

For years the championship of Bibb County has been decided by the annual clash between West Blocton and Bibb County High at Centreville.

There was a time, though, when that title was a three-way battle and those two schools were just as likely to finish up as also-rans.

Prior to its becoming a junior high in the late 1930s, Piper-Coleanor High School, serving the mining town of Piper, was a power to be reckoned with in West Alabama prep football. If you were looking for a "breather," Piper was not the school you scheduled.

"We enjoyed the four years we were at Piper more than any place we lived except Sylacauga," Mrs. H. F. Eubanks said recently, recalling the days when she taught school and her husband directed the gridiron fortunes of the Piper Bulldogs.

"Piper was a company town," Eubanks added. "Everything there was owned by the Cahaba Coal Co. We were there during the Depression when the state was paying teachers in warrants. Well, the Cahaba Coal Co. had a little check for the teachers each month. It sure came in handy."

As a coach, Eubanks found Piper-Coleanor (pronounced kol-EE-nor) High School a good place to work.

"Piper was a place that doesn't exist any more. It was a one-purpose place with no dissension and no disunity. The boys were highly motivated and highly dedicated. It was a good place to build a team," Eubanks said.

"Those boys worked in the mines in the summer or even on weekends during school. They were well-developed physically and fairly mature for their age. And they weren't afraid of hard work," he added.

Eubanks, a stern taskmaster who didn't even want his boys to date the night after a game, according to Mrs. Eubanks, made good use of that strong, mine-developed material. He produced the best of his nearly 30 football teams there.

In 1935 Piper bowled over six

opponents in compiling a 6-1-1 record. The only loss was to Guin of Marion County, 19-0. Among the victims were Bibb County (6-2-0 that year), West Blocton and Holt; Tuscaloosa County was tied.

And that season was no fluke. The year before Eubanks' boys had knocked off several foes, including West Blocton to the tune of 33-13. And a year later, with J. V. Bice taking over a Piper and Eubanks moving on to West Blocton, Piper's record was 6-1-1 again. The only loss that year was to Double Springs, 7-0.

Eubanks, a native of Blount County, started his teaching and coaching career in Fayette in 1921 at the age of 18. He was head basketball and baseball coach and assistant football coach for a Fayette team that claimed the state championship.

"It was unusual for a high school to have an assistant coach in those days, but Fayette was a football-minded town even then. They had hired a former University of Alabama star just to coach football," Eubanks said.

After a year at Fayette, Eubanks went to Guin for a year, Altoona for a year and Oneonta for two years, winding up in Alliance in Jefferson County in 1926.

"We got married at Alliance, and I put a stop to that wandering," Mrs. Eubanks reminded him.

Although he did put in a year at Oak Grove and another at McAdory, Eubanks essentially remained at Alliance until 1932 when he went to Piper.

"Alliance was kind of a forerunner of the vocational schools we have today," Eubanks said. "They had hogs, regular Jersey cows and white leghorns and somebody had to look after them 12 months a year. They wanted students to know how a henhouse operated."

Alliance, oddly enough, was one of three schools Eubanks coached that no longer exist. In 1930 the school was merged with Oak Grove. In 1938 Piper became a junior high and several years ago Altoona

merged with Walnut Grove to form West End High in Etowah County.

While he coached football at all of the schools mentioned above as well as at B. B. Comer of Sylacauga and Maplesville, Eubanks also coached boys and girls basketball and took the girls' basketball team at Guin to the state tournament in Montevallo.

Eubanks finished up his career as a coach and teacher at Tuscaloosa County, retiring in 1966 after almost 20 years at the Northport school. He spends his time these days attending high school and college games in all sports and dragging Mrs. Eubanks to a good many of them — but then, she's used to that with a husband and two sons in the coaching business.

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