

By Shelly Springborn

Larry Petersen has fond memories as Montcalm Community College's first basketball coach.

He was appointed to the position during the MCC Board of Trustees meeting on Oct. 10, 1967.

"We didn't have a gym," Petersen said. "We played anywhere we could.

"One night, we went clear to Blanchard just to practice," he recalled. "Stanton and Sheridan had gymnasiums where we practiced, too."

Home games were played at Central Montcalm and Greenville.

The team made its debut on Nov. 12, 1967, against Grand Rapids Baptist Bible College at Central Christian High School in Grand Rapids. It was the first of a 15-game schedule of which eight were played at the Central Montcalm High School gymnasium.

In an article from The Daily News dated Nov. 11, 1967, Petersen said he was optimistic about the team's ability, even though it was lacking in height.

"We will have to depend on speed both offensively and defensively," he said in the article.

Their work paid off with the Centurions downing Grand Rapids Baptist College 76-58.

It was the start of a three-year coaching run for Petersen.

The longtime Stanton-area resident, now age 85, said he doesn't remember all the details anymore, but he got a glimmer in his eyes when he talked about those years and how his experiences shaped his lengthy career in education.

Petersen was working as the local director of migrant education and one of the events for the summer program was to visit MCC.

"There was a lot of construction going on out there," Petersen recalled.

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