

This article is a clipping sent to Mary Weaver by Toni Roberts. Quite appropriate as the community prepared for the three-day tournament.

It is dated August 12, 1969

Dear Ruth,

This article appeared in the sports section of the Waterloo Courier Tuesday evening and I thought it might interest you and your Rippey News readers. I think everyone in Rippey would get a kick out this writer's impressions of the town as he attended the state legion baseball tournament last weekend.

Although there are a few errors (how could 1,500 souls get in Rippey?) I see the article as very accurate. Hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Sincerely,
David Chase
Cedar Falls

Rippey Was Rippin' Good by Bill Mann, Courier Sports Writer.

It seemed like a somewhat unlikely, or at least, unheard of spot to find the finals of a prestigious state baseball tournament, but maybe it made a lot more sense than you expected.

It was a pleasant, relaxed weekend this past Saturday and Sunday. This is what you expect a little town in the middle of August to be like.

Rippey, which the map lists as being populated by 1,500 souls, hosted the state legion finals this past weekend.

Many people don't even know where Rippey is, even people have lived in Iowa all their lives. For the record, it's about 32 miles west and a little south of Ames.

How small is it really? Just remember the old line about the biggest thing in town being the unloading of trucks down at the A&P. Well, Rippey doesn't have an A&P.

Random thoughts here, organized even more randomly:
It wasn't as incongruous as it seemed, however. In fact, at the end, it seemed like this is where the tournament should have been all along. It was, to be sure, Rippey's biggest "happening" of the year.

Rippey's Legionnaires ran the ball park's concession stand. At first, you have a hard time believing that you can actually buy a nickel candy bar at a ball park for a nickel. Then your mind is really blown when you find a 25-cent hot dog. Despite the fact that the most expensive item was all of 35 cents, the legion took in around \$300 in two nights.

And the people were, well, just friendly. One family even offered this reporter the use of its living room to type and file a story.

So, I picked up the horn to call Waterloo. The first thing I noticed was that someone had swiped the dial. But, on closer scrutiny, I found that it was a crank phone. Dial phones haven't made it to Rippey yet.

I remember the struggle the little town of Central City, Colorado, had to put up for some 10 years to keep its non-dial phones. AT&T won that fight.

Just for the heck of it, I picked up the phone, gave a crank, and asked for Sarah. That wasn't the operator's name. I was disillusioned.

The playing field of the park was well-manicured. The grounds-keeper called himself a "diamond cutter". The joke was old. No one minded.

Out in the right and center fields of light poles were inside the fence, not outside, where reasons of safety would have seemed to dictate. In the second game, one Council Bluffs outfielder discovered the guide wire by accident and had a nice trip.

You see little kids scrambling for foul balls, just like they do in Wrigley Field or Yankee stadium. The Legion pays a dime for each one returned.

Mike Watkins of Waterloo hits a long blast to deep center for a home run in the Mason City game. The ball clears the wall by 15 feet, and also clears the street and lands in Rippey's municipal 12x12' swimming pool.

(Bill Watt's note" Actually the private pool of Keith Devilbiss family. It measures 20x40 surrounded by a 33x63 patio enclosed by a brick wall. There are seven similar pools in the area).

A towheaded, freckled, little kid comes panting up to the press box for his dime. "This ball's no good," says the scorekeeper, squeezing the ball out. "Give it to Watkins.". The kid takes his dime, blows it on a soda. Watkins gets an ovoid, if somewhat soggy, souvenir.

Before the games, there is a ceremony including the national anthem and the raising of the colors. The flagpole in center field is not working right, and the flag goes up to three-quarters staff (I read once that "half mast" means on a ship)

Three quarters staff is an enigma. Sitting in the stands, you're pretty sure the flagpole is just stuck; but you're not positive, on the other hand, that someone pretty important has not left us. The flag goes all the way in the second game and you breathe a sigh of relief.

Most of the Waterloo players' parents stayed overnight at local homes so they could see the finals. They tell each other that the folks are great hosts.

Dave Susong is one of those who stayed to see his son (the first baseman) play Sunday. He stands behind a row of cars, nervous. He is tearing up a gum wrapper; his son is at bat with a man on base. The son gets a single and a smile crosses his face. Later, the worried look returns when Waterloo loads the bases with one out and doesn't score.

"Don't try to kill it, just meet the ball!" yell the Waterloo fans behind first.

One of the loci people, a heavy-set man in his forties with a bulbous nose that reminds one of W. C. Fields, says this is Rippey's first summer without a semi-pro team, and that the townspeople are glad to see baseball here once again.

The nights, like the days are warm and humid. Good baseball weather.

There is, it turns out, an even better bargain in town than the concession stand.

There are two two-pump gas stations in the town. The local people say they're having a scaled-down "gas war". It turns out that ethyl is selling this week in Rippey for 26.9 a gallon. I fill up, no fool I.

Rippey, in short, is a scene right out of Americana, where the people look like Grant Wood paintings.

This is what urbanites might call a "hick town."

And for someone who lived in New York some seven years, it was darned refreshing.