"WE" the Wolverines of 1953

We wouldn't think of dancing or striking a pose in the end zone after scoring a TD --
We never played on artificial turf --
We blanked Woody Hayes and his Buckeyes 20-0 --
We didn't wear face masks --
We never saw a twenty-five second clock --
We never had a female trainer --
We traveled in airplanes that had four-prop engines --
We didn't know what an agent was --
We never paraded around after making a tackle --
We never drank Gatorade --
We had a record of six wins and three losses --
We never experienced a TV time out --
We never thought there would be eleven teams in the Big Ten --
We scored 163 points and allowed 101 --
We were never investigated by the NCAA --
We didn't have a ball hat to wear on the sidelines --
We had all male cheerleaders --
We had coaches that sat at a table on the sideline and even smoked --
We didn't have a banner to jump up and touch as we came on the field --
We never played Notre Dame --
We didn't have free substitution --
We even shifted into the single-wing offense and used an unbalanced line --
We didn't have our name on our jersey --
We never heard of a strengh coach, special teams coach, or a recruiting coordinator --
We never had to tackle a 260-pound back --
We didn't have a weight room --
We never thought that fifty years later the coach of the Wolverines would be paid over one million dollars a year --
We never poured ice water on a coach --
We had 97,000 plus fans at a home game for our largest crowd --
We scored a season high fifty points against Washington --
We had knees that got the big cut because no one had heard of the scope --
We had a national ranking of No. 5 during the season for our high --
We never once turned to the TV camera on the sideline, held up one finger and said "Hi, Mom" --
We thought the red zone was some place in Russia --
We had a coaching staff of eight men --
We had a final season ranking of AP, No. 20; UPI, No. 19 --
We felt all our positions were skilled --
We didn't think the NFL was our future --
We had a coach who was a three-time All-American at Michigan, Bennie Oosterbaan --
We all left some blood, sweat and tears in Ann Arbor --
We always thought we would be able to get Michigan tickets to future games --
We never thought about our 50th reunion --

We have some players who are no longer on the roster.
Those of us who are still playing in the 4th quarter have seen many changes, some good, some bad. However, we will be loyal to the Maize and Blue until the clock runs out.

Gene Knutson
1953 Wolverine No. 86
2003
A Field Revisited
October 25, 2003

To go down the long tunnel from the locker room and out onto the field of the Michigan Stadium as a Wolverine football player was something more than special. You were given the privilege and opportunity to represent Michigan and the tradition that is Michigan; a time to react to and perform the verses that the "The Victors" and "Varsity" so perfectly describe.

In my life and the lifetime of my teammates game day was a half century ago, but so vivid in my memory when I was told that our 1953 team would be introduced on the field as part of our 50th reunion celebration. My thoughts turned to sitting in the locker room prior to the game; sitting there waiting to take the field, and looking down at the famous Michigan helmet that I was holding in my lap and then onto my clean and polished shoes; the quiet, assuring talk of the players, and then the words of our coach. I'm sure there are other occasions in life that I've never had the opportunity to share, and they are comparable to the big stadium locker room, and the big game just minutes away, however at that time I found myself in a world of unbelievable anticipation. The feeling that rushes through you is undescrivable, and I thank God for giving me the chance to be there many times on a fall Saturday afternoon in Ann Arbor.

Over the past fifty years I've been back to many Michigan home games, but never has an occasion presented itself to go down the tunnel and out onto the field. On reunion day I rode down the tunnel on a golf cart, and then walked out onto the field. I sat down on the visitor's bench and took a look around. The playing field is still a hundred yards long, looked about the same width, and the grass is gone. The stadium had a capacity of just over 97,000 in 1953, and now it's a little bigger. The players were warming up. The bands were getting ready to take the field. Cheerleaders were there, as were photographers and TV camera people. A stray ball bounced near me, and came to rest at my feet. It was retrieved by a Michigan player, and naturally he was wearing my old number, 86.

We were introduced during the second TV time-out in the north end zone. Once again twenty-nine of the 1953 team members came onto the field. This time we walked and limped, but still with the pride of old Wolverines. The crowd gave us a cheering and standing ovation. Yes, I cried, as others did, because I'm an emotional and sentimental slob.

The Michigan kids playing in the stadium that afternoon looked very good as they crushed their opponent. However, they've got their work cut out for them to stay up with us. We won all six home games in 1953, which included a season-ending win over Ohio State, 20-0.

The boys in the Maize and Blue have been rockin', rollin' and marching on to victory on this field and in this stadium before our 1953 team members were ever born. It is my hope that the players, coaches and fans of today and those of years to come will remember that Michigan football and all the tradition that surrounds it was well underway before any of us existed. Those of us who are loyal to Michigan today are like the unstoppable drive and just keep it going!

Go Blue

Gene Knutson
1953 Wolverine No. 86