

March 9, 1986

(9)

"A Basket Ball Story"

It is 3:30 P.M. Sunday, March 9, 1986, and on April 2, 1986 I'll be 85 years young. I've had a nice afternoon nap and the sun is shining and I have a yen to write. So here goes.

When I was 13 I walked across the Chicago & Eastern Illinois (C.&E.I.) track which ran in front of our house 2 miles North of Kinmundy, Illinois, down the long dusty road and in to town to start my high school education. I probably wouldn't have gone, but our eighth grade teacher, Earl Morris, while teaching us at Shanghai country school (across the creeks and 2 miles North in the real country), had told us that when we got through high school we'd just know enough to know we didn't know anything. To me that was a great challenge for I already knew a lot and read everything I could get my hands on. Anyway, when I got to school I was told to get bloomers and a middy blouse and tennis shoes, as we'd be having gym in the downtown Opera House. Our High School Building wasn't so bad but no place for exercising. Soon we started and I was introduced to my first basket ball, and I've loved the sport ever since. I wasn't very tall and didn't play too well, but I kept right on. When I graduated from High School I was only 17 and couldn't yet get a job teaching, so my good buddy (Lela Swift Helpingstine) and I decided to go to Charleston (EIU) and learn some more. I had substituted many times for "absent teachers" while I was in H.S. and knew by then my longing to be a lawyer was changing over to being a teacher. So we boarded the old steam passenger train uptown in Kinmundy (remember that old I.C. station & Mr. Wormley selling us our tickets?). The train stopped at every town along the way and the wheels squealed and made songs for us as we went. We were really celebrating big, and sort of sorry to get off at that big station in Mattoon and find the interurban to swing us across to Charleston. We got there O.K. and walked down Sixth St. toward the college. Our trunks (mine with 50 glasses of jelly & a few home made clothes) were delivered later to Fourth Street, where we found a lovely lady, Mrs. Curtis, that rented us two rooms - one for cooking and one for sleeping. 'Twas well, for I liked to study in a room by myself. First thing I did was to touch the gas light and spoil it. I hadn't seen gas lights before. The landlady forgave and fixed it. She had tomatoes in her garden too, and let us eat all we wanted. I wanted many and

it helped the \$200.00 my Dad had borrowed on our home for my year in Charleston. What a year!

I played Basket Ball and Madge Connor, a beautiful girl that could hit the basket, was our star. Honestly, I was on the team (a guard and we couldn't run far on the floor those days), and we played Carbondale. When their boys team came they sent a girls team too. Of course Madge was the star, but I played the whole game too. When time out was called we had no place to go so just sprawled on the floor in front of the howling mob. But we rested and were ready to go again when the whistle called.

At the end of the year, when I was barely 18, head of the School Board, Ed Wormley, called me back to Kinmundy to teach in Seventh and Eighth Grades (in 8th for 3 forty minute periods while Polly Baggott taught in High School). Do you remember the Northeast upstairs room in the old building? It was huge and held one class in the back studying, while I taught the other in front - standing close to the students. Florus Carmean was always in the front seat, counting the buttons up the front of my long, blue serge dress, or something else just as important. He never got down to business until a Junior in H.S. (I heard later) and then did 4 or more years in 2. Anyway, I loved 'em all - good or bad. There was Scoop Schooley, who (I was informed) never did anything good for any teacher or for himself. But I found out he loved history and so did I so all went well. And Bliss Carmean (who tried to make Florus behave) and sweet Wilma Boughers and John Lee and Faye McLaine (later Brasel) and Mary & Pearl Shufeldt - I wish I could name them all but I'd run out of paper. In the evening I'd work until Miss Polly Bagott came to the door and said, "It's time to go home." Otherwise I might have worked all night. I'd walk home with her and on North down the long C. & E.I. track home. Our Opera House had burned down long before this; but we found places to keep that basket ball bouncing, and our boys - as well as my girls - were doing real well.

The long, wonderful year was finally over, and the \$455.00 I got for teaching the entire year paid off my \$200.00 debt to my father and financed my second year at Charleston. By this time it had advanced to a 4 year college but I was in the 2 year course; and when Grove Butler came looking for a history teacher for Glen Ellyn, Illinois Junior High, he visited my class and chose me. Another chapter in my life opened and it was wonderful. The people there were so interested in education. They invited teachers into their homes, they took us places - they loved us and we loved them. Pres. of the Board, Benjamin March (a big corporation lawyer

practicing in Chicago) and other board members came to visit me at school and watch me teach. (I had 2 March children in my classes.) My hands sweat but my voice was clear as a bell. Remember I was only at the end of my teen years. The other teachers were all older and so good to me. My principal, Margaret Simmons, (she was Irish) said I was the best teacher ever. She didn't expound on that but it pleased me and I did my best. I went there at \$1055.00 per year (base pay for all the teachers). Four years later I set the amount at \$1485.00 (the figure Evanston had offered me, as they wanted me). The board approved and I stayed in Glen Ellyn for one more year, as I had "found my man" and was getting married in June.

I almost forgot - this is a basket ball story. Glen Ellyn had a no-good P.E. teacher when I went there so I immediately volunteered to start a Girls' P.E. Class. There was no gym so we found an empty church. My girls played basket ball so well and were so interested in it all that the 2nd year I was there they hired a full time Girl's P.E. teacher. I watched them many times after that.

And then I got married and am sitting here now in another home, looking across to the Northeast at the fine house my dear husband built for me. That's where I raised my family, with a hoop in the basement and the basket ball bouncing all around. There were hoops on the garage too and even in the garage. My oldest son, Bud, was so busy helping his Dad in the ice and oil business that he wouldn't become involved in it at school until his Sophomore year. He's not far from 60 now but he has been involved forever it seems - first in his H.S. teams, then with Scott, and now David. It goes on and on.

Bud built a fine new home East of town and concreted a lot so they could play Basket Ball outside. Of course there are baskets inside too. Scott was a fine high school B.B. player and helped win trophies. But he was not quite tall enough for the college teams. He now has his degree and is working in his chosen accounting field but still finds time to go to the basket ball games. Especially since little brother David has grown to 6 ft. 1" in his Sophomore year and is a super ball player. The coach, Gary Shirley, had only one Senior and a Junior or two for his team this year so picked Sophomores for his varsity team. They have really "done themselves proud." They won game after game in tourneys and became the "darlings of the countryside." I have here on my table a stack of newspapers from all this section of the country praising them as they won the coveted Regional at Altamont. They played so hard against great odds but always came out on top. Even when

they played Vandalia and the broadcasters were so biased toward Vandalia. Well why not? Vandalia had won 9 straight Regionals and why not No. 10? Well, because Kinmundy was there with Doug Alberson and David Robnett and all those other good players. They game was tied time after time. In an overtime they were 50 to 50. And David Robnett got the ball Doug bounced to him and hit the basket just as the time ran out. Dave was saying, "Please, Please go thru." I was at home on radio yelling, "Oh God, put the ball thru." It went thru and Kinmundy won the Regional. Did I help?

Shall I go on? I'm hungry now and it's 5:20 P.M. and I haven't moved out of my chair Maybe I'll finish the story later.

6:35 P.M. Same day. They moved on to Vandalia for the Sectional and Kinmundy just couldn't hit so lost to West Frankfort. They couldn't have stood up to the Venice black boys anyway so it's just as well. From here on they enjoyed the games as sightseers. At Charleston another bright star "T-Town" Teutopolis started to shine. Their coach said he didn't really realize how great the Wooden Shoes were (they're large German boys and all good in every phase of the game). They won in Charleston and went on to the Finals at Champaign. Here they fought Hooperston to win by 15 points. Meantime Little Ohio up north way in Illinois with enrollment of 70 in H.S. was defeating West Frankfort with 700 in H.S. West Frankfort was 14 points ahead once but the Corn Jerkers of Little Ohio in their Blue and Gold never gave up and surprised everybody but their coach by winning over West Frankfort. Ohio didn't have much time to rest before the final game at 6 P.M. Their coach said they were tired and bruised but eager to fight on. The Teutopolis boys - the Wooden Shoes - much larger than the Ohio boys, came on strong and there was never much doubt that they would win. But even so they had to fight for it - you could never be sure. And the Corn Jerkers of Ohio had sold 3000 tickets - the whole county was behind them. I'll never forget the beautiful picture they made holding second place trophy. Nor the pom pom girls in their yellow and gold making an "avenue of color" for them when they were called out to play. It was an impressive sight. There is no doubt though that Teutopolis is really the A Champion of Illinois - they are great. But Ohio and Kinmundy haven't quit. Watch out for us in 1987! (See newspaper accounts in my trunk for full details.)

*(Excerpt from "My Story - Volume 1"
written by Lura Marcialene (Williams) Robnett)*

"Sequel to Basket Ball Story"

It goes on and on. The Effingham Daily News has been telling the whole story of our Kinmundy-Alma Hornets, featuring first the Patoka -K-A game where David Robnett made 32 points. (It's worth reading. You'll find those papers in my trunk, along with many towns round about.)

In the March 21, 1986 issue of *Salem Times Commoner* again Kinmundy-Alma was basking in glory. Three of our players were named to the All-Midland Trail Conference Team. Kelly Engel #3, David Robnett #9, and Doug Alberson #10, besides an honorable mention, Mark Seely. And Kinmundy-Alma was the only team in the conference with three players on the All-M.T.C. Sounds good for us.

In the same paper Salem picked the stars for Salem area with Skaggs and Cheatum of Salem as first two. But guess who were #3 & 4 - Kelly Engel and David Robnett of Kinmundy with #5 another Senior from Salem, Hollenkamp. Then they picked a Second Team and there was Doug Alberson in a good spot. Anyway, they don't seem to be forgetting Kinmundy-Alma yet and I doubt if they will for years. Come on boys, it's all out there waiting for you!

