

## KORBEL IS LONG TIME SPORTS BOOSTER

Bill Korbek moved to Pine City from Beroun in 1905 and has been a promoter of sports in the area ever since he can remember.

Korbek played on the first basketball team Pine City High School ever had. There were six players on the team and no substitutes.

"It was something," he laughed. "We had to play in an old building with a dirt floor. After about 10 minutes the clay dust was so thick we could hardly see each other."

When the team went to other towns to play they traveled by train.

"We caught the 4:45 P.M. train out of town. That connection was pretty good but getting home was another story," Korbek said. "We had to take the milk trains. They left Bush City at 2:00 A.M. and Hinckley at 4:00 A.M.

I tell you, we were one tired bunch of athletes in school the next day," he laughed shaking his head.

When a game was scheduled to be played in North Branch the team changed into their basketball suits in the hotel and then ran three blocks in the cold to the school where they played in a big room heated by a wood stove on either end.

"In Hinckley we played in the town hall. The room was divided with chicken wire. The crowd sat on one side and we played on the other," he said.

When the old armory was built the team played there and that was a big improvement according to Korbek.

In the early days of the Pine City High School there were no football teams.

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by horse and buggy

"We had track teams and would travel to Mora/for track meets, ~~by-ho~~ " Korbel said.

Ice skating was also one of Korbel's favorite sports.

"I took my daughter skating and we would practice figure skating. We even got pretty good at figure 8's", he winked.

He regrets that the Pine City Hockey arena named after him didn't make it.

"I'm sorry about that. I really thought it would work but everything went against us," he said recalling how the year the arena was built the season was nearly over before it was ready to use. The second year saw temperatures of 60 degrees in February and the ice could not be maintained.

When the plastic bubble sheltering the concrete block building burst last spring it was more than the optimistic arena sponsors could handle.

"It's too bad we didn't spend the money for a concrete block building that hot weather would not affect," Korbel said. "I still have hopes that someone will come along in the future and will continue what was started."

Baseball was Pine City's most popular summer sport in the old days. The grandstand was packed at every game and fans cheered their teams on to victory according to Korbel.

"The Hurley-Barrington baseball team made Pine City famous around 1912. Mr. Hurley was a distributor for Barrington whiskey. He sponsored the team and five Hurley boys played on it," Korbel said. "Teams even came up from the Twin Cities to challenge the Pine City team and they had the reputation of being tough competition."

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