

PEDERSEN

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famed Indiana team immortalized in the popular movie.

But their chances of winning a championship were just as low.

In 1966, Kincaid, now of the Village of Dunedin, was a junior.

"I was a 6-foot-2 power forward," he said. "There wasn't going to be too much of a market for me in college."

And the team's performance the previous year didn't inspire too much confidence, either.

"We were average, mediocre probably," Kincaid said. "So there weren't a lot of expectations for us."

That year, the team got a new coach — Don Smith.

Smith was a rookie coach whose team had a losing record — 7-8 — after 15 games.

"We didn't really know what to expect," he said.

But then something changed.

"We just felt like we were going to win every game," Kincaid said with a smile.

And they did.

"We were the underdogs in every game we played," he said. "But we just kept winning."

The Tigers won 10 games in a row when they advanced to the state championship game.

Nothing could stop them.

Except the flu.

"Half the team had caught it," he said.

That included Kincaid and the lead scorer, but both managed to conquer the bug before the game.

Vinson was down most of the game. But in the fourth quarter, the Tigers rallied to defeat Mullens 58-51.

Vinson won its last 11 games and finished the season 18-8.

"If you're going to win 11 games in a row during a season, make it your last 11," Kincaid said.

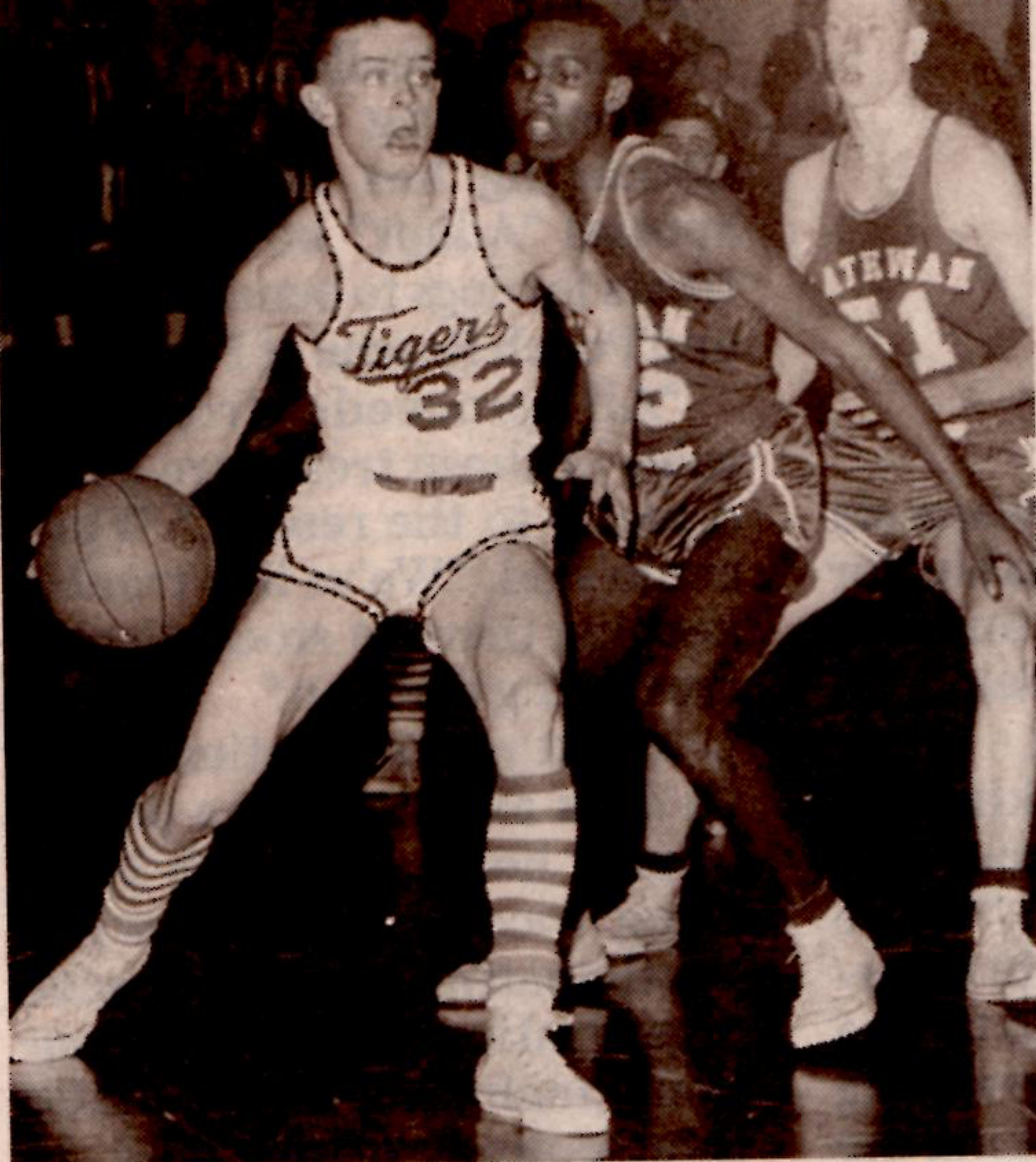
Not even the flu could stop this team from delivering the high school's first state championship title.

And that's what earned them the name "Penicillin Kids," given to them by a local newspaper writer.

"The name had a ring to it for the fans," he said. "We got a lot of support from fans, even from outside of town. To this day, people remember the Penicillin Kids winning the West Virginia Championship."

Smith led other teams to several more championships, making the school a basketball powerhouse in West Virginia.

Kincaid was done with



Dan Kincaid, left, and his 1966 West Virginia Class AA championship basketball teammates were invited to the 2016 Class AA state championship game to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their win.

Submitted photo

basketball, however, except for the occasional game of horse he would play with his children or grandchildren.

And that remained true until recently.

Earlier this year, Kincaid received a call explaining that the city of Huntington was honoring the team for its 50th anniversary by declaring March 18 "The Vinson Tigers 'Penicillin Kids' AA State Championship Day."

The whole team, along with their families, was invited to the 2016 Class AA state championship.

Nine of the 12 players were able to come, along with Smith and assistant coach Don Trimboli.

"Pretty amazing all of us were still living 50 years later," he said. "It's kind of like we never left, and fell back into the same pattern and relationships you have in high school."

On the day of the championship, the "Penicillin Kids" were asked to come down to the court during halftime. Each of the teammates was acknowledged

for his contribution to the winning season.

The announcers read a summary of the legendary year, which was composed by Kincaid. It wasn't his first time writing about the event. He's had practice with his book, "The Penicillin Kids," which chronicled the season.

"It wasn't like the greatest moment of my life stepping onto the court to receive applause from everyone," Kincaid said. "I've been married 45 years and have three kids and three grandchildren."

It's hard to compete with that as far as life achievements go. But there was something else that stuck out about the day.

"My grandchildren were there," he said. "To have them witness that, and know that they'll be able to pass on to the family that they saw me here, that means a lot."

Still, he said, shooting hoops and playing horse with them is just as meaningful.

"I can't play like I used to," he said. "But I can still beat my grandkids at horse. For now."

Full Circle Basketball Team Honored for Against- All-Odds Victory



They weren't supposed to win.

That's what an official proclamation made by Huntington, West Virginia, Mayor Steve Williams reads about Dan Kincaid and his high school basketball team, the "Penicillin Kids."

Half of the Vinson Tigers team were coughing and sneezing. Plus, they went into the playoffs with a losing record.

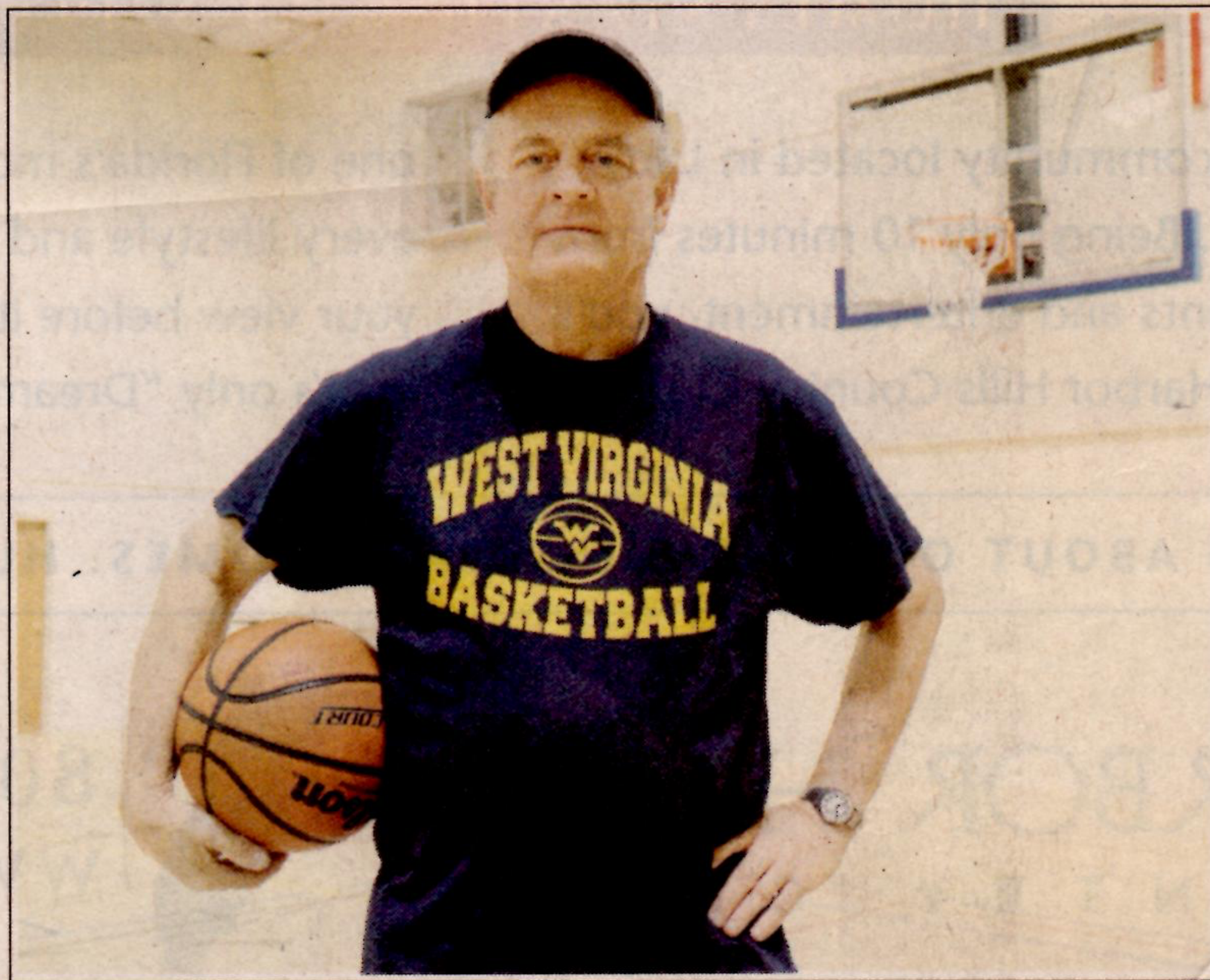
They weren't supposed to win.

But they did, and they're now known as the 1966 state champions, the first state title for the high school.

And that's why they were honored for their victory on the 50th anniversary this year.

Now, these guys were no "Hoosiers," the

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George Horsford | Daily Sun

Dan Kincaid, of the Village of Dunedin, was a member of the Huntington Vinson High School basketball team that won the 1966 West Virginia Class AA State Basketball Championship.



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