

HUGH GALLARNEAU

Submitted by John Gunn

CHICAGO -- Hugh Gallarneau was a high school dropout who would become a member of the College Football Hall of Fame, an All-Pro halfback scoring 210 points for the Chicago Bears, and an executive with Marshall Field's and Hart, Schaffner & Marx.

Gallarneau, 82, a 1936 graduate of Morgan Park High School, died July 14 at his Northbrook home.

"I dropped out of high school after my sophomore year because my family lost everything in the Depression," he told a 1992 interviewer. The family lived in the Vanderpool School area.

"I worked in the Stockyards almost two years before my family got back on its feet," he said. "On returning to Morgan Park, Coach (Bob) Antonides and I didn't get along too well. He cut me from the squad."

But Gallarneau knew that he didn't want to spend his life in the Stockyards. So he hit the books.

He also joined the swimming team. Ironically, Empehi's greatest football player did not play on the gridiron for the Mustangs.

"I got an academic scholarship to Stanford," he said.

He lettered at Stanford in 1938 and 1939 during 3-6 and 1-7-1 seasons, and competed in boxing and rugby. But in 1940 he -- and Stanford -- hit the big time. The Indians, with Frankie Albert at quarterback, Pete Kmetovic at the other half and Norm Standlee at fullback, went 9-0 and beat Nebraska, 21-13, in the Rose Bowl with the new T formation installed by Coach Clark Shaughnessy.

Gallarneau was selected on the Newspaper Enterprise Assn. All-America team, drafted in the fourth round by the Bears (Michigan's Tom Harmon was Chicago's No. 1) and chosen for the 1941 All-Star Game, sports editor Arch Ward's brainchild at Soldier Field. The Stars lost to the Bears, his future employer, 37-13.

The 6-0, 190-pound Gallarneau, who wore No. 8, helped spark what computer whiz Jeff Sagarin considers the greatest pro team of all time to a 10-1 record, a 33-14 playoff victory over the Green Bay Packers, a 37-9 victory over the New York Giants for the NFL title and a 35-24 victory over the Pro All-Stars. In contrast to today's pro largesse, each 1941 champion Bear received \$430 for winning the title.

Counting the regular season, postseason and exhibitions, the Bears went 18-1, their loss to the Packers 16-14. Six players would go on to the Pro Hall of Fame, in addition to Coach George Halas. The Bears scored a record 49 points in the second half against the Eagles and beat the Cardinals, 34-24, at (old) Comiskey Park on Dec. 7.

"Halas paid the players \$2,500 a season," Gallarneau said. "He also withheld 10 percent of their pay that was returned after the season so they could get home. He called me into his office and gave me an extra \$500. I asked: 'What's this for?' He said: 'You had a good season.'"

Teammate George McAfee's and legendary Don Hutson's 12th touchdowns edged Gallarneau, with 11, for the league lead.

The Bears (11-0) came close in 1942, losing to the Washington Redskins, 14-6, in the title game. Halas had been called up by the Navy in October.

With WW II expanding, Gallarneau opted for the Marine Corps. He was the top man in his class at Quantico, Va.

"They asked me where I wanted to be assigned. Since radar was new, I chose radar," he said.

Gallarneau would become a night fighter director and the Marines' first "ground ace" -- a controller whose planes bring down at least five Japanese planes. At Okinawa, his pilots brought down a record six. He received the Bronze Star, unusual for a ground officer, for "meritorious achievement... in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service" and saw combat at Tarawa, Roi-Namur, Engebie, Saipan, Tinian and Guam.

Returning to the States as a night fighter instructor at Cherry Point, NC, he was sent to El Toro, Cal., where he played three games, being released from active duty at halftime of the first Fleet City game on a Saturday in San Francisco's Kezar Stadium.

"Flying in those days wasn't what it is today," he said. "I didn't get to Chicago until Sunday and a small plane had to take me to Green Bay for the Packers game. I got there just before it started. I was terrible, fumbling twice and helping the Bears go down to a crushing defeat.

But 1946 was special. With others back from the 1941 and '42 seasons, the Bears (8-2-1) beat the Giants 24-14 for the NFL title. Gallarneau was an All-Pro.

The 1947 Bears media guide referred to him as a "quick-opening artist." He gained 1,421 yards on 343 carries in his five-season pro career and scored 26 TDs by rushing, 7 by passing and 2 on kickoff returns. He was the leading rusher for the 1946 NFL champion with 476 yards on 112 carries and returned 24 punts for 243 yards. Recent Bears media guides still list Gallarneau No. 19 in team scoring and No. 20 in rushing.

While those totals might not compare to today's, players then played offense AND defense. Once a player left, he could not return that quarter.

The Orange County (Cal.) *Register* in 1985, just before the Bears played New England in the Super Bowl, asked Gallarneau which team was the best. "Playing under 1985 rules, we'd be murdered."

But Hall of Fame guard Danny Fortmann said that playing under 1941 rules "We'd give them a pretty good game. They're not used to playing 60 minutes. And in 1941 there were only 10 teams. The players had to be good."

The feisty Halas and his former players had their ups and downs. Gallarneau recalled that he and Hall of Fame tackle George Connor checked into a Chicago hospital for a week in the late 1960s for surgery to repair football injuries. Halas didn't stop by to see them.

On the seventh day, they checked out. At the desk, they reached into their pockets to pay for the hospitalization. "It's already been paid for," the attendant said. "It was a Mr. Halas."