

# Leaving a Legacy in Boys Basketball:

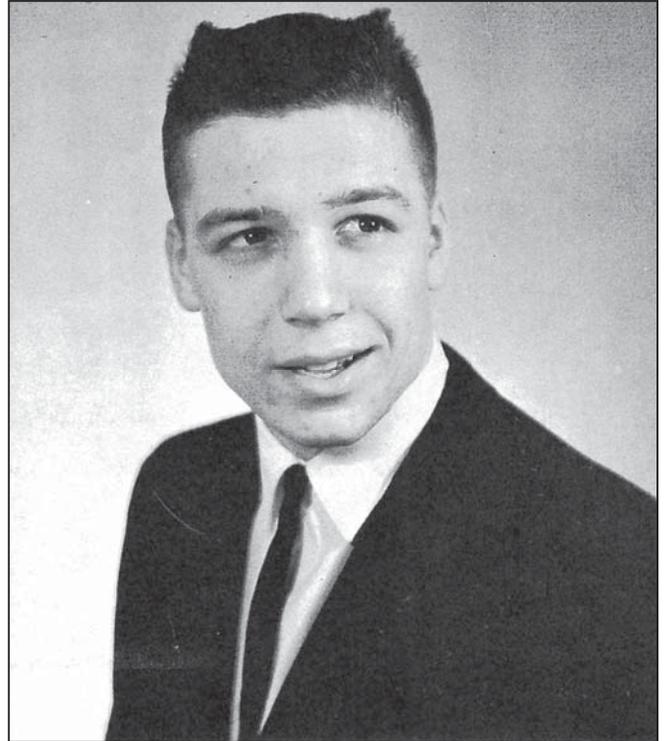
## *Gary Bandor*

By Annaka Isenberger  
Thorp Courier Reporter

The early 1960's was a golden age of boys' basketball at Thorp High School, and perhaps one of the most significant reasons why lies in the memory of one celebrated athlete: Gary Bandor.

Even though Bandor was even more well known for his outstanding efforts on the football field as quarterback his junior and senior years, he was almost equally as beneficial to the boys' basketball team. When people saw him walking Thorp's main street, he was bouncing a basketball. He lived and breathed athletics, dedicating himself to his teams and his coaches.

In Bandor's senior year—the 1963-1964 season—the young competitor managed to break a school record for most individual points scored in a single season with a whopping 535 points, and finished his basketball career with a total of 1,505 points. These achievements earned him a spot on record-holding lists. Even today, his name is still amongst the “greats” that have come from the Conference. Bandor went on to be named as a part of the Eastern Cloverbelt All-Conference First Team three years running—a feat not easily achieved in any way. His senior year, he not only led his team to the Sectional Finals for the second consecutive year, he also made the WSAU All-Star Team and was named a part of the Prep All-America Honorable Mention team.



Gary Bandor brought a new sense of pride to the people of Thorp. He not only brought recognition to himself, but also to the class of 1964, Thorp High School, and the city. Remembered for his ability to talk to anyone and everyone—bestowing beloved nicknames to everyone he knew—Gary was truly unique. Loved by just about everyone, Bandor even earned his own page in the 1964 Seniorian, where his classmates proudly displayed all his accolades and achievements along with his photo. At the end of his football career, his jersey—number 11—became the school's first and only retired number. To this day, he holds school records in football, basketball, and track.

Even after graduation, the heart of the champion kept beating for Cardinal red and white. In November of 1967, the hometown hero returned to his home court—not to play, but to teach the next generation of Cardinal athletes the tricks of shooting his trademark jump shot.

To this day, Thorp High School continues to award one deserving student the Bandor Award—which is given to a three-sport athlete who has been an active and contributing member for a minimum of two years and displays the kind of admirable character that Bandor was so well known for.

When Bandor left Thorp High School, he attended the University of Wisconsin on an athletic scholarship. As a flanker and cornerback on the Badgers' football team, he played well enough into his

sophomore year to earn college-level accolades. According to his roommate at the University, “[Gary] never looked too much like a Big Ten football player. He was 5’10”, weighed only 170 pounds, and had skinny legs.” But once on the field, he proved himself time and time again.

Unfortunately, due to grade problems, Bandor lost his student deferment and was drafted into the United States Army and served a year in Vietnam. The young man survived his tour of duty and returned home. Shortly after leaving for Fort Sill in 1968, Bandor was critically injured in an automobile accident. The driver of a Jeep in which Bandor was riding, lost control while crossing railroad tracks. Thorp’s hometown hero passed away four days later of a brain hemorrhage with his mother by his side.

Described as a “champion in every sense of the word,” Gary Bandor remains as one of the most outstanding athletes to ever come out of Thorp High School. Even though his time on earth was cut tragically short, his legacy still lives on. Bandor is still proudly and predominantly showcased in Thorp’s trophy case, where he will live on as a legend amongst men.