

Poem presented to Elmer Buttweiler during a banquet at Tri-City Legion on October 9, 1997, honoring his service as the baseball program's General Manager:

Elmer, the Great GM

He is Elmer Buttweiler of Tri-City Legion,
the greatest GM in the whole damned Region.
He knew in his heart that a championship team
was far more than a hope and far more than a dream.

The District had great strength in talent and numbers.
"It can be tapped!" exclaimed Elmer, "It will do wonders --
for the community, the Legion, and especially the boys --
those boys who play baseball with the greatest of joy!"

He recruited his coaches, and with a smile, he said,
"Yes! Go lay out your plans for the rise of the Red!
For we are Tri-City, and Tri-City Red can be great!
If we work, work, work, we can even get to State!
I will seek us the funds for uniforms, bats, and balls;
but "please" retrieve those balls that go over the walls!"

It didn't take long, under the great Elmer's guide,
for the Red ball club to get noticed, far and wide.
They climbed higher and higher in the State's ranking poll.
Great players -- Guse, Maz, Jake, Colin -- had the team on a roll.

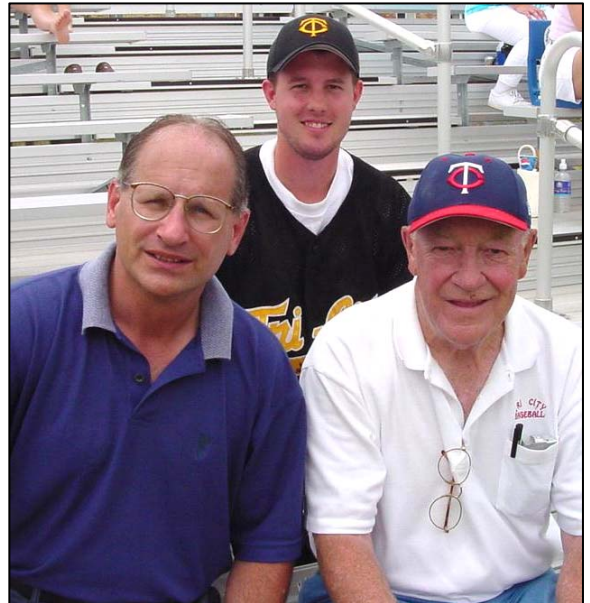
They traveled to tournaments, further away.
And they held doubleheader picnics down Rochester way.
They competed with perennial powers to sharpen their skills,
with Elmer right there with them, hardening their wills.

Then came the Districts, oh, what a sight!
The Red came away victors on '93 finals night!
They were one victory short in 1992,
but this '93 team saw it all the way through.

Armed with his nitro and plenty of pride,
Elmer and his Red headed down Highway #169
to compete in New Ulm and Sleepy Eye for the State Tourney Title.
With the Red 2-1, it rained and rained, and the ballparks sat idle.

First Eagle Lake and Little Falls, then Alex and Moorhead
succumbed to the Red team, which Elmer firmly had led.
Only Excelsior, in game 3, had managed to squeak past Tri-City,
but could Elmer's boys now rise to beat Osseo twice in this City?

The clouds parted finally, and the sun beat down brightly.
It got hot and muggy, and the field dried slightly.
"Play hard now!" Elmer urged, almost in song,
"Let's take home a championship, and show we belong!"



Elmer, Mark Kalata (L) and Mike Maslowski (C);
Brooklyn Center Tournament, 2001

The Red were victors in game one, 6-1.
Elmer was confident that it was just about done.
He was right; 11-4, TC, was the second game score.
Elmer had his first triangular State trophy, but wanted more.
A Region title in Jamestown eluded him though,
as his Red battled valiantly against their World Series winning foe.

Elmer and the Red gained great respect from all,
and the '94 season again made Elmer stand tall.
Princeton welcomed the Red into town with a cheer,
as they were the champs from the previous year.
Elmer's Red team also repeated as champs of District 4,
this time on to Northfield and Dundas, to knock on the State door.

Willmar was no problem, but Forest Lake put up a fight.
The game went 13 innings into the night.
Elmer called, "This is enough boys. Let's win and go rest!,
I'm about out of nitro, and I'm clutching my chest!"
A single to center brought the winning run home,
and Elmer cheered his Red, while forest Lake groaned.

Moorhead and Brainerd each then took a fall,
with the Red going undefeated -- no trouble at all.
Anoka was last in line for the Red to repeat.
Elmer, the GM, knew Anoka they could beat.

He was right, and the Red went back to Tri-City
with another triangular trophy for Elmer to set pretty
in the trophy case at the Legion for all to see.
It was true that this program, a power, could be.

Although in Rapid City, another Regional eluded him,
Elmer knew he and the Red were not just a whim.
When people spoke of baseball dynasties in the State,
now Tri-City, led by Elmer, was included as great.

'95 and '96, not quite as successful for the team,
but Elmer Buttweiler still had that championship gleam.
'97 showed promise for Elmer and his boys.
He knew Tri-City Red would make some more noise.

Although it was hard for him to give up the news,
Elmer announced also that he was preparing to "cruise."
He'd given so much to the Tri-City Legion,
but his retirement would occur at the end of the season.

The Red fired up, and for Elmer they played --
a year to remember -- a year that they made.
The Gopher Classic was a tip that great things were ahead.
"Keep your eye on Tri-City Red," it often was said.
The Red again entered Districts, being highly ranked.
They won the championship, and Elmer they thanked.



Fargo/Moorhead Tournament, 2001

Hamline was second, so went to the State Tourney too,
setting up a finish that was too good to be true.
The expanded State Tourney meant it would be rough,
but the Red hung together, and Elmer had the stuff..

In Chaska and Jordan they played and did well,
while Elmer, as usual, in fun, gave them hell.
No trouble with Bayport, did the Red have the first day.
But they ran out of runs against St. Cloud, you say?

Elmer encouraged them to continue the battle,
and the Red jumped right back in the saddle
They beat Willmar, New Ulm, and Excelsior too,
then Rochester in that day's double-header, game number two.

The Red was awesome in all these tough matches,
and Elmer stood taller, calling "Batten the hatches!"
For the Red had made it to championship day.
So had Hamline -- but Tri-City first had St. Paul Park to play.

A nail-biter it was, going twelve innings.
Who was going to collect this game's winnings?!
Elmer, the GM, relying again on his nitro,
cheered his boys on throughout the night -- oh!

A hero home run from Billy gave St. Paul Park defeat,
and Elmer, was once again on the edge of his seat.
For his Red now faced Hamline for the right to brag.
Who would be State Champ, and who would get snagged?
Before too long though, Elmer was raising
a third triangular trophy. His boys, he was praising.

On to Excelsior for Regional play.
Staying close to home was the treat of the day.
Bismarck, North Dakota, was first on the list.
Elmer got ready, and raising his fist,
cheered his Red to victory by a large gap.
17-1 did Bismarck get zapped.

Topeka, Kansas, was tough and fought more,
but the Red turned it on, and won 6-4.
Elmer and his boys met Excelsior next,
the wind and the rain coming in from the west.

The Red stumbled briefly, and went down 7-5,
but Elmer reassured them they were still very alive.
After all, they had lost one game in the State,
and they still put a championship on their plate.
Tri-city played Lincoln, Nebraska, next in line,
the Red handled their pitchers (score 19-1), just fine.



The wind and the rain came in heavy that night,
and in the morning, a flooded field was the sight.
High drama followed. What would they do?
It would be settled by a coin flip for the crew?

Dry, but unavailable, the dome was ruled out.
"How to play two games yet?!!" Elmer did shout.
Hark, in Albert Lea they say the rain has stopped!
So, onto the bus, arranged by Elmer, the whole team hopped.

Seven innings against Topeka was all that was needed
for Elmer's Red team to be seated
in the Regional Championship game. Excelsior was also in.
Could Elmer and the never-say-die Red do it again?

"Seven to nothing" had sent Topeka headed south,
but then the Red watched Excelsior come in to the house.
A defensive battle Elmer did see next --
between his Red team and the big E-X.

But the Red had more desire and drive, I think.
and took care of business, 2-0, with hardley a wink.
In the drizzle of Albert Lea they won it --
their first Regional Title! For Elmer they had done it.

It was Tarbuk, Beaulieu, Billy, Hoppe, Flip and Brew,
Kratochvil, Willett, Meyers, and Poser made up more of the crew.
Plus, Aubinger, Paone, Strandness and Pedersen,
Lodgaard, Clark, and last, but not least, Hanson.

Manager Frank, plus the coaches too -- Jeff and Mark,
with the boys, set their sights on playing in a World Series park.
It was only fitting, I say, that in this year, of all years,
that Elmer was in the World Series. Listen to those cheers!

The team returned home, still winners, and standing tall,
even though the World Series proved to be the toughest of all.
It was the experience of a lifetime for all who were there,
our Tri-City had done it. The memories we will share.
Three wins in three appearances in the State
is quite a record, but it's not just pure fate.....

I'm not a player parent, reporter, coach or assistant,
so why do I keep coming back to the Red, so consistent?
Because they are great, having lots of talent and heart --
But as a team, not as individuals who are far apart.

So to all Tri-City players and coaches I have seen,
thank you for being so dedicated to your teams.
How did you learn to play as a team in this way?
It came from your leader, the great Elmer, I'd say.
Many players have gone on to continue in ball,
thanks to you Elmer, and those involved with the teams -- all.

Some have called me the Red's #1 fan,
but that title can belong to only one man --
-- the man who took so many boys under his wing,
and made them into ballplayers that sing
with bats and balls and gloves each game,
and each time the hero is not the same.

As players grow and move on, with Elmer they shake.
New ones come on -- of Elmer, what do they make?!
But by the time the Legion season is done,
they have learned to win -- and to have fun.

And they play for Elmer! "Come on Elmer," they say,
"This is your trophy! You did it with us today!"
And they pat him on the back with affection and pride.
"This is our GM, Elmer; he's always on our side."

Yes, he is Elmer Buttweiler of Tri-City Legion,
the greatest GM in the whole damned Region.
He knew in his heart that a championship team
was far more than a hope and far more than a dream.
He made it a reality, with his faith and his pride.
Thank you, Elmer. You've taken us for one helluva ride.

With lots of love --

Gail Kalata
October 9, 1997



Elmer Buttweiler and Mark Paone, serving as Grand Marshalls of the 2000 Stockyard Days Parade, which celebrated Tri-City Red's 1999 National Championship.