

— 2017 —

Forsyth-Monroe County Sports Hall of Fame

Bill Fields



William B. Fields was a native of Monroe County, Georgia, and graduated from Mary Persons High School in Forsyth, and United States Naval Academy Class of 1954, and was a member of the 1952 Olympic Gold Medal winning 8-man crew at the Helsinki Olympics. Navy's 8-man crew, in its entirety, qualified to represent the United States at the Helsinki Olympic Games, and began known as "The Great Eight", and as such were inducted into the Helms Athletic Foundation Hall of Fame in 1956. Navy opened the 1952 rowing season with a 19-2 victory over Yale, won the next five races, defeating a total of 8 teams along the way, with every victory coming by at least two boat lengths. Navy closed its collegiate regular season with an undefeated record, winning the Intercollegiate Rowing Association National Championship. The entire crew qualified to represent the United States in the Olympic games with a nine second victory over Princeton in the Olympic trials, then an Olympic trials record. Bill Fields was #2 Oar for the team. At the Olympics, the Navy team posted a time of 6:25.9 to win the Gold Medal by nearly 6 seconds over Russia, 8 seconds over Australia, and 9 seconds over England.

Navy's crew dominance did not end at the conclusion of the Olympics. Navy would go on to post 29 consecutive wins from 1952-1954, winning three Intercollegiate Rowing Association and three Eastern Sprint titles during that time, and the entire 8 member crew was inducted into the National Rowing Foundation Hall of Fame. Commander Fields retired after a career in the Navy and moved to Gainesville, Georgia where he served as a high school crew coach and early consultant with the U.S. Olympic Atlanta Organizing Committee to establish the 1996 Olympic Rowing venue. Unfortunately, Fields passed away in 1992 and never got to participate further or see the Olympics come to Georgia. The Finish Line at the 1996 Olympic Rowing venue was within feet of the Gainesville home that Fields shared with his wife, Kitty.

