



# MONSTER OF THE WRESTLING MAT

Even better in the classroom

High School Athlete: At 95 lbs,  
the best in the State / High  
School Achedemics: Honor  
Society / College Athlete:4 Big  
Ten Titles and a National  
Championship Team / College  
Achedemics: College Professor  
and a lifetime of fitness and  
healthy living

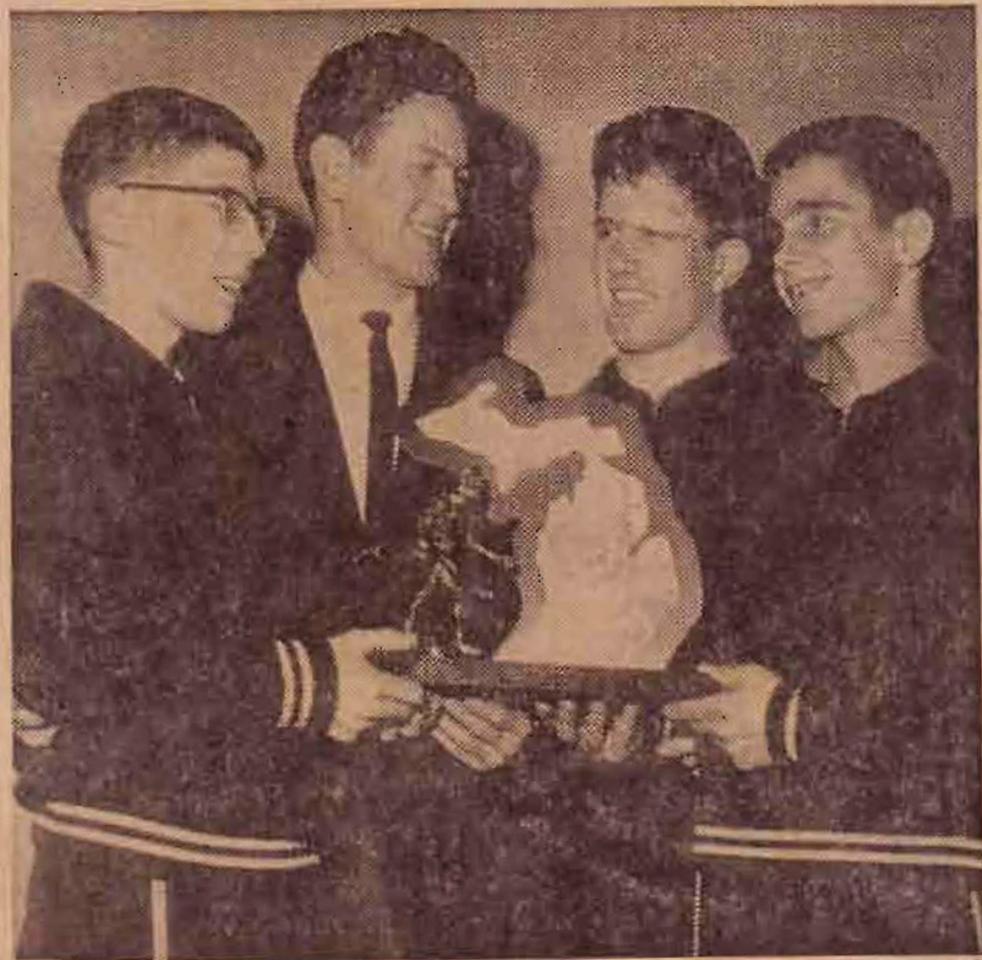
By Jay Guertin

## Michael McGilliard Class of 1965

## SPORTS

Mon., March 8, 1965

SECTION C



**MAT CHIEFS**—Okemos high school won its first state Class B wrestling championship Saturday and three boys carried the brunt of the load. Individual championships went to Mike McGilliard at 95 pounds and to Pat Karslake at 165 while Dave Martin was the runnerup at 103. Admiring the title trophy, left to right, are McGilliard, coach George Reynolds, Karslake and Martin. Early reports had McGilliard losing in the finals but he defeated his foe to take the individual title. (State Journal Photo) (See Story Page C-2, Col. 2)

**The Monster of the Okemos Wrestling Mat** does not readily bring to mind a 95 pound High School senior. But the truth is, Mike McGilliard was the most feared and honored wrestler in the State of Michigan in his class in that 1964 season. Author Jay Guertin remembers that year with the clarity of one that experienced it...he did. Jay was an all-around athlete and scholar that excelled in football (no. 32), track (sprinter), basketball, golf, tennis... and wrestling! Jay is the perfect classmate to evaluate the athletes from the Class of 1965 era...and he has done so with clear recollection and humor.

We were fortunate to get "Reflections of Okemos High School Wrestling" from Mike when he was in town for a few days in November, 2017. That weekend, Michigan State University invited back for it's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the 1967 NCAA National Champions MSU Wrestling Team...Mike was a big part of that team at 123 pounds...with his picture in Sports Illustrated.

Thanks to the big effort to everyone involved, this is our nomination of Michael McGilliard, Class of 1965, to the Okemos Athletic Hall of Fame.

Rodney Ellis, President

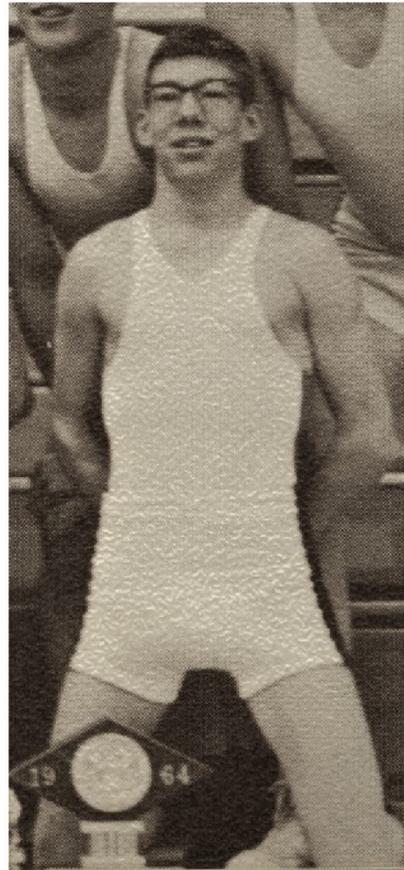
Okemos Alumni Association

April 1, 2018



By Jay Guertin

Edited by Rod Ellis



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# OKEMOS HIGH SCHOOL

## CLASS OF 1965

### ATHLETICS

By Jay Guertin

Classmate and web manager Rod Ellis asked me to do some articles about our classmates involved in athletics during their high school days. Of particular interest are those high school athletes that went on to even higher achievements or maintained their athletic standards throughout life. These articles could be based on team or individual athletic results and are intended to memorialize them as our Alumni Nominations to the Okemos Athletic Hall of Fame. I said yes and quickly grabbed my 1965 Tomahawk Yearbook as my main source for information.

**BANG!** I hit my first wall. Since the yearbook went to press in the early part of 1965 in order to allow printing time, there is no information on the results of all the spring sports! In fact, it doesn't even tell you what students were on the golf, track, tennis, or baseball teams let alone their team or individual records. In my yearbook, under tennis, is a picture of John Turner with his tennis racquet. John wrote over his picture "6-0 6-0 Turner". I don't know if this means that John won or lost every match 6-0? (I have a feeling I am going to hear which 😊)

**BANG!** The time reality hit me. In our minds, OHS is just yesterday. In reality, it is over 50 years ago and, what we have today is nothing like what the first years of the 1960's were like. We did not have interscholastic athletics for females! We had a club called GAA, Girls Athletic Association, for women. The yearbook did say that our classmate, Barb Vary, was president of GAA. Maybe Barb or another involved female classmate can reflect on the GAA and women's athletics in the 60's. The second part of the time reality is the sports that I watch my grandsons participate in and which most high schools have today, soccer and lacrosse didn't exist in our 60's reality.

Taking into account all the information I just shared with you, I started thinking about which 1965 athletic team and classmate was the most successful in athletics. Here are my conclusions: (Please note if any classmate has a different opinion, please share it with the class)

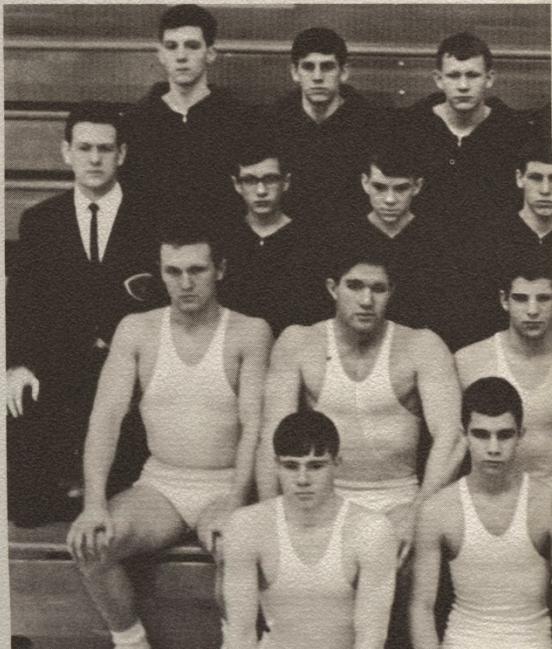
Most Successful Athletic Team 1964/65: To me this was an easy call – our Wrestling Team! They were Class B State Champions our senior year.

It may well be Okemos' first State Championship in any sport. (Full disclosure – I was on this team but, as all the wrestlers will tell you, I had nothing to do with winning the State Championship.) The Okemos Wrestling Teams went on to win State Championships in 1966 and 1967 and are in the Okemos Athletic Hall of Fame! Wrestlers from the Class of 1965 were Mike McGilliard, Wally Reese, Steve Senzig, Tom Sonneman, Mark Van Deventer and the aforementioned me. The coach, which led Okemos to wrestling dominance, was George Reynolds. I am attaching the recollections of the wrestling team as compiled by Mike McGilliard and our Class of 1965 wrestlers.

My Wrestling Memory: One day at practice, Pat Karlake brought a tube of Nair Hair Remover. We decided to use the hair remover on one of our teammates. Pat, one of the strongest people on earth, held down the wrestler while I put Nair on his eyebrow. When Pat let him up, he quickly wiped the Nair off his eyebrow and freaked out when the eyebrow came with it. We thought, due to fear of Karlake, he would stay quiet as to the perps. Misjudgment!! Coach Reynolds called Pat and me out and asked where the Nair was. We replied that we had opened the gym door and thrown it out in the field. (This might not have been accurate) He told us to go find the Nair. Pat and I, after spending a credible time looking, reported back that we couldn't find it.

## *Grapplers Take*

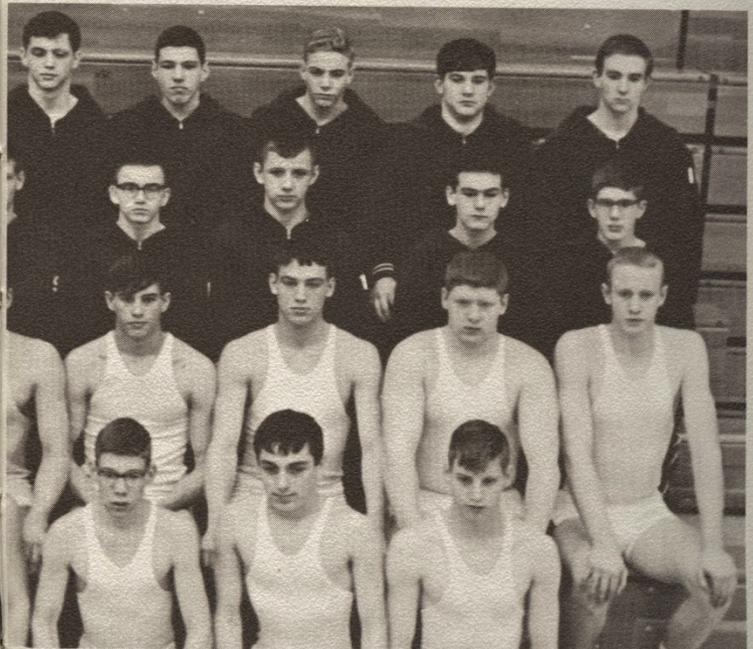
... with 'sweat, blood,



*Wrestling team. First row: Jeff Mikles, Dave Martin, Mike McGilliard, Pete Georgiady, Pete Willingham. Second row: Dave Williams, Pat Karlake, Mike Durocher, Doug Willingham, Dan Cope, Steve Senzig, Wally Reese. Third row: coach George Rey-*

## *State Championship*

tears'



*nolds, Vandy Vandemotter, Carl Johnson, Bernie Kraai, Larry Rudolph, Jim Shearer, Don Stacks, Scott McGilliard. Fourth row: Jim Coe, Duke Kraai, Pete Zecevic, Jay Guertin, Tom Sonnemann, Bob Miller, Tom Johnson, Larry Wheeler.*

Surprise! Coach Reynolds anticipating our failure sent a student to town to get another tube of Nair. Pat and I went home that evening minus one eyebrow!!

Look...You can see my missing eyebrow in the team picture!

In the coming months, I will be reflecting on all the other athletic teams for Okemos. If you have some thoughts for stories you would like to share with me, please contact me through the Okemos Alumni website.

Hall of Fame Nominee Athlete from the Class of 1965: When you think about athletes, you have a mental image of a tall, fluid athlete playing basketball or a hardnosed, brute of a football player. (You also may be thinking that an athlete would have a hard time spelling “academic”). This athlete from the class of 1965 is none of the above. In fact, he is almost the opposite of the characteristics I just mentioned. Our Nominee athlete is short, weighed 95 pounds, wears glasses and went on to get a PhD. My Nomination to the Okemos Athletic Hall of Fame for a “lifetime of athletic achievement” from the Class of 1965 is Mike McGilliard.



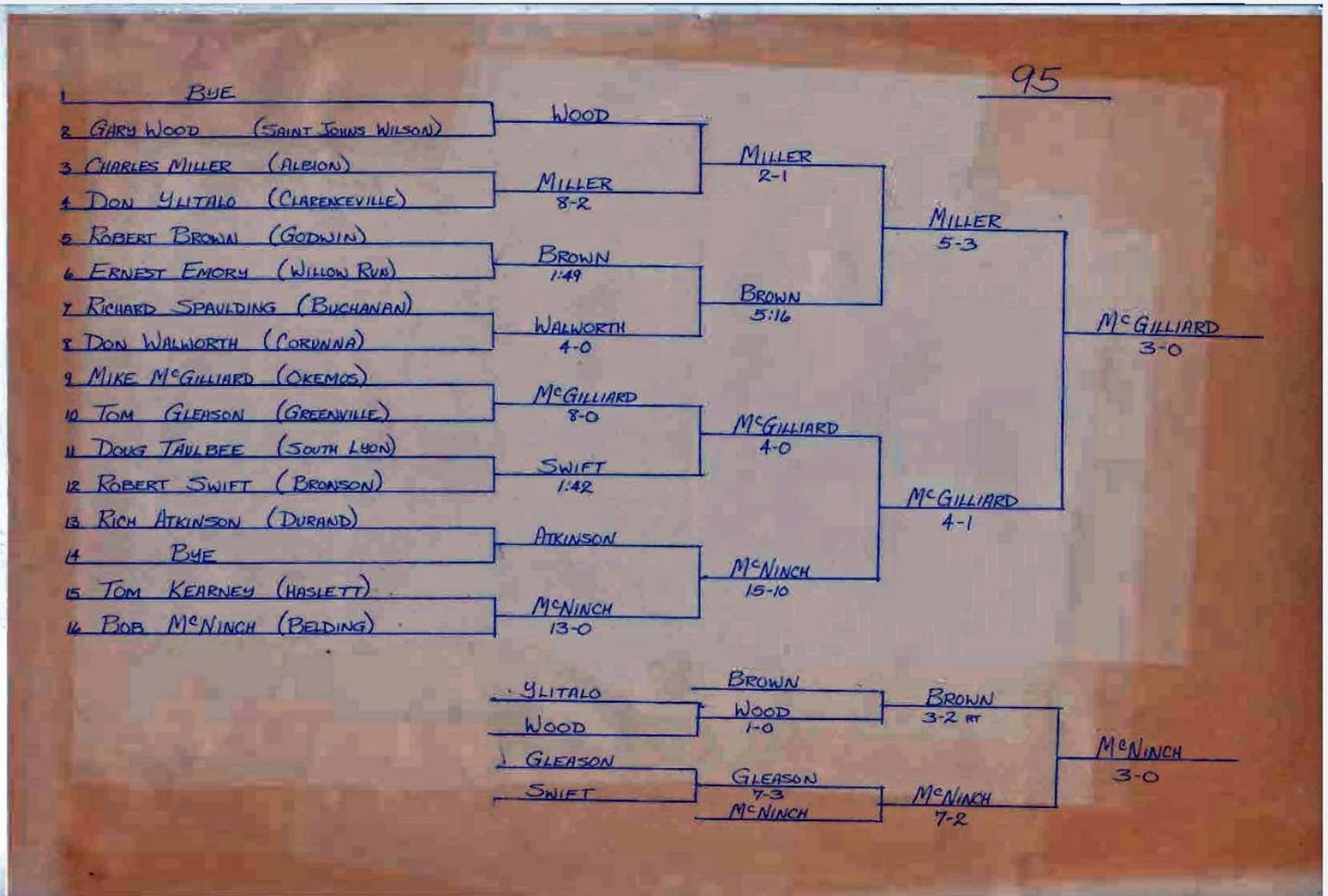
STATE WINNERS -- Belding's Eob McNinch is here shaking hands with the state champion in the 95-pound weight class following state finals in Lansing Saturday. Mike McGilliard, of Okemos High School, the state

champ, is holding a card with names of all grapplers in his weight class. Second place went to Charles Miller, Albion High School; McNinch in third; and Godwin's Bob Brown in fourth. (Banner-News Photo)

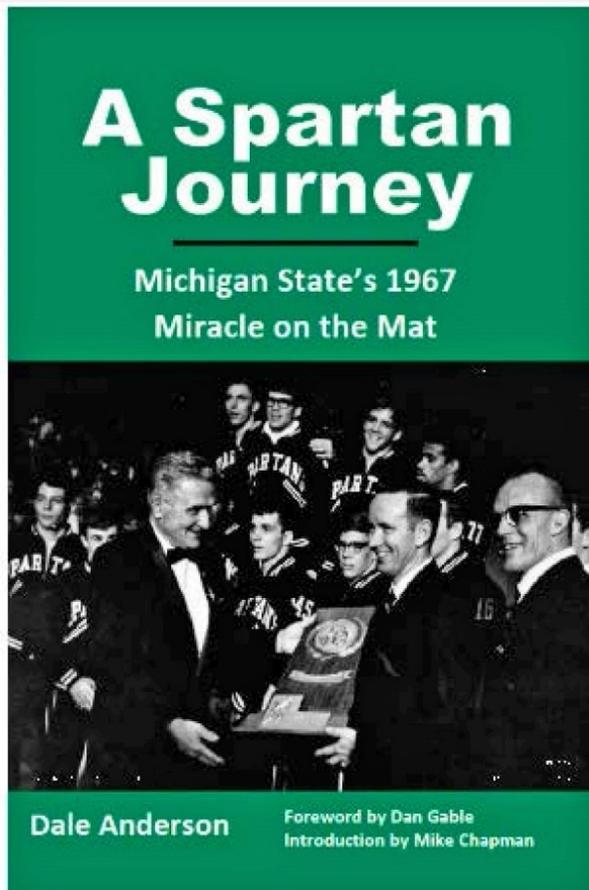
We learn in life that it is results that count. Here are Mike's results and why I feel he is the most successful athlete in our class: In his senior year, Mike won the State Wrestling Championship in the 95 pound category.

We had other athletes in our class of 1965 who were All League or recognized on a State level. But, none of the others were considered best in the State.

Pictured is the actual record of his State Championship tournament.



Another indicator is Mike competed like a champion at the college level. In college, Mike competed in wrestling at Michigan State University, a Division 1 college.



In the four years that Mike wrestled for MSU, they were BIG Ten Champions every year! In 1967, MSU were National Champions in wrestling. Recently a member of the MSU NCAA championship team wrote a book about it (and himself). This is the cover. Mike is the 123-pounder in glasses just above the trophy. The picture came from Sports Illustrated.

Further, Mike was awarded the Gorriaran Trophy for “most falls in the least amount of time” in the 1968 Big Ten Tournament!

In short, impressive Hall of Fame athletic results!



# Reflections of Okemos High School Wrestling

PAGE 8 THE MERIDIAN NEWS WEDNESDAY, MAR. 10, 1965

By Mike McGilliard



**BIGGEST FACTORS** in the state Class B crown captured by the Okemos wrestlers were these three individual champions shown with coach George Reynolds. Left to right, kneeling, are Dave Martin, second in the state in the 103 pound class, and Mike McGilliard, state champion in the 95 pound class. Standing is Pat Karslake, two-time state champion in the 165 pound class. — Meridian News Photo

## State Champs .

by Pete Georgiady

The Okemos High School wrestling team climaxed a successful season by capturing the Class B state wrestling title Saturday night at Waverly High School.

The Chiefs had two individual champions and one runner-up. They compiled a total of 38 points, eight more than second place Charlotte.

Retaining the 165 pound state title he won last year, Junior, Pat Karslake defeated Dennis Riley of Flatrock 2-1. Riley lost also to Karslake in the finals last year.

Senior Mike McGilliard won the 95 pound class crown by downing Chuck Miller of Albion 3-0 in the final round. McGilliard also beat Miller in the regional championship.

Dave Martin, sophomore, lost to James Lester of River Rouge in the finals of the 103 pound class. Last year Martin took fourth and Lester second in the same class.

Okemos tied with Haslett for the regional championship last

week. Earlier in the year they defeated Haslett for the Capitol Circuit crown. In December Okemos also won the Alma Invitational tournament.

Summarizing the Chiefs win, Okemos Coach George Reynolds said: "I was surprised that we won with only three men placing and bringing only five men altogether. This year though there were 62 teams entered and the competition was so keen that no team had more than two place winners other than Charlotte and ourselves."

### Okemos Notes

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Preston of 2256 Shawnee Trail, Okemos, enjoyed a visit February 25 to Sarasota Jungle Gardens while vacationing on Florida's lower West Coast. Here the visitors mingle with flamingos and other rare and unusual wild fowl from every Continent, which roam freely in these world-famous Gardens.

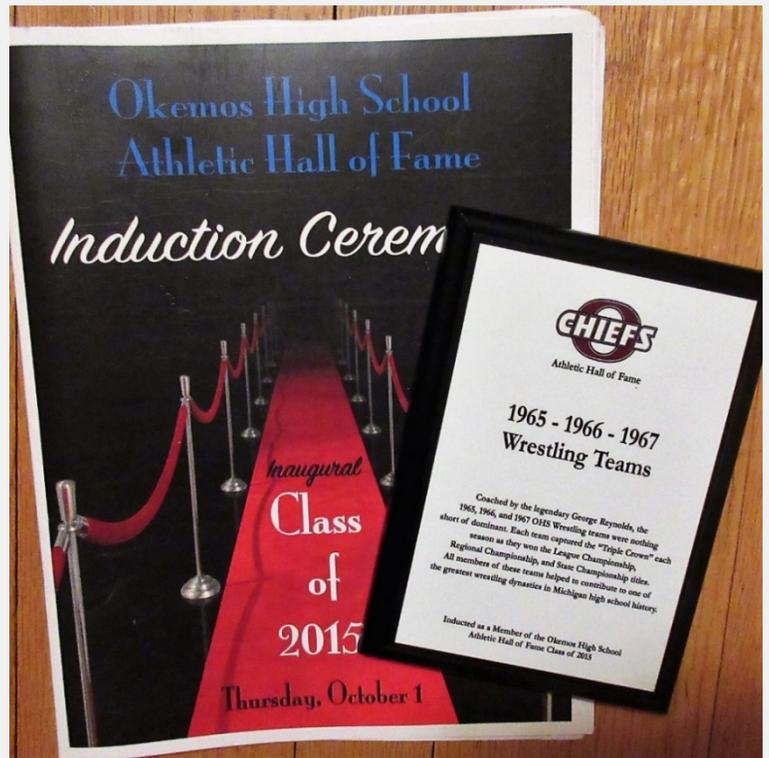
## Okemos Wrestling 1965

The finish was quite unusual. We won the league with a 10-2-1 record and headed to the regional only to be delayed by a March snow storm. At Eaton Rapids HS we won the regional, placing 4<sup>th</sup> or higher in eight weights, advancing five to the state tournament at Waverly HS three days later.

That Saturday we had two state champions and a runner-up, easily winning Okemos' first State Class B wrestling championship. It was in fact sewn up before the finals began.

The Meridian News for March 10, 1965. Notice the reporter is Pete Georgiady '67 and a wrestling team member.

Okemos went on to win the next two state championships in 1966 and 1967. Those three teams were inducted into the inaugural class of the Okemos HS Sports Hall of Fame in 2016, as was Coach Reynolds.



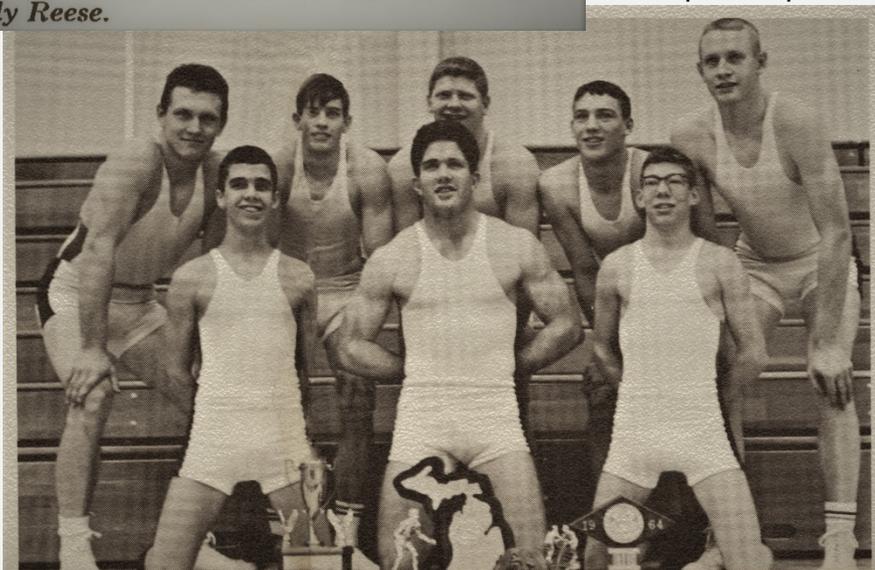
There were six seniors from our class on that 1965 team.

Jay Guertin, Mike McGilliard – 1<sup>st</sup> Region, 1<sup>st</sup> State, Team Most Valuable w/Karslake, Wally Reese – 1<sup>st</sup> Region, (State Qualifier), Team Most Improved, Steve Senzig – 4<sup>th</sup> Region, Tom Sonneman, Mark Van Deventer – prior to '65

*Regional and state champions are Dan Cope, Steve Senzig and Dave Williams, fourth in regionals; Doug Willingham, second in regionals; Mike McGilliard and Pat Karslake, regional and state champions; Dave Martin, regional champion and second in state; and regional champion Wally Reese.*

Other team members in the state championship but not in the class of '65

were Pat Karslake (1<sup>st</sup>), David Martin (2<sup>nd</sup>), and Doug Willingham.



Our class of '65 story was a four-year adventure starting in 1961-62 with a new



Okemos wrestling coach named George Reynolds, just out of Michigan State, who never got to wrestle there due to injury. We practiced in the gym lobby and rolled up and carried the mat to the gym for meets. There were 15 “wrestlers” on that 1962 team, and we went 4-9 in dual meets. Reynolds was adamant we were going to improve. He had a mini-megaphone he used at meets to encourage and instruct. His wife, Jane, was at every meet with babies and kids in tow.

In our sophomore year we were up to 21 wrestlers, had a 7-7 dual record, placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the region with six advancing to the state tournament. We placed 9<sup>th</sup> in the state, and Fred Stehman ('64) won a championship, first ever for Okemos. We were getting clocked by Boys' Training School and Michigan School for the Blind, with Stevie Wonder cheering them on. That all would soon reverse.

Our junior year we had fewer wrestlers but were significantly more skilled up and down the line-up. We went 15-5 in dual meets, won the region and placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state championships. Stehman, who should be credited with putting us on the map, won his second state championship and Karslake his first of three consecutive.



Meanwhile we took more initiative, gathering for pre-season workouts followed by no-rules basketball. Some entered the state AAU meet in Flint and attended the MSU Wrestling Camp in the summer. Reynolds continued to coach, teach, and discipline (the shoe would be out today, and should have been then). We practiced occasionally with Class A teams Lansing Eastern and Everett. For two consecutive years, Reynolds took several of us to the NCAA Wrestling Championships at Kent State and Cornell and Ithaca, NY, his hometown. He wanted us to see what it takes to be really good.

“Unfortunately, the State Journal reporter perused the wall brackets (likely before the finals) and decided the wrestler in the finals from the top bracket was the winner. So the report in the Sunday paper was that I won 2nd place. That was clarified by an article on Monday. But meanwhile I got a lot of congratulations/condolences!”

Our senior year we were up to 27 wrestlers with several brother pairs. Although we went 10-2-1 in

dual meets, with tournaments we individually wrestled in about 30 matches. Wally Reese's brother, Al, helped coach. As mentioned above we won the league, region, and State Class B tournament, placing three in the finals, with Karlake 1<sup>st</sup> at 165 lb, McGilliard 1<sup>st</sup> at 95 lb, and Martin 2<sup>nd</sup> at 103 lb, with Reese and Willingham also qualifying.

## Okemos wins state mat title

Led by Mike McGilliard, Pat Karlake, and Dave Martin, Okemos High School's wrestlers won the class B State championship.

Over 60 teams competed for the title at Waverly High School Saturday night.

Earlier this season Okemos won the Capital Circuit title. It also tied with Haslett for the regional title at Eaton Rapids.

"Winning both the league and state championship marks the end of a perfect season for Okemos," said Coach George Reynolds. "Wrestling seasons don't come any better."

"The victory culminates 4 years of hard work by the boys. We've consistently improved until our skill reached its peak just before the state championships."

McGuilliard (at 95 pounds) and Karlake (165)

each took first place. Martin (103) grabbed a second place. Okemos's Doug Willingham and Wally Reese also competed.

Although it had tied Haslett for the regional championship one week earlier, Reynolds had been pessimistic about Okemos's chances to take the state title.

"It didn't look too good for us after the regionals because we didn't capture many first and second places," he said. "But at the state championship we were the only team to have 2 boys taking first place."

At the regionals McGilliard, Karlake, Martin, and Reese all took first place. Willingham grabbed a second place and Dan Cope, Dave Williams, and Steve Senzig all captured fourth places for Okemos.

It was a great 4-year adventure.

## Epilog:

I did make an effort to stay active the past 50 years. While at MSU I won two intramural doubles paddleball championships with two different partners. Of course, I kept wrestling and we won four Big Ten Championships and the 1967 NCAA National Championship (and my picture in Sports Illustrated!). In grad school at Iowa State (Animal Genetics major) I played a lot of golf. Here at Virginia Tech (Professor of Dairy Science) I have regularly played racquetball at noon, ridden my bike to work (2 mi one way), and golfed. Now, 4 years retired, I still do those but weigh 15 lbs more than when I came here. Amazingly, Virginia Tech wrestling was 4th in last year's NCAA Championships; nothing to do with me except for one email to the coach exhorting better hand control on escapes. I couldn't resist!

50 years later, Michigan State welcomed back our 1967 National Championship team.





*Doing a light reflection experiment are Joel Peterson, Irene Townsend and Mike McGilliard, physics students.*



1965 Okemos High School Physics

Jan, Mike and grandchildren 2017



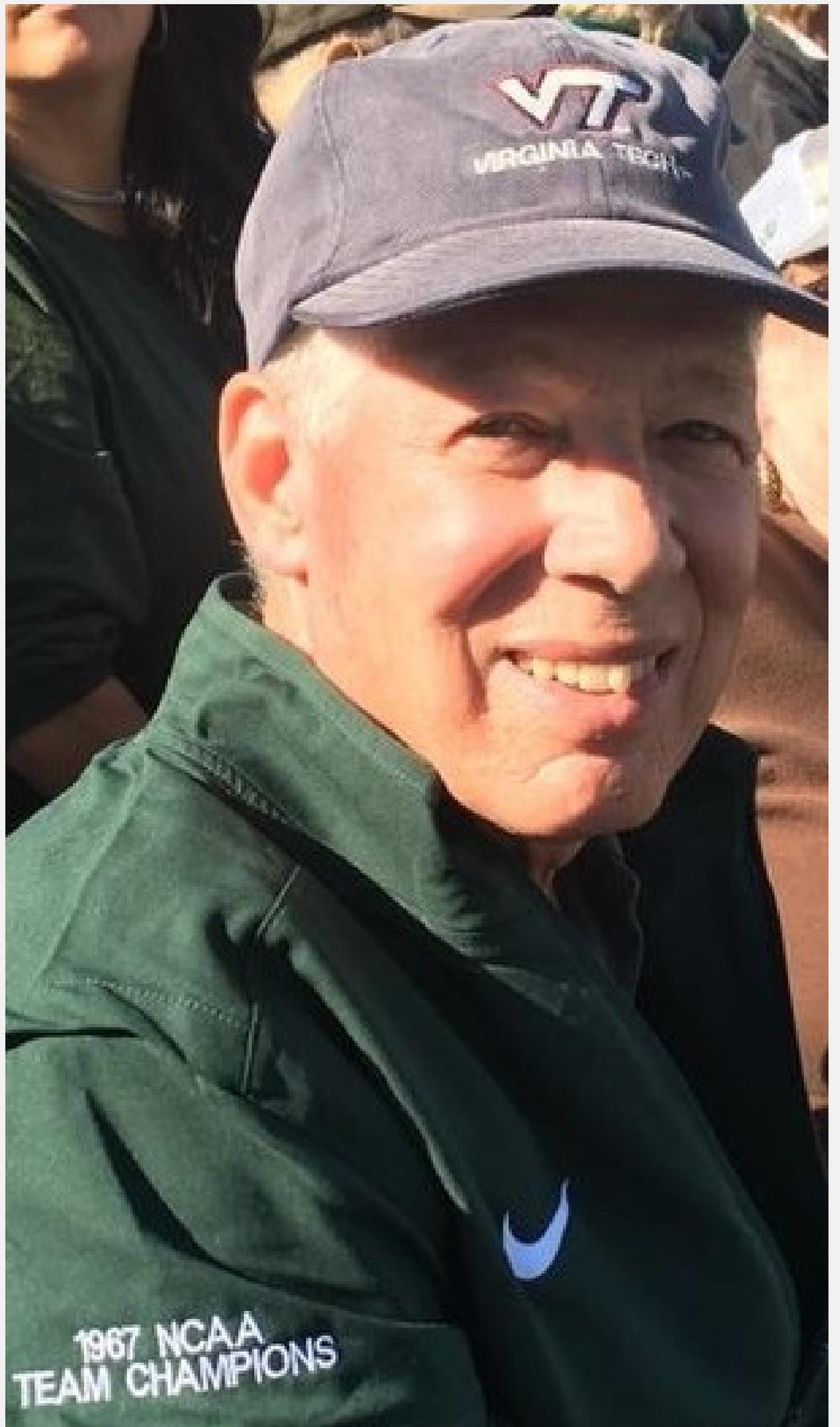


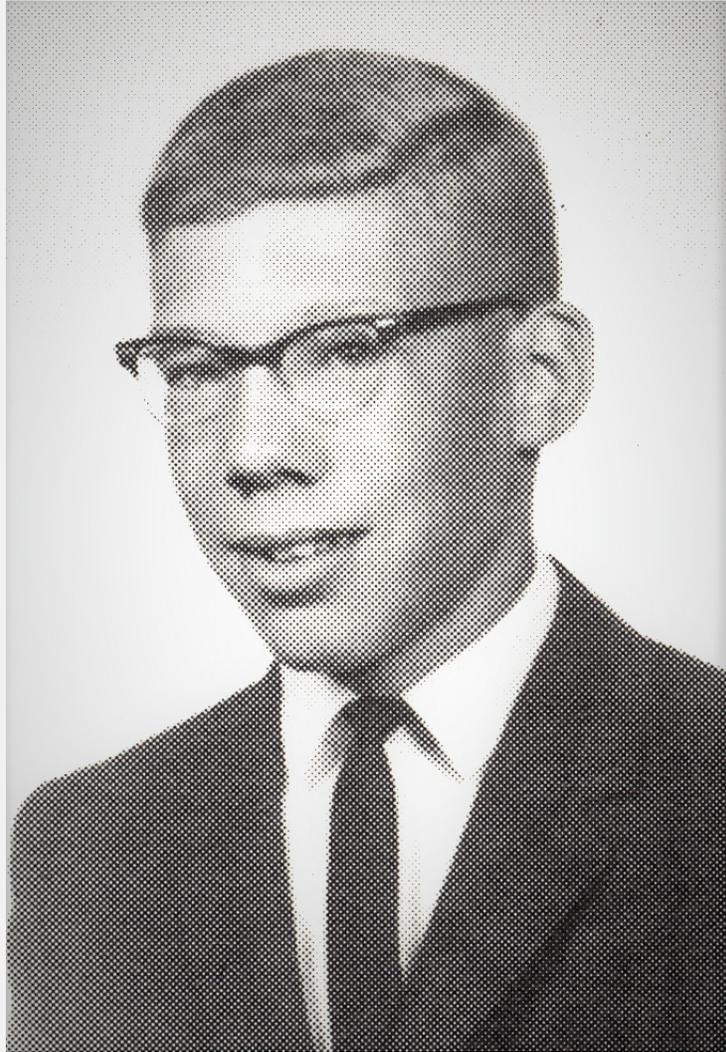
**Mike McGilliard**

**Okemos High School class of 1965**

**Nominee for OHS Athletic Hall of Fame**







Mike McGilliard \* Class of 1965



# A Spartan Journey

Michigan State's 1967  
Miracle on the Mat



**Dale Anderson**

Foreword by Dan Gable  
Introduction by Mike Chapman

