surprised coach had remembered this moment — or that he actually took the time to save and pass along the photo. That’s just the kind of guy coach Jim Stehlin is. The term “command presence” is used to define a rare, intangible leadership ability that can quiet a room and inspire men to follow you into battle. Coach Stehlin has command presence — when he talked, we listened; and I know we would have followed him anywhere. He always presented himself as someone you trusted and respected and still does to this day. Through good, bad times Though I am just one of many players he coached during his tenure, coach Stehlin has continued to impact my life, supporting me through the good times and bad. The day my son Derek was killed in Afghanistan, coach Stehlin was at my house that afternoon, sitting and talking with me, helping me try to cope with our loss. I am sure this was not an easy thing for him to do, but he was there for me and my family when we needed it most and for that I am forever thankful. He continues to send inspiring notes and a donation to Derek’s foundation every year. I am sure there are many other stories of him being there for his former players when needed. Sadly this happened this past summer when my teammate Craig Weir passed away after a long struggle with cancer. When Craig’s co­workers honored him with a retirement party, coach Stehlin attended and spoke so eloquently about Craig, praising and lifting his spirits. You could tell by Craig’s smile at the time how much it meant to have coach Stehlin there speaking. To think, 41 years after we graduated, he is still supporting us, which is pretty amazing and just shows the true altruistic man that he is. Coach Stehlin is a true class act who taught us — and continues to teach us — about so much more than football. I am truly honored to help memorialize his impact on Newburyport High School by assisting with the monument and plaque that will stand outside James T. Stehlin Field at World War Memorial Stadium. Thank you, coach, for the life lessons and for your continued friendship. The naming of this field is a much­ deserved honor, but know that we, your players, will always carry around the intangibles that you taught us. That might be the most meaningful tribute we could ever give you.

'Win with class, and lose with class' By Steve Bradbury NHS Class of 1983

Posted: Friday, November 20, 2015

*Editor’s note: On Thanksgiving Eve, Newburyport will officially name the high school football field in honor of Jim Stehlin, who served as head coach from 1964­1983, and as athletic director until 1993. Coach Stehlin’s influence on his players transcended the football field and served as life lessons for many. Leading up to the dedication ceremony, The Daily News is presenting a series of columns written by his former players, sharing their personal stories of the coach. This is the fourth in the series.*

My first recollection of Coach Jim Stehlin was in the summer before I entered the seventh grade in 1977. A group of us would typically gather at the stadium at the high school during the day for a game of stickball. In those days, the field did not have an underground sprinkler system so metal pipes were manually laid onto the field, and yes, someone had to go up there every day and turn the water on. As we were playing our game, this guy started yelling at us to get off the field, and of course it was Coach Stehlin. Little did I know back then that the coach took care of the field very much like he did most things. He would often say, “What’s worth having is worth taking care of,” a life lesson I have never forgotten. All my friends and I wanted to do was use the field, and so we would start to figure out when we might be able to sneak up there and avoid the stern figure that was responsible for spoiling our fun. So we continued to visit the field, now partly because of our curiosity of what this guy was up to. I have a vivid memory of Coach Stehlin repairing the cracked concrete retaining wall on the Summit Place side of the field — which is the exact spot that is finally undergoing major repairs right now, 30 years later. I have often reflected on the coach’s constant attention to detail to keep our stadium the best on the North Shore. Growing up on Lime Street in the South End in the ’70s was great. While none of us really had much, we really didn’t know it. To us we had everything we needed. Although we made our fun, everyone in the city also knew that the kids in the South End were “tough as nails.” But rather than getting into mischief, most of us turned to sports as our outlet. Much of our time was spent at Perkins Playground, March’s Hill or Atwood Park. We could be seen playing football under the park lights at Atwood Park on any given night during the fall. As a matter of fact, the lights were long ago removed since we were constantly disturbing the neighbors by playing football, baseball or basketball year­round. All of us in the ’70s were drawn to watching the Clippers’ powerhouse teams of that decade. It was something special. I had an awareness of the legendary teams of the ’60s, but I observed as a young teen an outrageous 38­game winning streak, and three Super Bowl appearances with two wins. Who could ever forget the win in South Boston that included the school marching band showing everyone that they too would not get pushed around? I also remember the incredible win over Ipswich led by Notre Dame­bound Bernie Adell that was played in front of over 5,000 at the stadium. The players on those teams were legends to the kids of my age, and there are just too many to list here. I remember the excitement walking up High Street on Friday nights to attend the games, and all you could hear was the loud sound of cheering, and voices singing in unison echoing out into the night air. We then would enter the stadium with the anticipation of seeing the Clippers warming up with their crimson and gold sweat coats on. No one had better uniforms, and no one had a better stadium. There is no doubt in my mind that this pregame routine, along with a crisp, well­uniformed marching band, intimidated many of the teams and the game was over before kickoff. It was truly an indelible memory of growing up, and I always knew I wanted to be part of it all. Clear expectations Coach Stehlin set the tone for all of this. And I will forever be grateful that I was lucky enough to experience firsthand the influence and impact this man would have on my life. By the time my freshman year was over in 1980, I, like all my teammates, knew exactly what was expected from all of us. Football was all business. Goofing around was not tolerated; and we learned about respect, sportsmanship and what it meant to behave with class. Coach Stehlin was revered at the high school, a reputation he had earned. I watched carefully as a young impressionable kid that some teachers and coaches demanded respect; but Coach Stehlin taught us to earn respect and he showed all of us how to do it by his example. I was so fortunate to be part of the 1980 Cape Ann League Championship team led by Coach Stehlin’s son, Kevin, at quarterback. It seemed that we were poised to continue a run the next few years, but my junior year was characterized by devastating injuries to two of our best players, Pat McAniff and Brent Salvatore, that pretty much ended our chances for a title. Amesbury and Triton both had great teams in my senior year and were frankly better than us. It hurts me to admit this. But I reflect back to these two years often. Sure, winning was more fun and always our goal; but learning how to deal with adversity is also a big part of life, and Coach Stehlin taught all of us how to conduct ourselves with integrity. “Win with class, and lose with class.” I have never forgotten this. Coach Stehlin would only coach one more year after I graduated before he spent his last 10 years at NHS as athletic director until his retirement in 1994. I cannot ever express adequately what this man has meant to me in shaping my life. My involvement in restoring our stadium has spanned the last 12 years, and I will be filled with emotion and a sense of pride on Thanksgiving Day when the work of so many finally comes to fruition, and we all can enjoy the Clippers returning to the field that is the site of so much history and fond memories for our community. Not only did I play there, but so did my sons, Jared and Trevor, as well as my dad, Steve, and uncle Bink (who is one of the first players to be elected to the Wall of Fame). My wife, Kelly, also was a cheerleader at NHS. So this moment and this stadium is very personal to our family, and I could not be happier that my son, Owen, will be on the field for the first game with the new turf on Nov. 26. It occurs to me that no longer does anyone need to put the sprinklers on during the summer, or take personal time to patch a crumbling wall like the coach did so many years ago. I will always remember his dedication and love for that place, and I am thrilled that this hallowed ground will forever be rightfully known as James T. Stehlin Field at World War Memorial Stadium.

**Kevin Stehlin reflects on father's legacy Kevin Stehlin Class of 1981**

Posted: Tuesday, November 24, 2015

*Editor’s note: On Thanksgiving Eve, Newburyport will officially name the high school football field in honor of Jim Stehlin, who served as head coach from 1964­1983, and as athletic director until 1993. Coach Stehlin’s influence on his players transcended the football field and served as life lessons for many. Leading up to the dedication ceremony, The Daily News is presenting a series of columns written by his former players, sharing their personal stories of the coach. This is the last in the series, written by coach Stehlin’s son.*

My parents always opened up their house on Lafayette Street, two blocks from the high school, to players, friends and neighbors. The activity through our front door was constant, and I would come to appreciate over time that the relationships my mom and dad had in Newburyport genuinely gave them the contentment and happiness that enriched the lives of our entire family. To this day, I continue to marvel at how close my parents are to these wonderful people, and in particular the young men that played football for my dad all those years ago. To understand my dad, it is important to know where he came from. My father was born and brought up in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The difficult circumstances of his youth helped me to understand what “made him tick.” He was the youngest of four children, with a brother and two sisters. His mother died tragically when he was in the seventh grade, and his dad, who was a jeweler, was unhealthy his whole life after suffering exposure to chemical warfare while in the U.S. Army. So his family struggled economically. It was this life experience in Allentown that certainly helped my dad relate to the kids in Newburyport that were less fortunate, and this perspective guided him throughout his career. There are numerous stories of my dad and mom helping kids that were down and out or in need of a father figure; and it is clear to me that my dad’s circumstances in Allentown contributed significantly to his passion for his work as a teacher, coach and mentor to young people. A son's perspective Kevin Stehlin with his dad in 1967. I was 4 years old when one of the players on the football team moved in with us due to difficult family circumstances. He lived there for two years until he graduated and he became part of our family. I remember this guy after graduation joining the Air Force and coming into our living room in uniform before he left for Vietnam. I was frightened and unable to cope with the moment. I ran upstairs between the beds to get away from all that was going on in my confused young mind. It was a time when the television had nightly reports of the horror in Vietnam, and I just could not deal with seeing him go to what I assumed was a certain death. This “older brother” by 13 years came to see me and promised he would return safe, and sure enough he did. It is this story that helped shape my perspective on many things, including how I tried to be as a parent, as I will never forget the important role my parents played in the life of this young man. I assure you, this man has paid back my parents, me, and even my son, 1,000 times over, for what they meant, were and continue to be in his life. It’s an example of how my parents, in their minds, have received much more back than they ever gave. ‘The General’ I used to tag along with my dad to practices, scrimmages and games from when I was a really young boy. He included me in everything he did. I didn’t realize at the time how special it was to be able to be involved in my dad’s “job.” I was witness to how he conducted himself and how he treated people. My dad was a stickler for the details, but also insisted that all players on the team were treated with respect whether they were the best athlete or a third­string lineman. Everyone’s uniform was the same — little kids notice such things. My dad has always relied on my mom, and somehow she earned the nickname “The General.” It really was a colorful way that my dad could convey just how much my mom was in charge at home and how important she was to making everything work. And by the way, she also had a full­time job. There is no doubt that she was the starting quarterback at our house. It was very important to my dad that he was able to devote his entire self to the passion of excellence as a coach and teacher. He was on duty 24/7: and yet it was because of “The General” that my dad was able to balance effectively his love and responsibilities to the family while excelling at NHS. One of my dad’s fondest memories of “The General” is about the time when my parents, along with four other couples, decided to go to an Army/Navy game. As usual, my mom would make all the arrangements. The group traveled together and when they got to the hotel, they discovered that the Army team and related staff were staying at the same hotel. On behalf of all the couples, my dad and one of the other guys went to the desk to check in for all five couples. The hotel desk manager sadly told my dad that there was only one room in the name of Stehlin, and that there were no other vacancies. My dad insisted that there must be a terrible mistake and to please check again. But to my dad’s disappointment, it was the case. My dad’s friend remarked, “Well, The General will really be pissed,” and the person at the desk hearing this immediately changed his tune. He certainly didn’t want the responsibility of screwing up The General’s accommodations, and before another word was spoken, my dad and his friend could return to the group with the reservation for five rooms. Joe Wiggin Joe Wiggin was a central figure in my dad’s life. Joe was a local character who somehow started to hang around the football team. Instead of my dad ignoring this guy or telling him to leave, he embraced Joe’s enthusiasm for the team and Joe remained an integral part of the personality of Newburyport football for most of my dad’s coaching years. Joe called my dad almost every single night at home and my dad would occasionally have to tell Joe tales of woe about how “The General” had put her foot down and he needed to get off the phone. He would remark to my dad, “Oh, she is really tough coach.” And my dad would agree. But he always took Joe’s call. He made it known to every single freshman class that Joe was an integral part of the team. And it was made clear that no one would ever mock his limitations or treat Joe differently. My dad tells the story of how each year a new freshman class would run out of the tunnel at the beginning of the year to go to practice, and at the top of the runway was Joe yelling at all of them, “I am important around here!” The way Joe was treated is an example of my dad’s kindness and humanity, and even though it wasn’t my dad’s plan, Joe‘s constant presence with the team became a teaching moment for our family and all of his players. Lasting bonds Although my sisters might roll their eyes, it wasn’t always easy being the son of coach Stehlin. But I have no complaints. Everywhere I went I was known as his son, and much was expected; but I also benefited from the relationships I built over the years with his players that produced a unique and lasting bond. Many took me under their wing. I also played quarterback for the Clippers, and of course my dad was that “legendary coach.” So my selection by him to start at quarterback, or the questions that inevitable come with being the coach’s son, always kept us under the microscope. I know we both handled it well. I was prepared because of all the years I had being around my dad and his winning teams — watching guys I looked up to, seeing their good work ethic and how they behaved with respect. There were no entitled players ever on any of my dad’s teams, and that included me. My senior year we won the Cape Ann League Championship. Also, probably the best game I ever played was the 100th win of my dad’s coaching career. This game was in World War Memorial Stadium under the lights against one of our fiercest rivals: Triton. I think often about my formative years as a kid watching those great teams play for my dad, and how I always wanted to be part of all of that too. Well I was, and it remains the best memory of my youth. When my dad was inducted into the Brandeis University Hall of Fame, I had the ultimate honor of introducing him and awarding the plaque at the ceremony. My dad is being honored because of all he did for Newburyport in the classroom, on the field, and in the community. But as I reflect on this great moment, I cannot help but think about the fact that this wonderful community has given him and our family so much more. Success is often measured by financial reward. My parents never had a lot of money, but it didn’t matter. They have a lifetime of cherished memories and a unique bond with an extended family that will be part of their lives forever. My dad may have been just the right man to come to Newburyport when he did, but Newburyport was, without a doubt, perfect for him. On behalf of all the Stehlins, my sisters Kelley and Kara, and my mom, Bev, our star quarterback, thank you so very much to everyone that made this unbelievable tribute to my dad possible.