

Iredell CITIZEN

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Iredell County's Own...

Field of Dreams

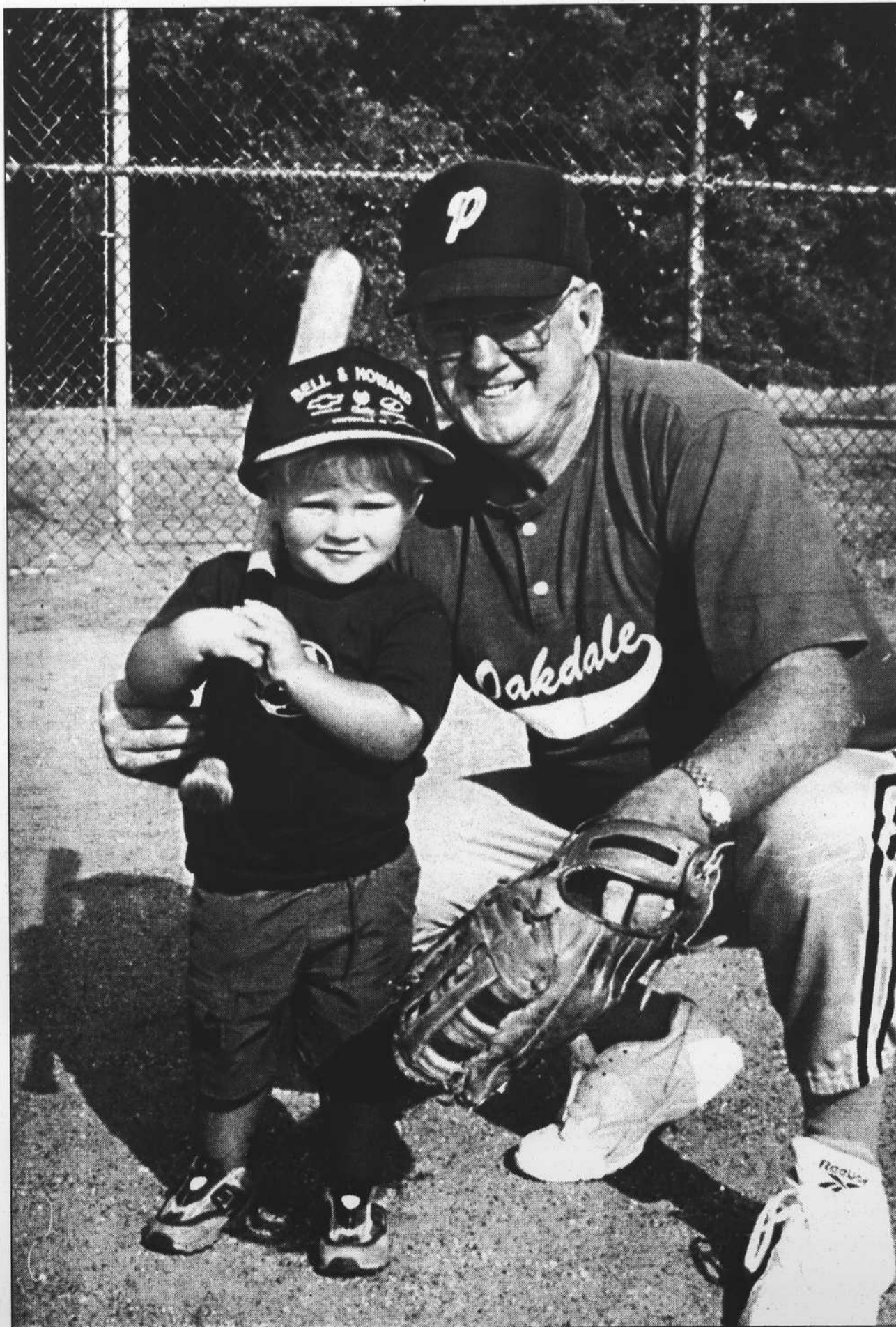
Linda Wilson
IREDELL CITIZEN

A STATEMENT FROM THE HIT BASEBALL FILM *Field of Dreams* a few years ago was, "If you build it they will come." The same is true of a field in Iredell County. The congregation of New Salem United Methodist Church built a ball field across the street from the church in 1952. Six teams of men from area churches and a team of little leaguers came to play. The teams and members of the church brought the poles and lights from Bethany Church to New Salem with the help of Davie Electric Corporation.

As interest grew, so did the number of teams. Church members filled the need by purchasing eight acres adjoining the church. The ball field was moved to the present location in the late 1960s.

Since its beginning, New Salem United Methodist Church ball field has brought hours of fun, exercise and fellowship to hundreds of residents in the county including Billy Swicegood who began playing at the original field when he was 13. He finished his 50th season this year. "I'm the only one left playing from the original group of boys," he said. "When I started out playing it was about the only recreation we had in the country. We worked hard on the farm but always found time to play ball."

Swicegood's love of the game led him to play on the Cool Spring High School team; in the army in the 1960s and on a J.C. Penney team. "At one time or another I've played every position except pitcher. My son, Sam, and I play together and I hope my son and grandson will play on the same field, making it three generations. One of my earliest coaches in the softball league was Haden Graham. When I was in my early 20s. Haden and other coaches like Frank



Linda Wilson/CITIZEN

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BILLY SWICEGOOD is starting his third generation of baseball players. That's his grandson, Jacob, holding the bat, ready for the pitch.