

Baseball Memories Of The Good, Old Days

Lincoln Herald Staff

MOUNT HOLLY––We recently told you about East Gaston High School's 1979 state runner-up baseball team (see related coverage, only here in *The Herald)*.

We'd also like to share with you some more stories of those heady days back in the glorious 1970's and what happened in the years that followed to these latest inductees into the Mount Holly Sports Hall of Fame.

Outfielder Tracy Black played Class A ball with the Twins organization in Visalia, Calif.

"It was in the middle of the state," he said, "hot as heck, 40 miles from Bakersfield. We were nowhere near water. I worked hard to get out of there. Then I played AA in Orlando. It was still the middle of the state, but it was better than the desert."

Black was switched from outfield to first base, where he had a career-ending injury.

"I gave myself a five-year plan to make the majors, and I was going on three years at the time," he recalled. "I was married and had a son back here, and I would have had to go down two levels and work my way back. As much as I loved it, I had a responsibility."

Today, Black lives in Fletcher, near Asheville, and works for Wilsonart, a specialty shop for designer laminate counter tops. He and wife Jill have a blended family with seven children.

Pitcher Wayne Kinley was drafted out of high school in the 17th round by the Seattle Mariners in 1981.

“I went to Bellingham, Wash., just outside of Seattle, at 18 years old and with $20 in my pocket,” Kinley recalled. “And I’d never flown before and was 3,000 miles away from home. Then I went to AA, and it was called the Wausau Timbers (in Wisconsin) in the Midwest League. Our second-baseman was a guy named Harold Reynolds, who’s the broadcaster on ‘Baseball Tonight.’ I eventually was released because of shoulder issues: rotator cuff.”

He went to work in the soft drink business, traveled the country and now lives in Calabash with his wife of 37 years, Debbie, and their son, Austin.

Centerfielder Kevin Collier played for the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He took a job in sales for a glass company, was on the Gaston County Board of Education for 24 years and now is the sole owner of Riverside Millwork in Charlotte, which specializes in hand-crafted doors and windows. He and wife Mary have two daughters and a son.

Derek Spears, who played shortstop and second base, was a three-sport athlete: baseball, football and track. Spears went on to play for Clemson. He was a member of the class of 1981 at East Gaston and was the quarterback for the football team when it won its first conference title.

And regarding their induction into the hall of fame, it was Black who summed it up, maintaining a philosophical, aw-shucks attitude.

“We were just a bunch of guys who grew up together and played baseball and loved it and had success at the end,” he said. “Even though it wasn’t the exact success we went for, we still did pretty good.”