

## HOW THE CHITTENANGO BLACK BEARS GOT THEIR NAME

BY

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In the fall of 1940 basketball coach Fred Heinlen decided that since Chittenango High School had no fall sports program, he would ask all of the boys going out for basketball to get in shape during September and October. During the fall all of the boys who showed up began to engage in exercises and long runs up and down the roads surrounding the school. Coach Heinlen was very pleased with the progress made by all of the basketball hopefuls, and he decided at the end of that training to give them a treat. He made arrangements with Jay Keene's father, who was a member of the club that owned a hunting camp about twenty miles north of Holland Patent, New York, to take the group up to his hunting camp on a Friday night and bring them back on Sunday night.

Since Coach Heinlen did not want to take the boys into the woods during deer season, when bullets would be flying throughout the woods, he took them the week before deer season. However, it was during **BEAR** season.

On the designated Friday all of the boys along with Coach Heinlen, Bill Pashley, and Mr. Keene, who would serve as a guide, drove cars to Holland Patent. They had to drive up a dirt road for about five miles through the wooded area to where the cars were parked. Then everybody packed the supplies, equipment and anything else they had brought with them, and hiked, about fifteen miles back into the Adirondack woods where they reached the hunting camp.

After a delicious supper, much story telling, and an explanation of the rules the boys would follow were explained, everybody went to bed.

The next morning everyone got up early, had a good breakfast and were free to enjoy the camp and its adjacent wooded area. Some boys had brought their fishing equipment and went fishing at a nearby stream, where they caught a lot of brook trout. Jay Keene cooked the trout, with the heads on. However, some of us had trouble eating anything that is looking at us.

Others investigated the surrounding wooded area until lunchtime. They saw deer, owls, partridge, and porcupine. Unfortunately, it was the time of year that the "no seeums" were out biting, and that was **not** fun!

After lunch, while the boys returned to their activities, Coach Heinlen, Mr. Pashley, and Mr. Keene took a walk about two miles from camp. During the walk, Coach Heinlen carried a shotgun with bird shot and Mr. Pashley carried a 22 caliber pistol.

As they were walking out of the underbrush, they came upon a berry patch, and in the berry patch was a large black bear eating berries. Knowing how dangerous the bear could be if provoked, Mr. Keane tried to get Coach Heinlen and Mr. Pashley to slowly back up and disappear into the forest. However, instead, Bill Pashley stepped out and confronted the bear with his pistol. His first shot hit the bear in the head, and the bear stood up and started waving his arms. Bill calmly fired a second shot at the bear, and the bear dropped over dead. Later, we discovered that the second bullet had gone between the bear's ribs and entered the bear's heart, killing him instantly. When this story was told to old-timers in the area they shook their heads with disbelief, and indicated that God must have been watching over Bill Pashley when he shot the bear.

While Mr. Keene and Mr. Pashley disemboweled the bear, Coach Heinlen came back to the camp. He asked some of the boys to go back with him and carry the bear carcass to camp. When the carcass arrived at camp, a pole was placed between two trees, and the bear was hung up on the pole. Sunday morning we had pancakes fried with bear grease, and they were delicious! During Sunday afternoon, two small trees were cut down and a framework was made so the bear could be carried back to the cars. During the trip back to the cars, since the bear was very heavy, everybody took their turn carrying the bear on its framework.

When we got back to the cars, the bear carcass was roped on the front hood of one of the cars for transporting home. When we got home, we all drove around the village honking our horns and yelling "WE GOT A BEAR!!!"

Mr. Pashley took the bear carcass to Fenton's Butcher Shop where the meat was removed. On the following Saturday night everybody enjoyed a bear meat dinner at the home of Lloyd Graves.

Bill Pashley took the bear hide, and head to a taxidermist where it was made into a bearskin robe with the head still attached. Meanwhile Coach Heinlen and all of the boys on the team decided that from hereon, the team would be called the **Chittenango Black Bears**. For a number of years the boy cheerleader would wear the headed bear skin and strut around the gymnasium during basketball games.

**This is how the Chittenango Black Bears got their name!!!**

Fred and Lois Heinlen

