Vince Lombardi once said, “I’ve never known a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn’t appreciate the grind, the discipline….I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour-this greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle, victorious”.

Football has been a big part of Gleason School’s history for many decades, but in 1963 a team played that people are still talking about today. Tonight, we at Gleason School would like to take this opportunity to honor this remarkable team, their managers, cheerleaders, homecoming court and all who had a part in their success! Ladies and gentlemen, please help us in welcoming home the 1963 undefeated Gleason Bulldogs!

We would like to begin tonight’s ceremonies by remembering the 1963 principal, Mr. J. T. Moore. It has been expressed by everyone involved that Mr. Moore was tough, but he made each and every one a better person. He loved football and was very supportive of this team. One cheerleader is quoted as saying, “Mr. Moore has been very patient with us while we have been in such an uproar over winning all of these games”. Any school, organization, or team is only as good as their leader and Mr. Moore was as good as it gets. Everyone definitely knew not to cross him, but they never had to question the amount of pride that he had for his school and this team. At this time we ask Mr. Moore’s daughter, Diane Hale, to step forward as we remember this remarkable man.

Coach Ed Settlers demanded 110% at all times from each and every player but the hard work and determination definitely paid off. He had the ability to not only get the players involved, but also the fans and the entire community. He started the 1st quarterbacks club at Gleason School and his enthusiasm for football spread to everyone who came in contact with him. Under his supervision and expertise coaching, the 1963 Bulldogs earned him the first undefeated season of his career. Although he is no longer with us, his legacy will always remain on the field of Gleason High School!

And what is a team without a supportive, patient, and loyal bus driver. Mr. Robert Clark drove this team to every away game. Many of these players could probably tell a story or two about what happened on those bus rides!! One such story was the time the ball team threw grapes at each other all the way home from Lake County. They threw so many that the juice was running down the windows and Coach Settlers stood up and threatened to take on each and every one of them! Mr. Clark, although it has been 50 years, some of these guys are still feeling guilty and would like to take this opportunity to apologize for all that they put you through. Thank you so much for your many years of dedication and service to Gleason School.

As we begin our recognition of the team, managers, cheerleaders, and homecoming royalty, we would like to start by taking a few moments to honor those who are no longer with us. We are deeply saddened by the loss of six team members and two cheerleaders. Their memories will always live on and their contributions to this team will never be forgotten! Helen Keller once said, “What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us. Those we love don’t go away, they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard, but always near, still loved, still missed, and very dear.” Tonight, we are greatly honored to have family members here to represent the memory of these cherished teammates and cheerleaders. As I call their names, I ask that any family members present please step forward.

Ronnie Taylor was a Senior left guard. He is represented tonight by his cousin, Mrs. Karen Dellinger Bouldin.

Jimmy Dellinger was a Sophomore defensive nose tackle. He is represented tonight by his cousin, Mrs. Diane Poole.

Gary Cooper played offensive left guard as a Junior.

Bucky Brawner was a Sophomore right guard. He is represented tonight by his two daughters, Monica Jones and Jill Coggins.

Nickey Bowers played defensive tackle as a Senior. Representing Mr. Bowers are his two sons, Monte and Nickey, Jr. and their mother Linda.

Representing Jeter Trevathan is his daughter Paula Cardwell. Jeter was a Senior defensive back.

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Kaye Roney was a Senior cheerleader. She is represented tonight by her daughter Lisa Vaughn and her two grandsons Aaron and Trae Vaughn.

Doris Blassingame Wagoner was a Senior cheerleader. She is represented tonight by her two daughters, Malita Rich and Missy Davis.

Now to the remaining team. As I call your names please step forward.

Freddie Spain, #81, was a Junior left end. Freddie now lives in Chicago, IL.

Jerry Sanders, #21, was a Senior fullback and resides in McKenzie, TN.

Russell Byrd, #70, played right tackle and middle guard as a Junior. He lives in McKenzie, TN.

James Morris, #18, played outside linebacker as a Junior. James now makes his home in California.

Gary Owens, #25, was a Junior defensive back. . Gary makes his home in St. Louis, Mo.

Billy Snider, #32, played defensive end as a Junior. Billy now lives in Milan, TN.

Jerry Jeter, #13, was a Freshman and he played defensive back. He now lives in Franklin, TN.

George Sawyers, #10, was a Senior offensive left halfback and defensive safety. He lives in Gleason.

Glen Margrave, #50, played center and defensive tackle as a Junior. He now lives in Novi, MI.

Jerry McElhiney, #27, played quarterback and defensive back. Jerry lives in Gleason.

Larry Joe Freeman, #80, played right end as a Junior. He lives in Gleason.

Ronnie Dilday, #71, was a Senior left tackle. He makes his home in Gleason.

Jimmy Belew, #22, was a Senior right halfback and linebacker. He lives in Gleason.

And last but certainly not least is #16 Johnnie Bradberry. Johnnie was the Senior quarterback and yes, he is still left-handed! He now resides in Jackson, TN.

Managers for the team were:

Frankie Gibson – Frankie now resides near Tampa, FL.

Phillip Bradberry – Phillip makes his home near Arlington, TN.

Richard Hodges –Richard lives in Gleason.

Robert Tuck – Robert resides in Gleason.

What is a football team without a supportive group of cheerleaders? A cheerleader is a valuable part of any athletic program and this group was certainly no exception. Though small in number, they made up for it in pride for their Gleason Bulldogs.

Betty Ward Brawner was a Sophomore cheerleader. She now lives in Jackson, TN.

Karen Dellinger Bouldin was a Senior cheerleader. She lives in the Murfreesboro, TN area.

Janice Bookout Hall was a Junior cheerleader. She lives in Cookeville, TN.

Lucy Hunter Lewis was a Junior cheerleader. She now lives in Bristol, TN.

We are also glad to have the homecoming royalty here with us tonight. The 1963 homecoming queen was Martha Boone Sublett. Martha now lives in Martin, TN.

Senior Maid was Carolyn Trevillian Roney. Carolyn lives in Gleason.

Junior Maid was Bonnie Arnold Bullock. Bonnie now lives in Dresden, TN.

Sophomore Maid was Sharon Morris Bowers. Sharon now lives in Martin, TN.

Freshman Maid was Lavelle Blassingame Floyd. Lavelle now lives in Paris, TN.

And lets not forget the flower girl and ring bearer.

Becky White Trevathan was the 1st grade flower girl. Becky now lives in Gleason, TN.

Robert Jeter, who was also a 1st grader, served as the ring bearer. Robert lives in Gleason also.

When asking the team, managers, cheerleaders, and royalty what some of their most memorable moments were, many cherished some of the very same memories, while others shared some rather funny stories. Here are a few of our responses:

Everyone remembers the feeling that they had when the team was crowned the Reelfoot Conference Champions, beating Martin for the second time. The most memorable moment shared by all was the Rotary Bowl win against Parsons. What a way to end a perfect season! There was no play-off format in those days like we have today so this game was the pinnacle of all games. Gleason was substantially outweighed at all positions and Parsons had a superb passing game as well. However, Gleason’s defense was unrelenting and the Bulldogs ended their career as the Rotary Bowl Champions!

A few of the other stories were the time that Jerry Sanders was knocked silly at Sharon and didn’t know where he was. “He sat out one play and went right back in the game. He also broke his finger in another game, ran off the field and got it taped and went right back in.”

“Then there was the bad snap to Jimmy Belew on a 4th down punt that never got off the ground. The ball rolled to him, he picked it up and ran for a 1st down. We later scored on that possession. This was during the Rotary Bowl.”

Freddie Spain recalls one memorable, or not so memorable event that also happened in the Rotary Bowl Game. It was late in the game and Gleason was up 19 to 12. “We kicked off and their star quarterback, supposedly Mississippi State material, received the kick. I didn’t remember it but was told that I hit him head on and stopped him. I stayed in the game but didn’t remember anything until the game was over and everyone was slapping each other on the back. Bucky Brawner slapped me and I said, What happened? He said, We won!! And I said Oh, Good!!”

A few memories of the cheerleaders and royalty were:

“The honor and blessing of being associated with such a special group of people and the pride of the accomplishments as Gleason Bulldogs.”

“The honor of being involved in this extraordinary season, riding on that white convertible around the football field, and waving to family and friends. These memories will always remain special.”

“Getting to decorate the entire town and leading the pep rallys on game days. Cheering our Bulldogs on to victory at both the Reelfoot Conference Championship and the Rotary Bowl Game where I’ll never forget how hard that frozen ground was!!!”

“After each ballgame EVERYONE (players, coaches, cheerleaders, families, friends, and supporters) all gathered at the one and only place in Gleason (Jr’s Dairy Bar) run by Jr. and Joyce Watts. The place was always packed but no matter what, you would manage to get inside, order you a hamburger, fries, coke, all for about 35cents I might add. That was where you really enjoyed the “fruits of your labor”, while everyone had food, conversation, fellowship and commenced to get ready for next weeks big game!”

“Our supporters during the ’63 season were avid, intense, enduring weather conditions (especially the bitter cold Rotary Bowl Game). They were enthusiastic and always there!! This, I will never forget.”

“I think the highlight of the 1963 football season was watching the Bulldogs win the Rotary Bowl game against Parsons. We had won many game already, but that game was special. It was soooooooo cold that night, and everyone was bundled up from head to toe. The bleachers were filled with the young and old from “Tatertown”. Pride and excitement was in the face of every spectator and winning it all was unbelievable!!! It is still a very fond memory of mine after all of these years.”

Gleason was most likely the smallest school to field a football team in 1963, yet their pride, grit, and intense determination allowed them to end their season undefeated, giving up only 12 points in regular season play, with both the titles of Reelfoot Conference Champions and Champions of the Rotary Bowl Game against Parsons. For this, you will always be remembered!! Once again Welcome Home!!!!!!!

We ask that you remain on the field for a few quick pictures and also want to remind everyone involved with this team in any way that they are invited to Crossroads Restaurant tomorrow night at 6:30 for a night of good food and reminiscing.