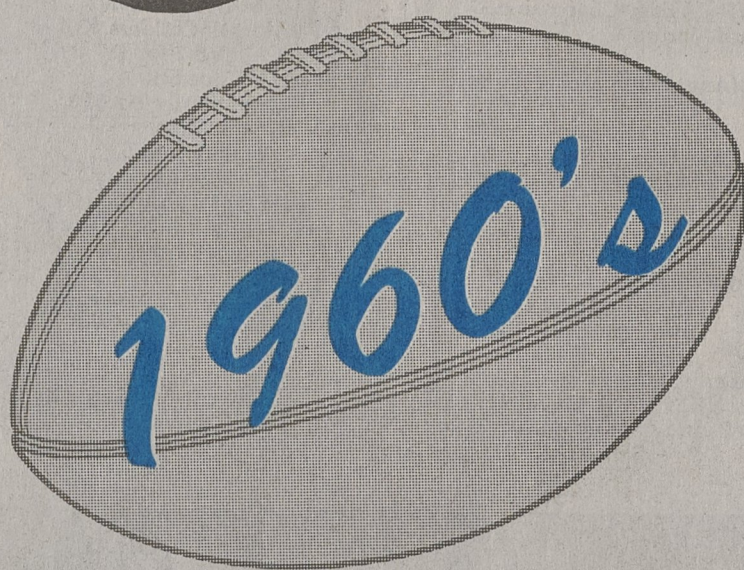
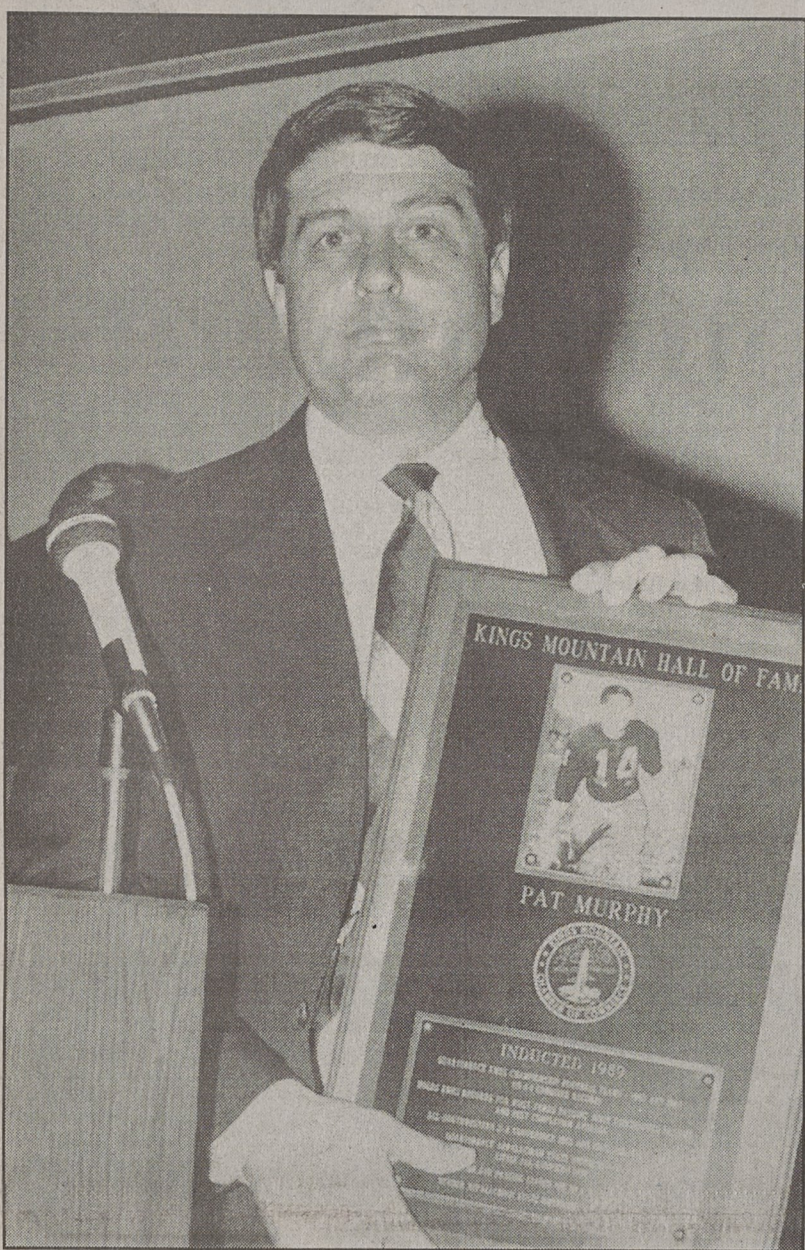
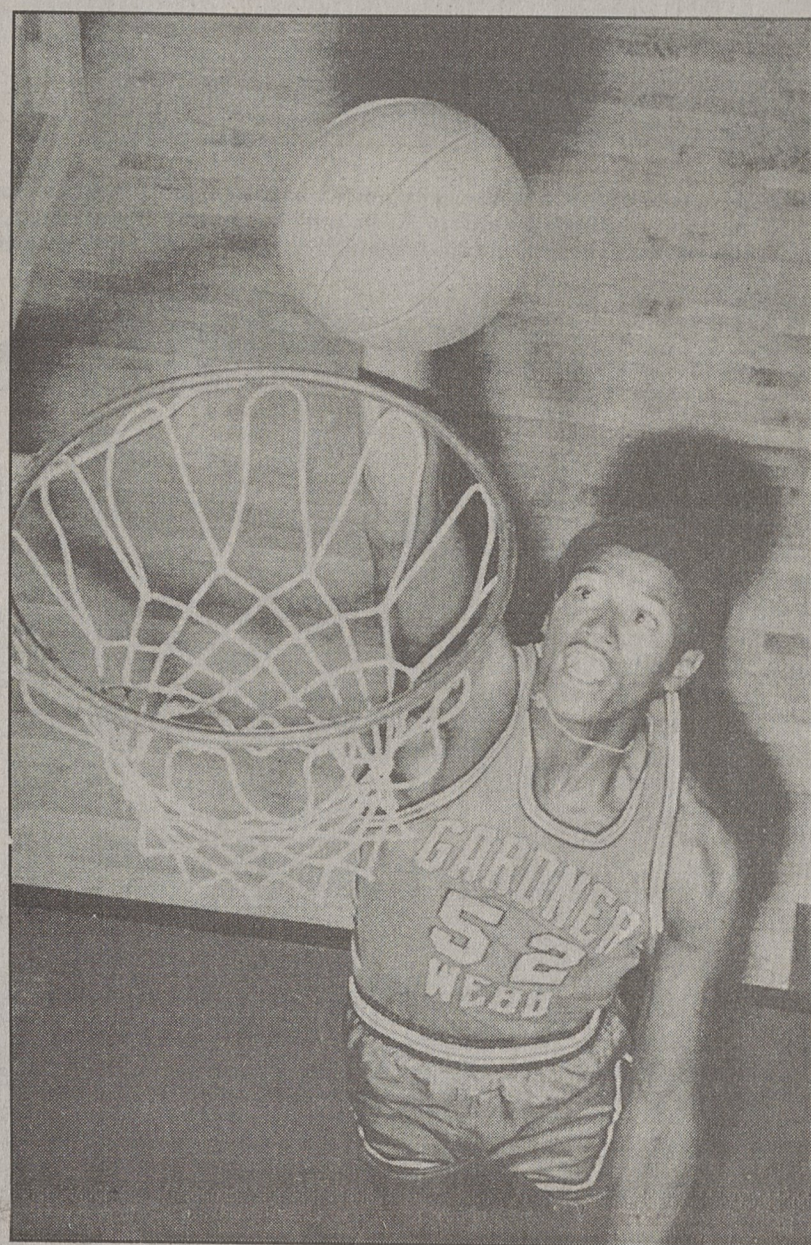


All-Americans Murphy, Adams were head of the class of 1960s



Pat Murphy at his induction into KM Hall of Fame in 1989

George Adams, three-time All-American at Gardner-Webb



(Fifth in a series of stories on Kings Mountain's Athletes of the 20th Century. Today, the 1960s).

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

The decade of the 1960s was one of the most prosperous in Kings Mountain sports history.

High school athletic teams were at their peak. The football program carried on the tradition begun the previous decade by people like George Harris, Ken Baity and Keith Layton. The Mountaineers won back-to-back Southwestern 3A Conference championships in 1963 and '64, compiling an overall record of 19-1-1 during that stretch.

The 1963 baseball team won the SWC under Coach Fred Withers and included players like pitchers Barry Gibson and Bo Goforth, who went on to play college baseball. The '67 team won the SWC under Bobby Hussey, and Hussey's '69 team won the SWC and WNCHSAA championships and included such stand-outs as All-State pitcher Rocky Goforth and one of the best hitting and defensive infielders to ever come through KMHS, Mike Smith.

The men's basketball team won the SWC in 1964-65 and 1966-67 under Don Parker, and won it again and made it all the way to the WNCHSAA championship game in 1967-68 under Hussey. People still recognize names such as Richard Gold, Ken Bunkowski, George Adams, Steve Spencer, Otis Cole and Charles Barnes as being among the best cagers in KMHS history.

Baseball great George Wilson was nearing the end of a 20-plus year career in which he became the all-time minor league home run king; and KMHS had at least one graduate playing college sports in every year of the decade of the sixties.

Football players like Punch Parker, Dale Hollifield, Jerry Adams, Pat Murphy, Hubert McGinnis, Bert Smith, and others, performed on the college level. Richard Gold was a first team All-American second baseman at Florida State, and George Adams was a three-time All-American basketball player at Gardner-Webb.

Choosing two players as the best from the sixties was difficult. Although all of the above-mentioned athletes, plus others, are worthy of the honor, probably the two that stood out the most on the high school and college levels were football star Pat Murphy and basketball great George Adams.

A 5-10, 170-pounder with a rifle for a right arm, Murphy ranked as one of the best passers in the state his junior and senior year. In a day when the Mountaineers were still a running football team, Murphy passed for 1,848 yards during his three-year varsity career and even more impressive were his completion percentages of 63.3 percent (76 of 120) his senior year and 59.1 percent (152 of 257) for his career. His career passing yardage records stood the test of time until 1990 when Ryan Hollifield topped the 2,000-yard mark, and it was topped again last year by Anthony Ash.

Murphy passed for 16 touchdowns his senior year - and that record still stands as the most in a single season for any KMHS quarterback.

Equally as impressive as his completion percentages was his interception figure. His senior year he was picked off just two times - once in the season's opener against Stanley and once in the WNCHSAA bi-conference championship game against Hickory.

Murphy honed his passing skills at an early age playing catch with his cousin Richard White, who would turn out to be one of his favorite targets at KMHS.

Coach Bill Bates, who still likes to talk about Murphy taking the football every day after practice and throwing it right through the middle of the goalpost from the 50 yard line, also remembered Murphy as a great leader when he inducted him into the Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame in 1989.

"Pat was probably one of the better motivated young men we had to go through Kings Mountain," said Bates. "His motivation carried over to the team itself, which in turn, motivated them to be good. Pat was a natural leader. Whatever he does he'll do well. Most people who are successful at one thing can be successful at anything."

Murphy was a two-time All-Conference choice and was All-State his senior year, and Kings Mountain fans weren't the least bit happy when he was overlooked for selection on the 1964 Shrine Bowl team. Because of his outstanding football ability, people over the years may have forgotten that he was also a tremendous baseball player. He was also All-Conference in baseball his senior year, hitting well over .300 and committing only one error at third base.

Fans over the years have felt - and coaches believed it too - that Murphy could have accumulated astronomical passing records if he had wanted to be a one-man show. But Murphy and his coaches were always true to the team concept.

Murphy really reached star status after he left Kings Mountain - but he was still, and always will be - a Mountaineer. He accepted a full scholarship to Appalachian State where he re-wrote their passing record book and made All-American.

In four years as the Mountaineers' starting QB, Murphy passed for 46 touchdowns and 5,141 yards. He hit 111 of 219 passes for 1,724 yards his junior year, and hit 145 of 275 for 2,330 yards his senior year. For his career he hit 338 of 694 passes. He was inducted into the ASU Hall of Fame in 1976.

Two years after Murphy left KMHS, schools were integrated and the excitement generated by football players over the years quickly switched to basketball.

The reason was a 6-5 superstar named George Adams, who had played his freshmen and sophomore years at the all-black Compact High School under Coach John Blalock.

People who saw Adams dominate the Southwestern Conference his junior and senior years would have never dreamed that he didn't make the cut when he first tried out for Bill Hager's eighth grade team at Compact in 1963.

But that just made Adams more determined. He approached varsity coach John Blalock about being his trainer. Blalock recognized his talent and later in the year when an extra uniform became available Blalock put him on the varsity.

By the end of that year Adams had worked his way into the starting lineup.

When he enrolled at KMHS as a junior along with a number of other outstanding black players, the Mountaineers became an instant basketball success. Adams and Company led Coach Don Parker's 1966-67 team to a 20-0 record before falling to R-S Central in the opening round of the Bi-Conference Tournament at Hickory.

Adams led the SWC in both scoring and rebounding, and was named All-Conference and All-State.

By the time his senior year rolled around, Coach Parker had retired and Bobby Hussey took over the coaching duties. With

Adams averaging over 25 points and 20 rebounds per game, the Mountaineers breezed through the SWC and won 25 straight games before falling to Kannapolis in the WNCHSAA championship game.

Adams reaped a number of awards, including All-Conference, All-State, and MVP in the Marion Civitan Classic. He scored 18 points in the annual East-West All-Star Game in Greensboro, and capped off his season by becoming the first basketball player in KMHS history to be named to the High School All-American team.

College offers came in from all over, including the University of Houston which was the top-ranked team in the nation. But to Adams, his family and hometown always came first and he felt he couldn't be any happier anywhere than Gardner-Webb College in nearby Boiling Springs.

His freshman year at G-W, the school was still a junior college and one of the top-ranked teams in the nation. Adams averaged 18 points on a team that included All-Americans Artis Gilmore and Ernie Fleming.

After Adams' freshman year, Gilmore and Fleming, who were a year older, transferred to Jacksonville University. Dolphins' Coach Joe Williams wanted Adams to come with them, but G-W was switching to a four-year program and he elected to stay with Coach Eddie Holbrook and the Bulldogs.

Adams made All-American his sophomore, junior and senior years at G-W and played in three NAIA national tournaments. He still holds 15 school records, including most career points (2,404) and most career rebounds (1,113).

Adams once scored 57 points in a single game and had a 26-rebound game. He averaged hitting 64.2 percent of his field goals over a four-year career.

Although the Bulldogs never won an NAIA national championship, they played for third place twice in three years during the Adams' era, and finished third once.

Adams was drafted in the second round of the NBA draft by the world champion Milwaukee Bucks, and made it all the way through the Bucks' exhibition season before being the last player cut.

After being released by the Bucks, Adams was contacted by San Diego of the ABA, and he played four years with the Conquistadors. He averaged 12 points and four rebounds per game and played one year under the legendary Wilt Chamberlain.

Adams was selected to try out for the 1972 U.S. Olympic team but suffered an injury and had to come back home to Kings Mountain.

After the ABA folded, he considered trying out for some NBA teams, but returned to Cleveland County to complete his degree requirements at Gardner-Webb. He earned his B.S. in parks and recreation in 1977 and served several years as Kings Mountain Recreation Director.

Adams joined the late Jake Early, John Henry Moss and NFL football star Kevin Mack in the Kings Mountain Hall of Fame's inaugural class in 1988.

**Next Week:
The 1970s**