

# EPH LEGEND – BILL CHAPMAN '64

by Dick Quinn, Director Sports Information



When former Eph running back Bill Chapman '64 was in junior high he found a small photo of a Williams football player.

"It was my dad," Chapman said. "A son could not have a better role model."

The photo was from a 1935 edition of the North Adams [MA] *Transcript*. Chapman's father William Lansing Chapman Jr. was a member of the Williams Class of 1937 and played both football and hockey for the Ephs.

Chapman put the picture of his dad in a frame on the dresser in his bedroom, where it's been ever since. The only exception was the four years it was on his dresser at Williams.

"From our early teenage years, my brother and I accompanied Mother and Dad to Williams football games," Chapman recalled. "I have no distinct memory of deciding to go to Williams, only that I wanted to. When I entered my junior year in high school I realized what a daunting task it would be."

His grandfather, W. Lansing Chapman, was a member of the Class of 1910, and he passed away on August 17, 1960, just before Bill reported to Williams for his freshman year.

The name Lansing Chapman has a sizable mark on campus, as Chapman's father was the lead donor in the project to cover the Ephs' ice hockey rink located behind the town courthouse on Spring Street. Before Lansing Chapman Rink was attached to Chandler Gym and Towne Field House, the rink with its new roof was a stand-alone structure, dedicated Dec. 6, 1969.

## *Quietly Reserved Even in a Starring Role*

Chapman followed in the footsteps of both his grandfather and father not only to Williams but also, after gaining several years of business experience, to the publishing business started by his grandfather and then led by his father. The business was sold in 1968, and Chapman went on to become a lawyer.

Chapman, who also lettered in golf at Williams, was the Ephs' leading ground gainer in the stunning 1961 upset of an Amherst football team that was 7-0, averaging 32 points a game, and generally thought to be invincible.

The 5-2 Ephs not only shocked the Lord Jeffs by winning 12-0 on Weston Field, they thoroughly dominated their archrival. On that day, Amherst did not enter Williams's territory until the fourth quarter.

In the early 1960s most teams ran the ball far more often than they passed. The 1961 Amherst defense was feared as it had allowed a meager 37 yards rushing per game, but Chapman himself would rush for 65 of the Ephs' 142 yards on the ground in the game. In the 1961 contest both teams combined for 23 pass attempts: six were intercepted, and five were completed.

Chapman notched the first and only touchdown the Ephs would need in the second quarter after he perfectly executed a quick kick on third down.

Instead of punting on fourth down the Ephs snapped the ball through the legs of quarterback Bruce Grinnell '62 to Chapman on third down and he deftly deposited a 37-yard punt on the Amherst three-yard line. Amherst managed to get a first down, but the Eph defense forced a Lord Jeff fumble that was recovered by the Ephs on the Amherst 9-yard line.

Three straight running plays left the Ephs with a fourth down from the 2-yard line. The 1961 Ephs were not about to try a field goal as their kicking game was such that after most touchdowns they eschewed attempting to kick the point after touchdown and opted to try for the two-point conversion.

The decisive fourth down call was for Chapman to go off right tackle; he busted into the end zone to put the Ephs up 6-0. The team's two-point conversion attempt failed,

but the Ephs had put Amherst behind for the first time all season.

Typical of the soft-spoken and reserved Chapman, his fondest memory of that day was not his touchdown run but, rather his "being 'jazzed up' from the time I awoke until Mike Reily ['64] intercepted Mark Hallam's first pass. Then the day took on a surreal quality. It still does."

Though the Ephs took a 6-0 lead into halftime they knew Amherst was more than capable of mounting a comeback. Even a third quarter touchdown run by the Ephs' Chris Hagy '64 to boost the lead to 12-0 was not enough to quell the fear that Amherst could respond. More concerns arose when a second two-point conversion attempt failed.

Chapman does not recall a particular instance during the contest when he felt that the Ephs had the game locked up. "I just wanted everyone to keep playing the way we were," he said.

When Amherst finally made a deep surge into Williams' territory in the fourth quarter, it was Chapman's classmate, Reily, who stopped the Jeffs cold with his second interception of the game, this one inside the Williams 10-yard line.

"Taking nothing away from Mike [Reily], we beat Amherst because everyone on the team gave it their all on every play," Chapman said. "It was one of those magical moments in our lives that I suspect none of us will ever forget."

Since 1972, Chapman has been practicing law in Concord, N.H., where he is president of the firm of Orr and Reno.

Chapman said when he joined the firm one of the partners was Charlie Toll, who'd been a Walter Camp All-American tackle at Princeton and had played against Chapman's father in 1935 and 1936. Williams nearly upset Princeton in 1935, losing 14-7.

According to Chapman's grandfather, Princeton won only because it had a larger team that wore down the Williams players. Chapman in his own quiet way fondly remembers that in 1973 he introduced his father to Toll, and the pair soon went off to a corner to relive the games and their mutual friends. 🐾