

# Youth Page

Lowndes County Historical Society

May - June 2008

## Valdosta Native Carries Winnersville Spirit to the Arctic Ocean Shore

Cathy Biles Parker graduated from Lowndes High School in 1983. She was in the Georgia Bridgemen Marching Band. She now lives near Jacksonville, Florida. When speaking here in June 2008 to civic group, the Valdosta Rotary Club, she said that this area is still home to her. She is an accountant. Her husband Carl Parker is a football coach at Bartram Trails High School. They have three sons that play football.

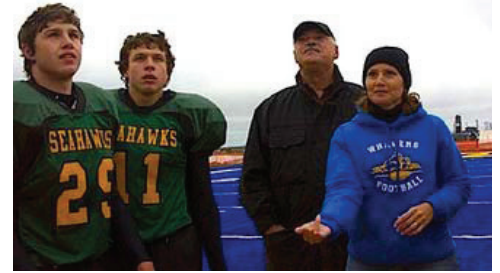
In October 2006 Cathy Parker saw a feature on ESPN television about the plight of the experimental high school football team in Barrow, Alaska after the completion of their first year. Barrow is a town of under 5,000 people well above the Arctic Circle where the permanently frozen ground, called tundra, means no trees or plants can grow and roads in can't be paved. The ESPN program stated that the school had a dropout rate of over 50% with bad drug and other problems. When the school superintendent surveyed the student body to determine what activities would help them remain interested in school he was surprised at the response: *form a football team.*

The ESPN feature that Cathy Parker saw also told that the team had played their first year on a gravel field. At one practice they had to keep an eye on a distant polar bear. Many of the team members are Inupiat Eskimos. The Inupiat hunt whale as part of their living. Named the Barrow Whalers, the team did win one game their first season. Cathy Parker understood that football in Barrow was designed to be a tool to help teenagers overcome social issues.

Cathy Parker began Project Alaska Turf, a complex task that many people thought not possible. After much hard work, help from all over the USA, and reliance on faith, the blue artificial turf was ready for the first game.

One reporter noted, "Barrow, Alaska is not a normal destination point for national media, but on Friday August 17, 2007, crews from ESPN, ABC, NBC, and CNN gathered in the northernmost community in the United States to see a dream realized. A \$500,000 artificial turf field in bold blue and gold a few yards from the Arctic Ocean became the new home of the Barrow Whalers."

The Whalers came from two touchdowns behind and won the game with a last minute score 18 - 16. They jumped into the Arctic Ocean to celebrate the victory.



Above:  
Cathy Parker  
flipped the coin for  
Barrow Whalers &  
Seward Seahawks.  
During a ceremony  
the football field  
was named for her.



*The photo above is of Cathy Biles (Parker) from the 1982 Munin Yearbook when she was a junior.*

*During that school year, in October 1981, she participated in the first Winnersville Classic Parade*

When Cathy Parker flew into Barrow, her plane landed at the Wiley Post-Will Rogers Airport. Wiley Post, the famous and distinguished aviator, and Will Rogers, famous humorist died in a plane crash at Barrow in 1935. They were world renown.

In 1931 Wiley Post, with John Getty as navigator, set a record that had the world excited, flying around the globe in eight days—in the airplane named the *Winnie Mae*. A national celebration tour followed. As people in Barrow for decades will tell of seeing Cathy Parker, the lady who brought them the football field; men in their eighties in Valdosta still tell of seeing Wiley Post and the *Winnie Mae* when they were boys. The museum has a photograph of the Wiley Post visit. On December 10, 1931, Valdosta, Georgia had the good fortune of getting a visit from Wiley Post, John Getty and the *Winnie Mae*.

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For more about history ask your parents if you may visit our web site at [www.valdostamuseum.org](http://www.valdostamuseum.org)

The Kids/Youth Page is made possible through the Rudolph and Lilly Howell Endowment Fund

## Did you know?

The “Winnersville” idea came from the Public Relations Committee of the Valdosta/ Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce. The February 1979 bulletin of the Chamber said that residents would soon see about 50 area billboards with “Winnersville” slogans on them. The slogan continues to reflect the many aspects of success in our community, but especially in athletics and the values learned in athletics. Recently the Valdosta Times reported over 325 titles between Valdosta State, Valdosta High, Lowndes High, The Valwood School, Open Bible School, Georgia Christian, and the former Pinevale and Dasher Highs.

Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, The Winnersville Classic began in 1981. It centered on the week before the Lowndes- Valdosta football game and was designed to “promote good sportsmanship and community pride.”

Lastinger graduated from Valdosta High School in 1949 and Coleman in 1958. During those years they saw many titles in football, golf and/or tennis at VHS.



*In 1979, Valdosta and Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce President, Wade Coleman and Chamber executive, Johnny B. Lastinger revealed the first “Winnersville U.S.A” billboard. The Winnersville Classic began in 1981*

### WORD FIND - Are you up to the challenge?

M	I	S	T	N	C	A	M	A	R	N	A	T	M	L	A
E	S	K	I	M	O	A	H	I	P	Y	S	L	A	P	P
L	H	R	T	S	A	L	A	S	K	A	S	A	Y	I	A
L	P	G	L	S	C	I	E	D	F	R	O	Z	E	N	L
I	I	A	E	O	H	B	K	L	O	R	A	C	D	A	A
V	P	H	S	J	A	C	K	S	O	N	V	I	L	L	E
S	B	L	A	H	T	S	O	L	T	T	I	A	L	L	H
R	E	W	H	A	L	E	R	S	B	N	L	R	G	I	E
E	A	A	T	R	A	B	V	P	A	R	A	D	E	K	B
N	D	S	T	C	N	M	I	R	L	E	H	A	O	T	L
N	S	T	E	T	N	U	E	V	L	C	A	D	R	Z	A
I	N	U	P	I	A	T	G	S	E	T	W	G	G	X	Z
W	H	A	O	C	T	O	S	E	D	I	T	I	I	N	E
R	E	V	N	L	A	C	E	T	U	N	D	R	A	N	R
W	I	L	D	C	A	T	S	V	I	K	I	N	G	S	S

Find the following words. They are written forward, on an angel and upside-down.

COACH  
ALASKA  
ESPN

WINNERSVILLE  
JACKSONVILLE  
FOOTBALL

TUNDRA  
ESKIMO  
ARCTIC

WHALERS  
GEORGIA  
INUPIAT

PARADE  
TITLES  
FROZEN