

Football Hall selects another Marine

By John Gunn
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On the football field, he was a hawk, not a dove.

As a result, former Marine Bob Dove of Notre Dame and NFL fame was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame. He is at least the 45th former Marine so honored.

The hall's Honor Committee, which reviews accomplishments of players of more than 50 years ago, selected Dove, a three-year starter at end for the Fighting Irish from 1940-42, a two-time All-American and winner of the Knute Rockne Trophy in 1942.

"It had been over 50 years. I almost forgot about it," Dove said.

(Similar efforts have been unsuccessful to honor back George Franck, a Minnesota All-American who was third in the 1940 Heisman Trophy voting and a Marine aviator in the South Pacific during WW II.)

THIRTEEN OTHER PLAYERS and two coaches whose selections were announced April 25 at a South Bend, Ind., news conference will be inducted into the hall at a Dec. 12 banquet in New York and formally enshrined at South Bend in August 2001.

Dove, who played nine seasons with the Chicago Rockets, Chicago Cardinals and Detroit Lions, also starred for the El Toro Flying Marines in 1944 and '45 -- the "Boys of Autumn" and strongest Leatherneck teams ever fielded.

The '44 team won eight, lost one and was ranked 16th in The Associated Press poll even though the base was barely a year and a half old.

The '45 team, augmented by Hall of Famer Crazylegs Hirsch, Franck, College Hall of Famer Hugh Gallarneau (Stanford, Chicago Bears) and others won eight, lost two (both to Fleet City Navy, one of the games drawing 90,000). But they were turned down for postseason games against Army (the No.1 college team) or the NFL champion to benefit Victory Bonds. (They beat USC and UCLA in scrimmages and would have won more but were so strong few teams wanted to face them.)

Thirty-six players had played pro football or would after WW II despite an era of two-way players and small rosters. L.A. Radio station KMPC broadcast some games.

Dove, 16 other players and Coach Dick Hanley formed the nucleus of the Chicago Rockets of the new All-America Football Conference in 1946.

IRONICALLY, 1945 WAS a bittersweet season for Dove, from Youngstown, Ohio. Against the 2nd Air Force, he tackled Heisman Trophy winner Frank Sinkwich (Georgia), a close friend from Youngstown. Sinkwich sustained an injury that shortened his pro career.

But there was a lighter side: Dove, Hirsch, All-Pro tackle Wee Willie Wilkin and end Pat Lahey (John Carroll) played under assumed names for the San Diego Bombers of the Pacific Coast Football League even though it was a court-martial offense. Dove was Bruce Thyberg of Whitter, Hirsch was Jack Sullivan of Fordham, Lahey rearranged the letters in his name as "Haley."

Returning from San Diego one Sunday afternoon, they stopped by a roadside place for refreshment.

"Willie ordered six bottles of beer," Dove recalled. "When they arrived, I reached for a bottle. A big arm came down on mine. It was Willie's. 'That's mine,' he said."

That was one of the few people Dove, 6-2 and 222, didn't argue with. Wilkin was 6-6, 290.

Dove, Lahey and Hirsch had to order their own.

A co-coach of the Rockets in 1946, Dove would be an assistant coach with the Lions in 1958-59 and Buffalo Bills of the new AFL in 1960-61. He was head coach at Hiram (Ohio) College from 1962-68, then began a three-decade association with Youngstown State as an assistant coach, coach emeritus, scout, scheduler and other athletic office duties that continues today.

Leathernecks made their mark on football

If anyone says the Corps hasn't turned out some good football players, tell them at least 45 former Marines are in the College Hall of Fame:

Alex Agase (Illinois, Purdue V-12), Harry Agganis (Boston Univ.), Harold Ballin (Princeton), Bert Baston (Minnesota), Cliff Battles (West Virginia Wesleyan), Ron Beagle (Annapolis), Gen. John Beckett (Oregon), Angelo Bertelli (Notre Dame), Charlie Conerly (Mississippi), Bob Dove (Notre Dame), Steve Eisenhauer (Annapolis), Chalmers "Bump" Elliott (Purdue V-12, Michigan), Hugh Gallarneau (Stanford), Paul Governali (Columbia), Pat Harder (Wisconsin), Bob Herwig (California), Ed Hart (Princeton), Elroy "Crazylegs" Hirsch (Wisconsin, Michigan V-12), Weldon Humble (Rice, Southwestern Louisiana V-12), Eddie LeBaron (Pacific), Bob MacLeod (Dartmouth), Eddie Mahan (Harvard), Jim Martin (Notre Dame), Thurman McGraw (Colorado A&M), Ernie Nevers (Stanford), Leo Nomellini (Minnesota), Bob Peck (Pittsburgh), Arthur Poe (Princeton), Barney Poole (Mississippi, North Carolina V-12, West Point), Jack Riley (Northwestern), J.D. Roberts (Oklahoma), George Savitsky (Penn), Dave Schreiner (Wisconsin) (KIA on Okinawa), Frank Sinkwich (Georgia), Jim Weatherall (Oklahoma), Art Weiner (North Carolina), Adm. Don Whitmire (Alabama, North Carolina V-12, Annapolis), Gen. Mike Wilson (Lafayette), Alvin "Moose" Wistert (Boston Univ., Michigan).

Coaches: Bernie Bierman, Vince Dooley, "Navy Bill" Ingram, Chuck Klausung, Tuss McLaughry, John Ralston.