

The Kinmundy Ball Park
By Shirley (Bailey) Miller

The year was 1946. Our fighting men had come home from the war, were getting jobs, starting families, and looking for some fun for a change. Thus an Independent Baseball Team was started in Kinmundy and nearby towns, i.e. Salem, Centralia, Farina, Patoka, Louisville, Odin, Sandoval, etc. Lloyd Bailey rounded up some of the guys he knew loved baseball and they organized the Kinmundy team. The original lineup was:

Pitchers: Jeff Lemay, Charles Johnson, Lyle Green
Catchers: Cliff Olden and Pug Jenkins
First Base: Joe Malone and Howard Robb
Second Base: Spike Cheatum
Third Base: Sleepy Gaston
Shortstop: Bob Johnson
Left Field: Dick Gray
Center Field: Sterling "Sully" Sullivan
Right Field: Chuck Kline, Rex Gammon
Manager: Lloyd Bailey
Coach: Cecil Bailey

They started the season playing on the diamond at the high school, but due to complications (too many balls hitting the gym or going over the railroad track), the school board determined they could no longer use the diamond – so – there was a cornfield (which didn't grow much corn) located on Route 37. The owner (Buck Miller) was approached to see if it could be used to build a ball diamond. The deal was made to rent the land for \$15.00 and the guys got together to make their own diamond with the attitude "If you build it, they will come." First, Gene Bailey took the tractor over and plowed and disc the ground, getting rid of weeds and corn stubble. Then Cecil Bailey made a drag out of railroad ties and they worked on it until it was almost smooth. Cecil and Lloyd brought home some oil field pipe and chicken wire and the team made a backstop. A collection was taken up at each game to buy equipment, pay rent, and eventually they were able to buy uniforms. Kinmundy had a VERY good ball club, and regularly defeated their opponents. They also had a huge following. Many times cars were lined up on both sides of the highway from the curve to the Bailey house, by the crowd that came to see them play.

Soon after the men began their season, the ladies formed an independent softball league, and they too played on the "new diamond", and eventually the High School began playing there.

In 1976, the Lion's Club bought the property and spruced up the old diamond, adding lights, bleachers, a real backstop, dugouts, a concession stand, etc., and it has evolved into one of the nicer ball parks in southern Illinois. But it all started in a cornfield, by Cecil Bailey and a bunch of guys who loved the game of baseball!