



Al Petranick

Year of Induction: **2017**

Year of Graduation: **1950**

The Wildcats featured numerous outstanding athletes during their dominant years on the gridiron in the late 1940s and early 1950s, including Johnson City Athletic Hall of Fame members Jack Decker, John Spalik and Ed Matyas. But none may have rated higher as an overall player than Mr. Albert Petranick. When his career as a Wildcat was complete, Mr. Petranick had received nearly every award possible at that time, and his accomplishments earned him notice from some of the biggest college football programs in the country.

An outstanding all-around athlete, Mr. Petranick was a three-year varsity player on the varsity baseball and basketball teams, as well as a four year player in football. However, it was on the football field where he excelled. Johnson City's football teams in the late 1940s were recognized as one of the best programs in New York state. They ran off an amazing streak of 28 games without defeat from 1947-1950, and at the center of that greatness was Al Petranick. Mr. Petranick didn't play a position that generally gets noticed by the casual observer, but his presence on both the offensive and defensive lines is widely regarded as one of the primary reasons for the Wildcats' success. Newspaper reports from that time cite Mr. Petranick as a hulking force on the offensive line who would open huge holes for his teammates in the backfield and as an immovable presence of the defensive line that could not be penetrated by opponents. His dominance on the line was so impressive that he accumulated the following awards:

--All-STC 1947, 1948, 1949

--Binghamton Press Player of the Year 1949

--Johnson City Football Leadership Award 1949

--Syracuse Herald-Journal All-Star for Upstate N.Y. 1948 and 1949

--Johnson City Football Co-Captain 1949

Perhaps Mr. Petranick's true greatness was best summed up by Binghamton Press sports columnist John Fox in a retrospective published in 1961: "Johnson City's Al Petranick is one of only two players who've made the STC All-Star team three years in a row, the other was Ernie Davis. Petranick remains the most respected lineman in STC history, the rock of JC's 28 game unbeaten streak."

His exploits as a Wildcat caught the attention of college football coaches from throughout the country. Coaches from Florida, North Carolina, Michigan State, Cornell, Syracuse, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Rutgers and Lehigh all wanted Al to join their teams; however, after a visit in 1950, he decided to play

for famous coach Frank Leahy at Notre Dame. Leahy was quoted in the press as saying that he was thrilled with being able to gain a player of Al's quality. After watching him practice as a freshman at Notre Dame (at that time, freshmen played on the freshmen team in college), Leahy predicted that Al would be a three-year starter with Notre Dame's varsity team. Unfortunately, after suffering a neck injury during a varsity scrimmage in 1951, Mr. Petranick was unable to continue his playing career.

After finishing his degree at Notre Dame in 1955, Mr. Petranick went on to serve in the military where he flew a B-52 bomber in Vietnam. He later became a Captain in the Strategic Air Command, serving our country in a specialized unit during the Cold War. Mr. Petranick's son, Michael Petranick, authored a book about his father's life in football and the military entitled, "Peace Was His Profession: A Story of Sacrifice and the Strategic Air Command."

The Johnson City Athletic Hall of Fame is proud to welcome a player who reached incomparable heights as a lineman in the late 1940s, who was on the wish list of dozens of college football programs, and who went on to serve his country with honor and sacrifice, Mr. Albert Petranick, JCHS Class of 1950.