

EPH LEGEND – SHAUN MEEHAN '41

by Dick Quinn, Director Sports Information



On August 3, 2016, Shaun Meehan arrived in head football coach Mark Raymond's office with his son Matt and documents relating to his grandfather, John Shaun Meehan '41, and his standout football career at Williams.

Shaun Meehan had come to donate four framed letters and a contract from the Brooklyn Dodgers National Football League club sent to his grandfather "Shufflin' Shaun," a moniker bestowed by a *Williams Record* writer. Raymond told the Meehans that the documents would be displayed outside his office for all to see.

Wayne Wilkins '41 who had played baseball and football with Meehan's grandfather, was on hand to meet the Meehans in Raymond's office that day. Wilkins told the Meehans that "Shufflin' Shaun" made a big impression right from the start. He was a threat to run the ball, throw a pass, catch a pass, and he also kicked off and did the placekicking. Their team went undefeated in their freshman year.

In baseball, Wilkins said, "It seemed like half of his hits freshman year were home runs because we played on Cole Field and there were no outfield fences. He would hit one between the outfielders and then scamper around the bases before the outfielders could get the ball back into the infield. He was fast, strong, and just a stellar athlete."

Meehan noted that his grandmother had once shown him letters the Detroit Tigers had written to his grandfather.

"Baseball and Football Standout Offered a Pro Football Contract by the Brooklyn Dodgers"

"Shufflin' Shaun" grew up in nearby Pittsfield, Mass., and came to Williams after graduating from Choate. In his first football game at Williams he scored a touchdown and kicked a field goal in the Ephs' 23-6 win over Middlebury that led to the perfect 5-0-0 freshmen campaign.

"Shufflin' Shaun" also made a big impression in his first freshman baseball game. He had three hits, one of which traveled 400 feet and ended up as a triple because he had missed third base and was playing on a bum leg.

He was a consistent and strong varsity performer all three years in football and baseball, but it was his last three football games that displayed his varied talents.

In the sixth game of his final season the Ephs trailed heavily favored Tufts 13-0 at the half, but behind "Shufflin' Shaun" and a well-rounded attack that finally finished off some offensive forays into the Jumbos' end of the field, Williams prevailed 22-20. He had contributed a touchdown run and a field goal.

Wilkins remembers that with just over two minutes remaining the Ephs were some 70 yards from a touchdown, but they managed to put together a consistent drive that moved the ball to just inside the Tufts' 20-yard line. "With 30 seconds remaining we lined up for a field goal and I was the holder," Wilkins said. "The snap was true, the spot was good, and I think he kicked it halfway to the Taconic Golf Club and we won."

The next Saturday the Ephs hosted Wesleyan in their first Little Three encounter. Wesleyan entered having upset Amherst the week before, and the Cardinals were looking to lock up the Little Three title on Weston Field.

The Cardinals were dispatched 40-6 by the Ephs. With four minutes gone in the contest "Shufflin' Shaun" had delivered a 14-0 lead for Williams with his running, passing, kicking and a recovered fumble.

He had returned the game's opening kickoff 24 yards then ran for four more yards on the first play. When it looked like Wesleyan

might force a punt he threw a pass to Herb Holden, who outran Cardinal defensive backs to score, and "Shufflin' Shaun" converted the point after.

Next he kicked off and when the Wesleyan player fumbled the ball, he pounced on it. On the first play he tossed a scoring pass to Charles Brothwell and then converted his second point after. Seven plays and 14 points in four minutes took the wind out of the Cardinals' feathers, and the Ephs rolled to victory.

In the season finale at Amherst the Ephs had a chance to win the Little Three title outright and snap a 10-year losing streak in Amherst. Amherst notched the first score in the game, but the Eph defense made sure it was their one score of the day. Williams rang up 294 yards on the ground with "Shufflin' Shaun" leading the way, and his fourth-quarter 35-yard TD run snuffed out any chance of an Amherst comeback, giving Williams the Little Three title.

After his senior season "Shufflin' Shaun" was named the winner of the most prestigious Eph team award, the Belvidere Brooks Medal, presented to the member of the Williams College football team whose play during the season has been of the greatest credit to the college.

As it turned out he decided against signing the contract the Dodgers had offered him, instead joining the U.S. Navy and serving in World War II.

Returning from the war, he earned an MBA from UMass-Amherst and then worked as the accountant for the *Berkshire Eagle* in Pittsfield from 1946 to 58. He was Pittsfield's tax collector from 1958 to 66, and later went to Boston to work as an accountant for Aberthaw Construction Company. He died in 1981.

Of giving the documents to Williams, Meehan said, "It was extremely gratifying and personally rewarding to know my grandfather's hard work and legacy will be shared with the Williams College community."

