



photo courtesy of TARMO MAATTALA

The second, third and fourth rows of these football players comprised the 1944 Farmington High School football team which went undefeated that season compiling an 8-0 record. Six of the players who met recently to reminisce about the team are: number 20, Don Gramer; number 23, Harold Turney;

number 24, Cyril Schniers; number 25, Milton Knight; assistant head coach Tarmo Maattala is in the last row, far right, and team manager Norman Goers is second from the right in the last row.

Memories

'40s gridgers recall days of glory

By Jean Adamczak
staff writer

The year was 1944. The Glenn Miller Orchestra swung the nation with its big band sound while the Allies invaded Normandy marking the beginning of the end of World War II.

The mood of the nation was patriotic. Women gave up wearing dresses for slacks and worked long hours in factories while husbands fought overseas. People bought food and gasoline with ration stamps and listened to President Roosevelt's fireside chats on the radio.

The Willow Run Airport in Ypsilanti manufactured military aircraft for the war and several automobile plants in the Detroit area halted production of cars and turned out military vehicles instead.

That was also the year of glory for the Farmington High School football team. That season the team went undefeated, ending the season with an 8-0 record, and were crowned Inter-Lakes League Champions.

"There was a special togetherness among us," said Milton Knight of the 1944 team.

Knight and five of his teammates met recently in a joyful mini-reunion of the undefeated team. They got together to reminisce about the old days and to see how each other had changed over the past 41 years.

"My God Harold you've gotten so big," Knight said, hugging his former teammate Harold Turney. Knight remembered Turney as the 5-foot, 8-inch quarterback and linebacker who was quick in the backfield.

Today, at about 6 foot, 4 inches, Turney is the tallest of the six gathered.

"Look it, he's got half in this picture,"

exclaimed Tarmo Maattala, assistant head coach for the team. Maattala was looking at the team picture taken for the school back in 1944.

"Farmington was a powerhouse back then (1944)," recalled the 71-year-old Maattala.

"Every once in awhile you'll get a group of fellows who come along who are so good, there's just no stopping them," he said.

Life on the gridiron was simpler but a lot tougher in 1944, the ex-football players say.

The football helmets were made out of leather with no face mask or straps. Players wore high boots, usually without socks, which had large mud cleats on the bottom, and they endured many a painful hit in the face.

"YOU GOT HIT and that helmet would take off like a rocket. You got stepped on

by those huge mud cleats and boy that would hurt," Maattala recalled.

Farmington High School was located on Thomas Street in downtown Farmington. Today the building is still used by the public schools for the Farmington Training Center.

The football field was located where Farmington City Park is today. The play-

Please turn to Page 4



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Gathering together at the present Farmington High School football field to relish old football memories were six members of the 1944 Farmington High School football team. From left to right are Norman Goers team

manager; Cyril Schniers, left guard; Tarmo Maattala, assistant coach; Harold Turney, quarterback and linebacker; Milton Knight, left halfback; and Don Gramer, left guard.