

Educator, Coach, Marine....SHAZAM!

Jim Nabors played the lovable Gomer Pyle on "The Andy Griffith Show" in the 1960's. He had a loyal following and he was well known to exclaim, "Shazam!" whenever something unusual was said or observed. Gomer got his own T.V. show in 1964, "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.," which ran for 5 years. You may recall hearing from, sometimes Pvt. Pyle and sometimes the entire platoon, "Sir, Yes Sir!" This was generally in response to an order barked out by their drill Sgt. Vince Carter, played by Frank Sutton. Sgt. Carter often came back repeatedly with, "I can't hear.....you!"

Today's "Time Machine" is not about a sitcom Marine Pvt.; however, it is about a Marine Capt. A real one. An educator, a coach, and a real Marine. SHAZAM!

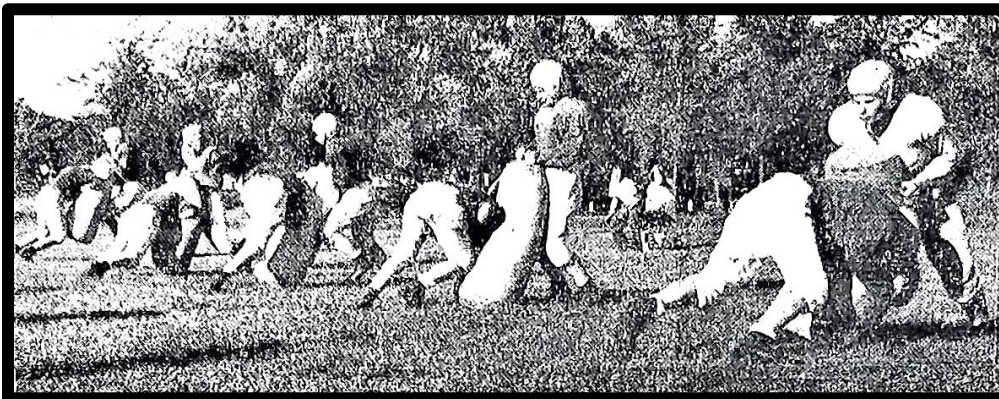
After graduating from St. Cloud Tech HS in 1943, Bill Larson enlisted in the Marines and served through 1946. At twenty-one years of age, it was time for college. Larson attended St. Cloud State University and the University of Minnesota. The interior lineman played football for the Huskies and the Gophers. Subsequent to graduation Capt. William Larson, U.S.M.C., started teaching math and was an assistant football coach at WHS in the fall of 1950. His last assistant coaching assignment would be in the fall of 1978. After his first year on the job, he was called back for another tour of duty. The U.S. Marine Corp needed him again, this time in Korea. On October 15th, 1951, he landed in Korea in the morning and by evening he was with his outfit. The next morning, they were on the front line engaging the enemy. Until late March they remained in their original sector, at which time they redeployed further north to Seoul, in anticipation of a Chinese attack.



1958

Larson's last deployment, before heading home, was Panmunjom, the eventual site of the peace settlement. During that time, Larson and his outfit witnessed many peace delegates coming and going, but to no avail. The "war" did finally end July 27, 1953. Capt. Larson was already back in the classroom and on the football field in time for the 1952-53 school year. When welcomed back by Supt. Ted Tofte, Larson's response was, "It's great to be back." One can only imagine.

Remember Joe Krause WHS class of '55? I have shared his insights with you before. In one of his two "Life in the Slow Lane" books he describes himself as small and out of shape just as the two-week preseason, two-a-day, mid-August workouts were about to begin. Joe describes coach Larson as a very intense ex-Marine drill Sergeant that worked him so hard that he threw up, I believe more than once.



August 1953

Two Weeks
Leaf Lakes
Resort

Two-A-Day
Practices

Interior Linemen

"The Time Machine"

Art 34

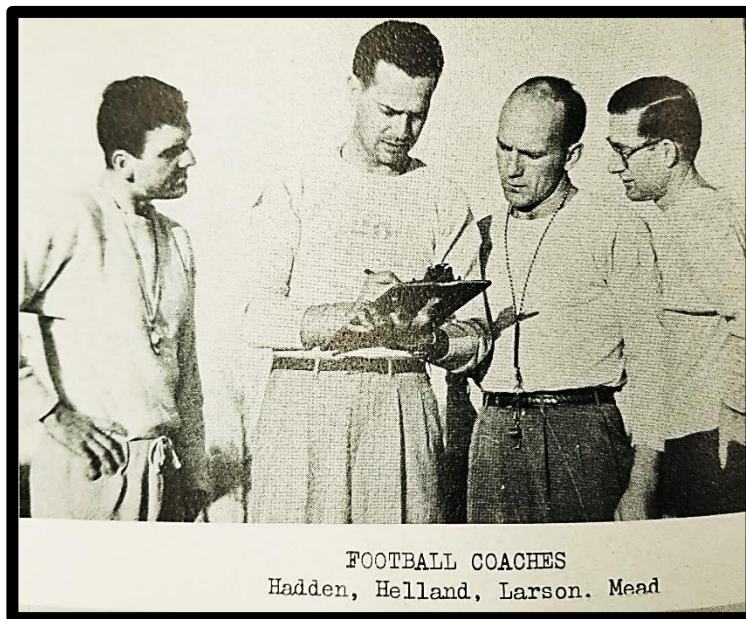
Dave Zosel, WHS class of '62, was the quarterback of the 1961 8-0-1 team, the only undefeated team of John Conzemius' 31-year tenure. Dave's recollection of that magical season starts on page 152 of the "1960-69 WHS Football Scrapbook." He recalls the coaching staff as being tough and demanding and describes line coach Bill Larson as being one tough ex-Marine.

Offensive and defensive interior linemen have to battle on every snap of the ball. About as close to war as you can get, without weapons. One of Larson's favorite battle cries during practice drills, for his offensive linemen, was, "GET DOWN LOW AND STRIKE A BLOW!"

Fighting Marine's Influence Reflected In Prepsters Play

During my junior high school years, 1968-71, Mr. Larson was our principal. He ran that building like we were in boot camp. There was to be no goofing around, no tomfoolery, and no hijinks before, during, or after class. Once class was in session, if you heard a loud stern voice coming from the hallway, followed by the sound of a "student body" crashing into a locker, then you knew someone failed to comply with the goofing around, tomfoolery, and hijinks restrictions. At a student council meeting, chaired by Tommy Merickel, a motion was made to "Defund the Principal," but it failed for lack of a second.

William Larson was a very successful educator, coach, and marine. If you followed the rules in school and on the field it was easy to get along with him. In fact, I truly believe that deep down he was actually a big ole teddy bear. As stated in his obituary, three of his favorite pastimes were flower and vegetable gardening, making lefse, and reading. SHAZAM!



FOOTBALL COACHES
Hadden, Helland, Larson. Mead

Fall 1950