

INDUCTEE PROFILE

Williamsburg's shooting star

From a young age, Kagarise lived the game

By **Walt Frank**
Altoona Mirror

Basketball became an obsession very early for Bill Kagarise. "I would say around ninth grade, I fell in love with everything about it," Kagarise said. "I wasn't a great athlete, but I lived and died basketball. That was all I did. I was there as soon as daylight and played at night under the street lights at Robeson Extension. It was fun."

Kagarise went on to become one of the top scorers in Blair County high school basketball history. He scored 1,748 points — including 843 his senior season — in leading the Williamsburg Blue Pirates to a 25-0 record and the 1966 PIAA Class C state championship.

His high school career total was second, at the time, only to Don Appleman's county-record 2,100 points.

The Blue Pirates' 1966 team, led by Kagarise, was inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame in 2016.

"My greatest sports accomplishment was in 1966, winning the ultimate goal, the state championship," Kagarise said.

He becomes Williamsburg's fourth Hall of Famer, joining Galen Hall (1987), Dick Buckley (2006) and Don Appleman (2012).

"When you look at the list of Williamsburg people in the Hall of Fame, I am in awe to be in that group," he said.

Kagarise said he became excited about basketball while watching the 1958 Blue Pirates, led by Hall, win the state championship at Juniata College.

"That excited me and got the juices flowing, the super strong desire to be part of something like that," Kagarise said. "There were great athletes and players that I admired but what spurred me on was the excitement of that team."

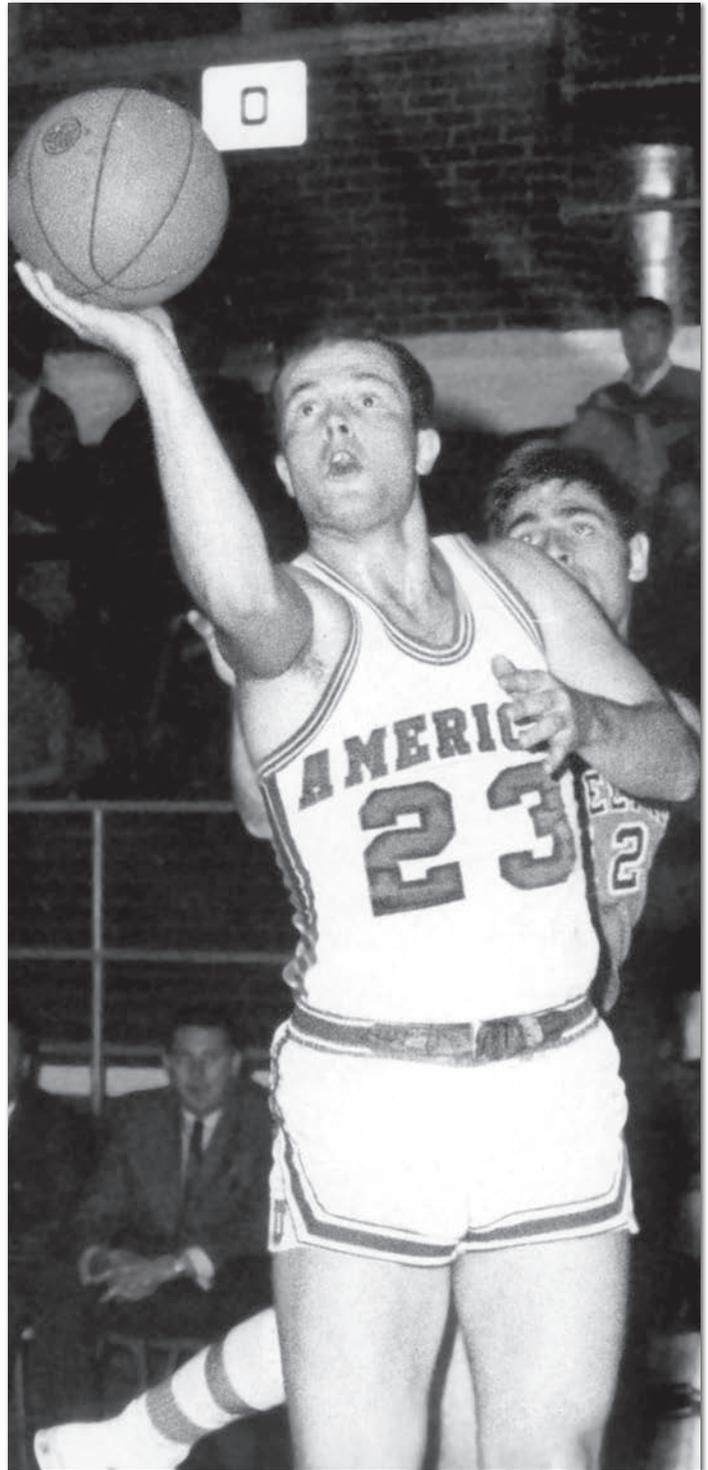
Kagarise said winning the state championship was both a "sigh of relief and exciting" as the team lost in the state western finals both his sophomore and junior years.

"We had a long road to climb. I will always believe the most talented team was when I was a junior and lost to Conneaut Lake," he said. "That was heartbreaking. Going into my senior year, I didn't think it was in the cards."

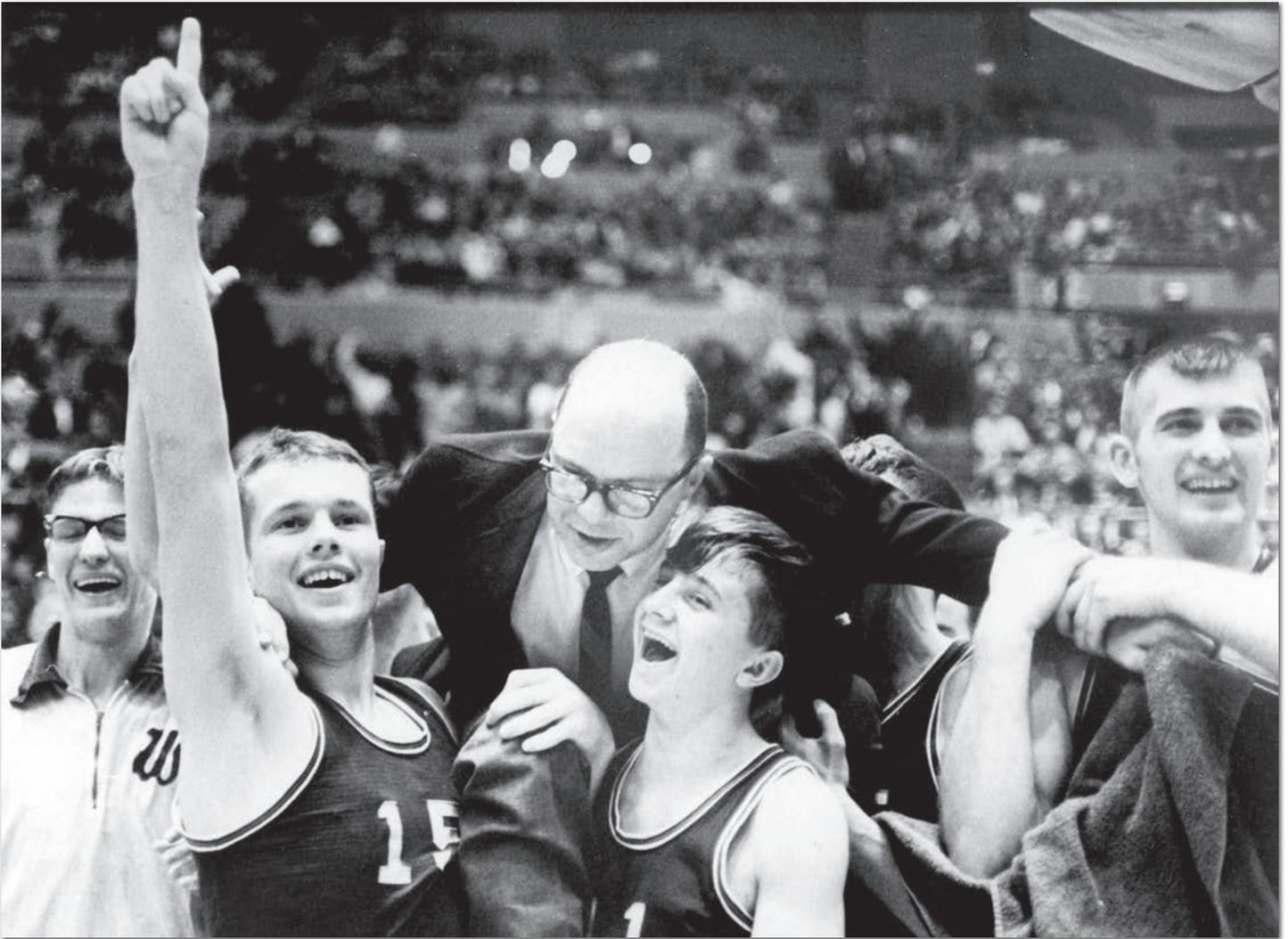
Kagarise said the team's 62-60 win over Bishop Guilfoyle in the Philipsburg-Osceola Holiday Tournament — the Pirates trailed by nine points with 90 seconds to play — was important to the team's success.

"We will never know if we had not made that comeback what would have happened," he said. "That made us believe in ourselves that we might have something special."

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Bill was a two-year starter at American. Among his top scoring games were 30 points against Old Dominion and 22 against Notre Dame.



Bill (15) leads the celebration after Williamsburg completed its unbeaten season by winning the PIAA title in 1966.

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Bill Gaffey, Bishop Guilfoyle's coach at the time, remembers the game.

"He (Kagarise) was a complete player — very intelligent," Gaffey said. "He shared the ball but shot when necessary. Some players who are high scorers take a lot of shots. He did what was best for his team. Sometimes that was shooting the ball."

The championship season almost didn't happen.

The paper mill in Williamsburg was shutting down, and Kagarise's father, Bill, moved to Covington, Va. during his sophomore year, to keep a job. Young Bill and his mother, Mary, stayed in Williamsburg so he could play for the Blue Pirates.

"My mom and dad made a big sacrifice," Kagraise said. "I had the greatest respect for the sacrifice my mom and dad made."

"His family's decision gave us the opportunity to be state champions, because without him we would have been just another team," longtime neighbor and teammate Pepper Appleman said. "I still to this day appreciate what the Kagarise family did."

Buckley, the Williamsburg High School coach, called Kagarise a complete player.

"He was a team man, and I say that sincerely," Buckley said. "If he had an open shot, he took it. If someone else was closer, he would

pass the ball. It was a coach's dream to have someone like that."

Kagarise's dedication to the game made him a great player.

"He worked harder at it than anybody," Don Appleman said. "He



Kagarise bio

Sport: Basketball

High school: Williamsburg

College: American

Hall of Fame achievement: Bill averaged double-figures as a two-year starter at American (1969-70). Played two years at Brevard Junior College, where he set a two-year scoring record of 1,134 points. Prolific shooter at Williamsburg who set Blair County's single-game record of 62 points en route to 1,748 career points. Led the Blue Pirates to the 1966 PIAA Class C title.

Current residence: Moneta, Virginia

played every day. He would go to the courts or if there was a basket in the alley he would shoot.

"He is the best long-range shooter I've ever seen in high school around here. He could shoot from halfcourt at our gym. He could shoot from 30 feet. As he got older, he became a better, well-rounded player, a better ball handler and better on defense."

Kagarise's nickname was "Beef."

"He did not have the classic look of a basketball player," Pepper Appleman said. "This allowed him to lure them in by getting them to underestimate his abilities. His graceful quick moves, superb ball handling and deceptive speed on the court allowed him to outmaneuver nearly every opponent. He would stop on a dime, create space between himself and the opponent and quickly launch his deadly accurate shot."

"I never saw anyone as strong as him. He would go into a player and then back off and shoot over him, and no one could block it. I never saw a shooter like him in my life," said longtime friend Bill Farringer, a standout on the 1965 WHS team and Kagarise's Hall of Fame presenter.

"He was a scoring machine," Rich Tate, a teammate on the 1966 championship team, said. "He had the right mentality. He had a picture perfect shot, and his release was so quick. He was really dedicated to the sport. He played more than any of us."

After graduating from high school, Kagarise moved on to Brevard Junior College in Cocoa, Fla., where he scored 1,134 points, a school record, in two years.

"We were one of the top junior colleges in the country," Kagarise said.

After also considering Brigham Young, he then moved on to American University in Washington, D.C., where he averaged 12.8 points per game for his two-year career. The first year the team only won four games under Coach Al Kyber.

However, Tom Young — who later led Rutgers to the 1976 NCAA Final Four — became head coach for his senior year.

"What a great basketball coach and person he was. I learned so much from him," Kagarise said.

Dr. Tom Davis, who would go on to win 598 games as a college head coach (at Lafayette, Boston College, Stanford and Iowa), became an assistant under Young.

Both remember Kagarise, who after graduation stayed three years at American as a graduate assistant.

"He was the kind of guy you wish you had 12 of them



Bill was on hand to help honor his high school coach, Dick Buckley, during the latter's Hall of Fame induction in 2006.

on your team. He was coachable in every way," Young, now 85 and residing in Virginia Beach, said. "He wasn't the quickest guy but he could play, and he could shoot."

Davis, who took Iowa to nine NCAA tourneys, including two Sweet 16s and one Elite 8, said Kagarise was a model on and off the court.

"He had a great attitude," Davis, now 79 and residing in Iowa City, said. "He was a good, solid person, a good, solid guy on and off the court. He was a perimeter player, and he could really stick it."

Kagarise had his best college game with 30 points against Old Dominion, which was led by Dave Twardzik, who later played in both the ABA and NBA. Twardzik scored 34 in the game.

Kagarise, who graduated from American with a bachelor's degree in education, went on to teach physical education in Virginia schools for 33 years.

He served as an assistant varsity coach at Chantilly High School for four years, head coach at McLean High School for five years and about 20 years as an assistant coach, JV coach and freshman coach at Herndon High school.

Today, Kagarise and his wife Stephanie live in Moneta, Va., near South Mountain Lake. They have two sons, Jon and Jason, and four grandchildren.

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		Bellwood		[Handwritten marks]																							
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The box score in which Bill set a Blair County High School single-game scoring record with 62 points.