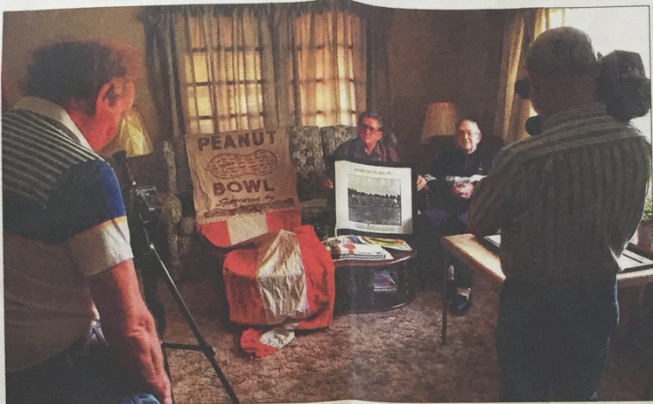


Bowled over

Peanut Bowl inspires Western Mass. filmmaker



Former Westfield High School football coach William "Bill" Moge, seated right, is interviewed in his living room in 1997 by one of his former players, Vincent Ciancotti, seated left, during the filming of a documentary by Jim Curran, left, and Ed Phillips, right, about the Peanut Bowl games of 1949. (THE REPUBLICAN FILE PHOTO)

BY GARRY BROWN

Special to The Republican

Scott Baldyga grew up in West Springfield in a home filled with memories of the Peanut Bowl, an intersectional high school football phenomenon of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The memories were shared by his father, the late Dan Baldyga, and his father's best friend, Vincent Ciancotti, teammates on Westfield High School powerhouses that won the Peanut Bowl twice, following the 1948 and 1949 seasons. The games were played in Columbus, Georgia, the first on New Year's Day, Jan. 1, of 1949 and the second on New Year's Eve, Dec. 31, of 1949.

Westfield's coach, a young dynamo named William "Bill" Moge, had a profound influence on his players. His football tutelage also provided life lessons, which Baldyga and Ciancotti learned well and carried into the real world.

Scott Baldyga loved all the stories he heard about those Westfield teams, how they were embraced by all of Western Massachusetts as they carried the region's banner into the south for bowl games against Georgia's state champions.

Holyoke, Agawam and West Springfield also competed in Peanut Bowl games before the Massachusetts High School Headmasters Association instituted a ban against intersectional post-season football in 1953.

Now, at the age of 47, Scott Baldyga works as an independent filmmaker, based in Los Angeles. He returned to Western Massachusetts in January for the New England premier of "Misled," an independent film he re-wrote with Jonathan Stanley, its lead actor and producer. Baldyga also produced and directed the film and composed its score.

He had the film's New England premier at the Agawam Cinemas because he wanted his mother, Diane



The 1952 Peanut Bowl program. (DICK HALL PHOTO)



Agawam High School's Bill Keeley, left, and Dick Hall played in the 1952 Peanut Bowl. (DICK HALL PHOTO)

Baldyga, to be there with him to see it. She still lives in the Baldyga family home in West Springfield. Her husband, Dan, died eight years ago.

As Scott Baldyga prepares to concentrate on his Peanut Bowl project, he hopes to make contact with people who will share their memories of the games with him.

To that end, he has established a "Peanut Bowl" SEE BOWL, PAGE C6

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Memories" Facebook page online at [Facebook.com/peanutbowl](https://www.facebook.com/peanutbowl).

"Embarking on this quest with me is Joanna Cobleigh, Vinnie Ciancotti's daughter and my lifelong friend," Baldyga said.

"Our intention is to gather as much information and memories as possible about the five Western Mass. teams



SCOTT BALDYGA

the challenges they faced on and off the field, as well as a Bill Moge-type father-figure coach.

"Coach Moge turned a lot of lives around, including my dad's and my Uncle Vinnie's.

that participated and turn them into a script, then make the movie.

The film will focus on a few players and

that participated and turn them into a script, then make the movie.

It's a heck of an inspirational story. I want to make the movie in Western Massachusetts and share the legacy with the movie-going world," he said.

Baldyga is a graduate of Cathedral High School and Boston College.

He has been working in the film industry for 20 years. Prior to that, he worked as a professional musician.

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