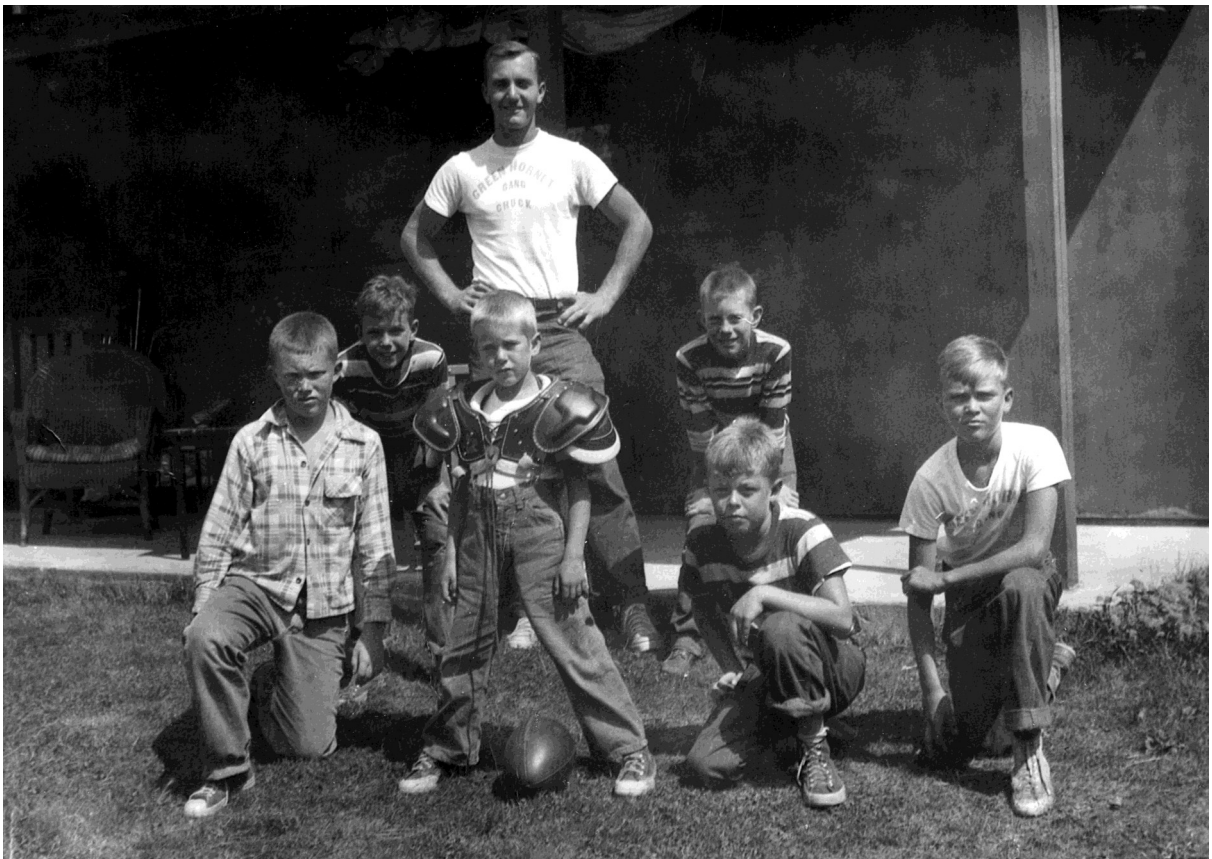


Looking Back #10

Charlevoix High Grad Chuck Fairbanks Becomes New England Patriots Coach

by David L. Miles, Curator

Charlevoix Historical Society Museum at Harsha House

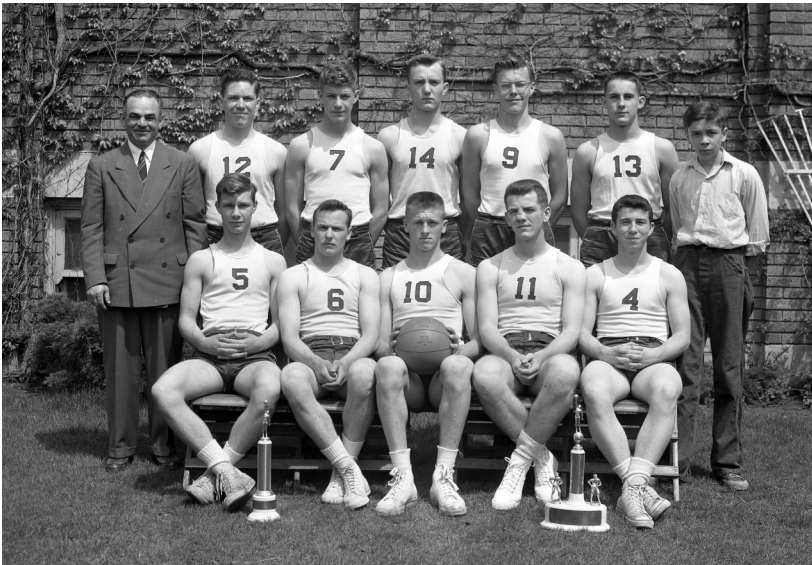


Chuck Fairbanks and his summer boys group
he called the Green Hornet Gang, ca. 1950

Charles Leo "Chuck" Fairbanks was born in Detroit in 1933 and came to Charlevoix a few months later. His parents, Ron and Grace, opened a popular bakery which they operated until 1950, lastly at 214 Bridge Street, now the location of That French Place crepes shop. Chuck was a naturally gifted athlete and excelled in football, basketball, track, and baseball. Charlevoix's famous Carey twins, Bob and Bill, were three years older than Chuck, but they became good friends. The Careys went on to fame at Michigan State College, now University (1964), where Bob set records in three sports that stand to this day. Chuck wanted to follow his idols, and claimed he was recruited by MSC's legendary coach Clarence "Biggie" Munn in the Carey home kitchen.



Above: Charlevoix High School basketball team, 1945-46. Chuck Fairbanks at far right as "team manager," age 13. Bill and Bob Carey in front row, #s 15 and 4. Charlevoix's legendary coach Ray Kipke stands at far left.



Left: CHS basketball team, 1949-50. Chuck Fairbanks wears #14. He would play football at Michigan State with teammate Ross Case, #10 in front row (see MSC program cover below). 1950 was Ray Kipke's last year as coach.

Below: CHS football team, 1949. Chuck Fairbanks wears #34, middle row. Assistant coach Stewart "Irish" Coleman stands at far right. All three photographs taken outside the school gymnasium, today's stacks room of the Charlevoix Public Library.





MSC football program with Chuck Fairbanks and fellow CHS classmate Ross Case on the cover.

Bill, Chuck, and Bob—Charlevoix sports legends together again

A trio of Charlevoix high school athletic greats, who later starred at Michigan State, put on their Green and White gridiron livery again recently in the first annual Old Timers classic in State's Macklin Stadium. The game, which ended in a 20-20 tie, pitted a team of alumni stars against the current Spartan varsity.

The Charlevoix products, shown in the sidelines just prior to the start of the game, are (l to r) Bill Carey ('52), Chuck Faribanks, ('55) and All-American Bob Carey ('52). Bob Kicked the vital extra points which helped the Old Timers gain their tie. Fairbanks caught one pass from quarterback Al Dorow for an eight-yard gain.

Two weeks after graduating from Charlevoix High School, Chuck married his sweetheart Virginia "Puddy" Thomson of Ironton five miles to the south, at the Ironton church. They had met at a high school dance. Then it was on to Michigan State, and a future with five children.

At MSC, Chuck played both defensive and offensive end on the football team. The 1952 team won the national football championship at 9-0, and in 1954 as Big Ten Conference champions (8-1) defeated UCLA in the Rose Bowl, 28-20.

While at MSC, inspired by the examples of Kipke, Coleman, and Munn, Chuck realized he might want to devote his future years to coaching. He switched from an accounting major to education. His first job after college was a three-year high school coaching stint in Ishpeming in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

With Old Timers At MSU





COACH CHUCK FAIRBANKS, OKLAHOMA

In Ishpeming, Chuck's talents as a successful coach began to become known. From there it was onward to Arizona State at Tempe as defensive backfield coach for four seasons, through 1961. At ASU, he caught the eye of the University of Houston in Texas where he assumed the position of assistant coach, in charge of offense, from 1962 to 1965. Then came the big one.

In 1966, Chuck Fairbanks accepted the offer of an assistant coaching position, basically defensive backfield mentor, at the University of Oklahoma at Norman. He showed his skill with pass defense, which allowed only one aerial touchdown all year. After the end of the season he was made offensive co-ordinator. Then, in April of 1967, occurred the sudden death of 37-year-old head coach Jim MacKenzie. In a state of shock, Chuck was promoted to head coach, at age 33. His first Oklahoma team finished 9-1, won the Big Eight Conference championship, beat Tennessee in the Orange Bowl, and was ranked nationally as #2 by Sports Illustrated, and #3 by UPI and AP polls at season's end.

Chuck scored three Big Eight Conference titles at Oklahoma, in 1967, 1968, and 1972. In 1967 he was named Big 8 Coach of the Year. In 1969 he coached Steve Owens to a Heisman Trophy. His last two seasons with the Sooners were both 11-1. Chuck's last full calendar year at Norman was actually capped by two Sugar Bowl wins: on January 1 against Auburn, again on December 31 against Penn State.

All this demonstration of his skills led Chuck Fairbanks into the big leagues. On January 26, 1973, he was named head coach of the New England Patriots of the National Football League.



CHARLEVOIX -- Big time football moved into Charlevoix recently when Coach Chuck Fairbanks, head coach and general manager of the New England Patriots and his offensive line coach, Robert "Red" Miller conducted an orientation camp at Kipke field. Pictured here with Coach Fairbanks (second from left) are Doug Dumler, University of Nebraska, offensive center; Sam Cunningham, Southern Cal., John Tarver,

University of Colorado, Bob McCall, University of Arizona, Josh Ashton, University of Tulsa, and Andy Johnson, University of Georgia, all running backs; Jim Massey, Linwood College, Ore., and Jack Mildren, University of Oklahoma, both defensive backs. Mildren was acquired in a trade with Baltimore. Johnson of Georgia was a 1974 draft choice. (Photo by Fran Martin.)

Fairbanks, Patriots Hold Orientation at Charlevoix

Petoskey News-Review, Tuesday, July 2, 1974

Chuck's tenure with the Patriots was not as glorious as his time with the Sooners. He was able to turn around a faltering team and earn a respectable 46 wins and 42 losses over six seasons, the best performance by a Patriots coach in its then 19-season history. Plus he got the team to the playoffs twice. Of course Charlevoix popped its buttons when Chuck assumed the Patriots' mantle. Local boy had made very, very good, and Charlevoix had every reason to be very, very proud. He even brought the Patriots to Charlevoix in late June of 1974 for practice sessions on the local football grass and spectator stands area named after his early mentor and inspiration, Kipke Field. The local kids went berserk. And he even came back to give an inspirational graduation speech to a senior class. Chuck Fairbank's star never shone so bright in Charlevoix.

Things took a twist in 1979 when animosity between coach and ownership boiled over, for various reasons, and Chuck left the Patriots under a cloud for the University of Colorado. Nothing worked out there, and with a dismal record he departed in 1982 to help found the fledgling United States Football League's New Jersey Generals, with Herschell Walker on board. That lasted through 1983 when Donald Trump bought him and the majority owner out. From then on, Chuck never coached another team, but went into golf course development (golfing was a lifelong passion, having been learned on the local Belvedere Golf Course) and real estate. He and wife Puddy had a seasonal home near Ironton on Lake Charlevoix's South Arm, and maintained a large circle of friends in the Charlevoix area over their last years.

Chuck Fairbanks died at age 79 in Scottsdale, AZ on April 2, 2013, a distinct legend in his time for many, many people in Charlevoix.