

Shortridge Basketball-The Early Days

Written by Emerson Houck

As many people my age can attest there comes a time for downsizing. In the process it often happens that long forgotten treasures are rediscovered. Such was the case recently when my friends Tom and Gretchen Hall came across a marvelous booklet entitled "A history of Shortridge High School Basketball" from the very beginning until 1944. Tom had played quarterback as a Frankfort Hot Dog and again at Purdue where he had the misfortune to be on the same team as one Len Dawson. Tom's father, however, was a Shortridge graduate who had been a starting guard on the 1918 team before going off to the war. He was the source of the booklet that was published by the Daily Echo, the nation's very first high school daily newspaper, and written by student sports editor Nick Ricos. Knowing of my interest in the history of Indiana High School basketball and of my book on the topic "Hoosiers All" (available from the Hall of Fame gift store) The Halls gave the booklet to me and it is the preponderant source of the Shortridge material included in this article.

James Naismith, a Canadian teaching at the Springfield, Massachusetts YMCA College, invented basketball in December of 1891 as a way to fill the competitive void between football in the fall and baseball in the spring. Although some people suggested naming the game after its inventor the



current name was selected because the first goals were actual peach baskets hung from both ends of an enclosed, or "caged" playing surface...hence the name cagers applied to early players. The first public game of the sport was played on March 11, 1892. Dissemination of Naismith's original 13 rules for his game was made, naturally enough, to YMCAs across the country. The game immediately caught on in Indiana and it is generally believed that the first game played between two towns in our state was also the first such game played out-

side of the state of Massachusetts. On March 16, 1894 at the Crawfirdsville YMCA, the home team defeated the visitors from Lafayette, 45-21. Crawfirdsville High School was also an early adopter of the game and was extremely successful at it claiming several unofficial state championships before the IHSAA was formed and the first official tournament was held in 1911. The Athenians also won that, defeating the Lebanon Tigers by a score of 24-17. It was also in Crawfirdsville in 1906 that a blacksmith was asked to forge a rim from which a potato sack with a hole cut in the bottom was first hung on the backboard replacing the original peach basket.

Back to Shortridge. The school was established as Indianapolis High School in 1864. It was later renamed after its first supeintendent, Abraham C. Shortridge. (The first school yearbook to use the name Shortridge was printed in 1901. The 1900 yearook was titled Indianapolis High School Annals.) It was first located in the former Second Presbyterian Church building, which had become Circle Hall, on what is now Monument Circle. In 1871 the school moved to a larger facility at the north-east corner of Michigan and Pennsylvania which had first been built as the



Circle Hall, in the northwest quadrant of The Circle, served as the first home of the newly organized Indian School (photo courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society)



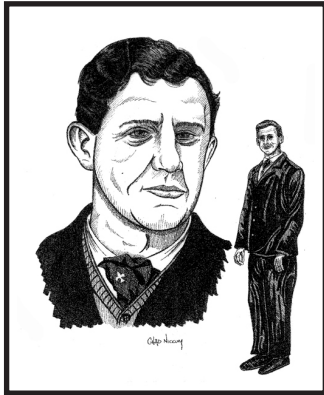
Present Shortridge Building

home of industrialist Robert Underhill in the 1830s. Underhill sold it in 1855 to the Baptist Church who remodeled the building

for use as a Girls Seminary which folded sometime in the 1860s. The first building designed and built as a high school was located on the same site in

1884 and a substantial annex was added in 1904. Both were razed in 1928 when the present building at 34th and Meridian became Shortridge High School's new home.

The game of basketball came to the school at a very early date. The first team, later to be known as the Blue Devils or Satans with a curious mascot called Felix the Cat, was formed in the fall of 1899. The coach was a Shortridge junior named Ralph



Jones who would stay on at the school until 1904 before going on to a truly illustrious coaching career than would span three decades and earn him recognition by the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame. His induction citation covers the highlights of that career.

Three games were played that first year and all three were won by the school we now know as Shortridge. Vanquished were Butler University twice, by scores of 12-4 and 17-16, sandwiched around a 6-3 victory over the local YMCA. An undefeated season! Unfortunately, although there would be successes in abundance over the years, there would never be another undefeated season. The 1901 Shortridge team broke even in six games, beating Butler twice and losing twice to the YMCA and initiating what would develop into an intense rivalry with Manual by splitting two games, the second won by a 23-20 count before 500 enthusiastic fans. The next year saw the blue clad boys win two, lose three and tie one. Manual was awarded the tie after winning the protest of a game that had gone in the books as a 22-18 Shortridge victory, Though not recorded by Nick Ricos The history of Basketball at Crawfordsville High School has this comment about the 1902 season:

CHS basketball teams started the 20th century by winning the unofficial State Championship six

times in the first ten years...The team of 1901-02 according to the 1902 Utopian..."was as successful as their predecessors, having never been beaten by a high school team." The only outside game CHS played that year was with Shortridge of Indianapolis who had already beaten Manual of Indianapolis. CHS claimed the championship that year by the fact that all other high school teams refused to play them...The CHS girls also played basketball in 1901-02 losing their only game to the more experienced Shortridge girls 12-11. (Author's note: We know the Shortridge girls claimed the 1905 State Championship and that their first girls team was fielded in 1901!)

The 1903 and 1904 Shortridge teams each finished at 3-4 after which Coach Jones moved on to coach Butler for a year before taking the reins at Crawfordsville High School. Coach Reiman replaced him at Shortridge and his only team regrettably went winless at 0-6. Coach McGee stepped in and his two years at the helm saw Shortridge go 3-7 and 2-5. Notably on the schedule were two games with Crawfordsville each year (Shortridge won just one) and a 25-20 win over the Kokomo Wildkats in 1907. With the exception of participation in the IHSAA sanctioned State Tournament Shortridge reverted to intramural basketball only from 1908-1917.



Game being played in the Shortridge gym in 1938

This booklet contains scores of every game played by Shortridge between the seasons ending in 1900 and 1944. That amounts to a total of 635 games and a winning record of .540. It includes 10 wins and only 4 losses against Butler, all games having taken place between that first season and 1906. In the only game played against Indiana University the Hoosiers managed a 23-18 win in

1903. In games played versus other high schools throughout the state the Blue Devils won 330, lost 271 and tied 2 for a winning record of .549. Included are seven Sectional titles, and one Regional championship, at Anderson in 1933. Unfortunately, in the 13 City Tournaments played between 1930 and 1944 the Satans were never able to emerge victorious, settling for runner-up six times with the closest losses com-

ing at the hands of the Washington Continentals in 1937 and 1938 by a single basket each time, 24-22 and 27-25. In this article I cannot cover every season in detail, let alone every game but there were several seasons that deserve comment. I will give the booklet that includes all of the scores as well as Nick Rico's interesting commentary and statistical analysis to the Hall of Fame so that it will be available for future research.

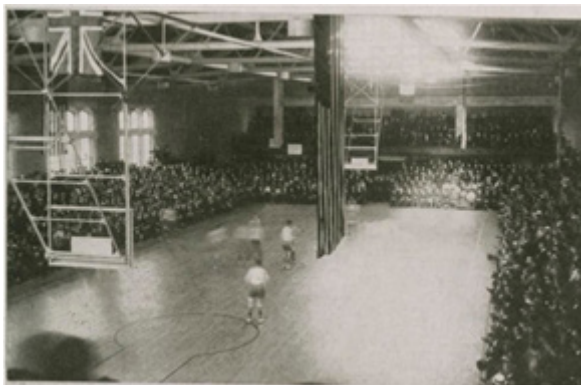
For the first State Tournament in 1911 the finals were determined by inviting one school from each of the state's then 13 Congressional Districts to come to Bloomington for the playoffs. Although Shortridge had abandoned interscholastic competition the school was still invited to represent the Marion County area Congressional District but was not allowed to go, nor was Manual, by decision of the Indianapolis School Board, leaving the field to 12 entrants. District tournaments were introduced in 1912 resulting in a Final Four in Bloomington of Lebanon, Orleans, Whiting and Franklin. Once again, Shortridge did not take part. The state's second champion was Lebanon, the Tigers prevailing rather easily over Franklin, 51-11. Shortridge did compete in each of the next two years. The 1913 team joined an expanded field of 36 schools with all games being played in Bloomington over two days in the old Hall. Shortridge defeated Brazil 37-9 before being eliminated by eventual runner-up South Bend (not yet Central), 29-11. That championship was won by Wingate, with Hall of Famer Homer Stonebraker, edging the Bears in a five overtime thriller, 15-14. In 1914 the tournament was again redesigned as a surprising 77 schools participated. All games were again played in Bloomington but the size of the field required the use of four facilities, the IU Mens and Womens Gymnasiums, the IU Auditorium and the local armory. Shortridge defeated Amo, 22-11, before losing a heartbreaker to Akron, 25-24. Wingate won

its second consecutive championship, the Spartans laying waste to the Anderson Indians, 36-8 in their sixth game of the tournament including a gruelling four games on the final day!

In 1915 Sectionals were introduced. There were 155 schools entered in the tournament, just over twice as many as the year before. The 14 Sectional winners came to Bloomington to determine the champion. Shortridge was sent to the Franklin Sectional where they defeated the Broad Ripple Rockets 30-17 before being unceremoniously ousted by the Southport Cardinals, 60-19. The next two years saw Shortridge sit out the Tournament. They returned to the fray in 1918 and a full interscholastic schedule was also played. Opponents included Rushville, Danville, Franklin, Richmond, Plainfield, Southport, Lizton, Brownsburg and Evansville, with a regular season record of 7-4. By this time there were 301 schools participating in the tournament which was reformatted with 20 Sectionals throughout Indiana. Shortridge was assigned to the Martinsville Sectional where they defeated New Bethel 27-9 before being sidelined by Morgantown, 20-15. The center on the 1918 team came from a well known and respected Indianapolis family, J. Rucklehaus, and of course Bob Hall was his teammate.



Indiana University's original Assembly Hall



1918 State Finals at IU Assembly Hall draws a large crowd!

In 1919 Myron Tatlock took over the coaching job from single year occupant Andrew Thoma for the first of his two seasons at the helm and the IHSAA raised the number of Sectionals to 22 to determine the finalists which were played at Purdue in Memorial Gymnasium.

For the first time the Indianapolis schools were not required to leave the city for their sectional assignment. Hall, which had been built in 1886 primarily as an auditorium for the performing arts

was to be the site. Located at the northeast corner of Delaware and Market Streets the hall was regrettably lost to fire in 1958 and is commemorated by the arch still standing near the City Market. The 16 teams comprising the field were Shortridge, Manual, Tech, and Broad Ripple, from the city; Acton Redbirds/Oreos and New Bethel Red Devils (now part of Franklin Central); Oaklandon Oaks and Castleton Comets (incorporated into Lawrence Central); Mt. Comfort Buccaneers (part of Mt. Vernon Marauders), New Augusta Red Devils (now Pike Twp.), Maxwell Lions and Westland Bears (later called Eden Flyers, both now part of Greenfield Central via Hancock Central Panthers); Chas. Fisher Tigers (first Hamilton Southeastern Royals, now back to Fishers Tigers), Cumberland (now part of Warren Central), Green Township (now part of Eastern Hancock Royals by way of Charlottesville Eagles); and Greenfield Tigers (now Greenfield Central Cougars).



Tomlinson Hall - First Annual Basketball Tournament in 1919

Shortridge played 20 regular season games and made it to the finals of that first Indianapolis Sectional where they lost to arch rival Manual, 25-9 after routing Greenfield 46-4 and edging both Tech and New Augusta, 15-14 and 15-13. Their final record was 14-10. For the first time schools such as Vincennes Lincoln, Huntington, Bloomington, Greencastle, Tipton, Thorntown, and Bedford had appeared on the schedule. Shortridge was truly playing comers from all over the state of Indiana. It should be mentioned that the captain of the 1919 Shortridge basketball team was Johnny Hennessey who was also one of the finest tennis players ever produced in Indianapolis with Davis Cup, Wimbledon and U.S. Open victories to his credit. Hennessey was ranked as high as Number 4 in the United States and Number 8 in the world.

Nineteen games were in the win column before the 1920 season ended with a Sectional final loss to Tech, 27-16. There were now 372 teams vying for the title in 26 Sectionals throughout the state. Memorable Shortridge victories were achieved over Muncie (not yet Central), 25-15; Shelbyville,

22-19; Greencastle 23-22; Rochester, 22-12; Argos 41-26; Wabash 41-26; Bloomington 19-17; Brazil 41-11; Vincennes 30-24; and Connersville, 33-14. Of the ten regular season losses incurred several were against recognized state powers such as Martinsville, 31-28; Hartford City, 26-20; Huntington 27-23; Bedford 29-25; Franklin 41-13; Tipton, 12-8; Lizton, 28-22; and Thorntown 31-18. The Satans were ready, willing and able to play anyone and everyone, from the larger schools such as Muncie to the small ones such as New Richmond (lost 39-17) and Pendleton (won 33-3).

In 1921 the IHSAA added Regional Tournaments for the first time as fully 394 schools entered the tournament. The plan now called for 32 Sectional winners to advance to 16 Regional sites for one game playoffs to determine what soon would be referred to as the Sweet Sixteen. The championship was moved to the original Indianapolis Coliseum where it would remain through 1924. Shortridge only won seven of 27 games for Coach Russel Julius. Noteworthy additions to the shedule were Cathedral (won 39-16); the Terre Haute schools Wiley (won 45-12) and Garfield (lost 27-14); Lafayette Jeff (lost 66-25); and Oolitic (lost 39-26). The next year was a complete disaster as Shortridge would only win one game for yet another single year coach, Frank Gorton, 35-24, over Wiley while losing the other 16 games played. Losses included Spiceland, 27-25; New Bethel 22-21; and Valley Mills, 24-22 in the Sectional. The powerful Vincennes Alices, in the midst of their record setting 35 game win streak laid it on the hapless Satans, 86-5(!) and the Lebanon Tigers registered a more merciful but nonetheless convincing 61-9 trouncing. A tough season for the Royal Blue and White and their fans.

Gradual improvements were made over the next two years as Shortridge welcomed Coach Enoch Burton to the job he would keep for six years with fans beginning to refer to the team as the "Battling Burtonians". The team went 6-13 in 1923 and 8-14 in 1924. One of the 1923 losses occurred in the second game of the season at Ft. Wayne, 8-7. The low scoring was attributed, in part at least, to the fact that glass backboards were used for the first time.

One memorable victory came at Manual in 1925. The favored Blue Devils were trailing at half time when a Manual fan proudly let her pet dog, all decked out in red and white, onto the floor. The dog promptly ran out to the center circle and settled in there quite comfortably to the delight of the Manual fans. As it happened a Shortridge student had brought her cat to the game and seeing the dog in the center circle quickly put some blue... perhaps a scarf that she had with her on a cold winter night... around her cat and placed it on the floor. The cat promptly ran to the center of the court and the dog immediately left the court to the delight of the Shortridge faithful. When the Blue and White came back to defeat the Redmen by a 35-29 count a legend was born. That Monday the Shortridge student body decided to have the cat become their mascot, and, being classically educated young men and women, selected Felix, Latin for cat, as the name of their new mascot.

These years had been but a prelude to the wonderful season that was to take place in 1925. Shortridge finished that year having lost only one regular season game, to power house defending state champion Martinsville, 45-23. That game had not been on the original schedule but was added to bring together what were widely believed to be the state's two strongest teams. The legendary Hall of Famer Glenn Curtis was the Martinsville coach and he had a freshman named John Wooden on his team who was destined to be a legend in his own right. The new Martinsville Gymnasium seating 5200 (the town's population was just 4800!) had just been opened as the largest high school gym in the nation. Trainloads of fans from all over Indiana and the Midwest had come to see this marvel. Both before and after that loss victories were scored in abundance by the Shortridge blueclads. Heading into the Sectionals season their record was 20-1. Early on Elwood, Morton, Broad Ripple, Seymour, Crawfordsville, Tech and Muncie were dispatched. Then the Brownsburg Invitational Tournament was captured with a 34-30 victory over Ben Davis and a 38-29 win over the hometown Bulldogs. Shortridge continued to roll with wins over Terre Haute Garfield, Brownsburg, Thorntown and Noblesville, before undergoing that one defeat by Martinsville. Regrouping, Shortridge scored impressive wins over Danville, Ben Davis, Mooresville, Manual, Elwood, Connersville and Lebanon, none closer than a six point spread. Five times the team scored more than 50 points in their regular season

games. The 1925 Manual game was played at the Fairgrounds Exposition Building and was believed to be the largest crowd yet to see a game played in Indianapolis, Shortridge triumphing in an exciting 22-20 game and thereby claiming the mythical city title. In the Sectional it was Shortridge 24 Ben Davis 21; 35 Valley Mills 9; 28 Tech 22; and 24-20 over Manual in the championship game. The Regional saw Shortridge raise its hopes for a Sweet Sixteen appearance by defeating Greenfield 34-26 but hopes were dashed when the Bearcats of Muncie won a decisive 37-19 encounter at the brand new 4800 seat "first" Wigwam in Anderson in a game officiated by a familiar name to Hoosiers, Birch Bayh. There would be no trip to the Fair Grounds Exposition Building where the finals would be held for three years, for the Blue Devils in 1925. As so often happens in a state with an abundance of highly skilled teams neither of the two early season favorites for the championship would even make it to the final game. Both Martinsville and Shortridge were sidelined by Muncie Central (the first usage of the name Central in their high school yearbooks came in 1923) who were in turn sent home by Everett Case's Frankfort Hot Dogs who claimed the title with a 34-29 victory over the Kokomo Wildkats in an all NCC final.

The 1926 season was a bit of a letdown until the Sectionals. After a just fair 9-6 regular season record the team seemed to find itself in the tournament. In the opening round Southport's Cardinals were ousted 31-27. This was followed by a scintillating victory over the Manual Redskins, 21-19 and an easy win over West Newton, 37-14. In the finals the Devils earned the right to cut down the nets by defeating Tech, 25-16. The run ended, however, with a tough 18-16 loss to the Summitville Goblins who went on to win the Muncie Regional that night. This was followed by three losing seasons, 10-11; 5-13; and 5-14. The IHSAA had introduced the now familiar 64 Sectional format followed by 16 Regionals in 1927. In 1928 the State Finals were moved to the nation's largest basketball arena, the brand new 15,000 seat Butler Fieldhouse just 2.4 miles from Shortridge's marvelous new building at 34th and Meridian. The Blue Devil basketball team also began playing in the fine new gym at the southeast corner of their new facility. In 1929 Lloyd Messersmith had become their coach.

It should also be mentioned that it was in the late 20s that the Shortridge team name became the Blue Devils, often mentioned in various sports col-

umns including the Daiiy Echo as the Satans. Blue Devils came about because many in the student body felt that although Felix the Cat was fine as a mascot something a little fiercer was needed for the teams. Students were asked to submit their nominations and the one selected by a school wide vote was Blue Devils, submitted by David Burns, a distinguished architect to be. David explained that he selected his nomination in honor of a French flying squadron (Les Diables Bleus) some of whose members had stayed at his home while in the United States on a fund raising mission during World War I. This is believed to also be the source of Duke University's team names.

Winning ways were resumed in 1930, 13-11, following which Messermith moved on to his alma mater, DePauw University, where he would become their Athletic Director. For the first time the Ft. Wayne South Side Archers appeared on the schedule, Shortridge winning, 22-10, as did the Peru Tigers, also a win, 34-15. Columbus ran up 69 points to Shortridge's 20, though, the most scored against the Satans since 1922. In the Sectional Shortridge defeated Ben Davis, 26-19, before being edged by Manual, 15-14.

In 1930 the largest score differential recorded in the first 20 years of the State Tournament happened at Logansport when the Twelve Mile Milers laid the wood to the Noble Township Knights (Cass County) by a 108-8 count. The next year the smallest total score took place when North Vernon's Panthers defeated its much smaller neighbor to the south, the Vernon Blue Devils, 3-0. These records still stand. One other factoid mentioned by Nick Rios involved the longest game played in the tournament which happened in 1935, a seven overtime marathon, Camden's Red Devils edging the Oracles of Delphi, 22-19 in the final game of the Delphi Sectional. This record stood until March 7, 1964 when the Swayzee Speedkings finally defeated the Liberty Center Lions, 63-61 after nine overtimes in a Regional semifinal game in the Marion Coliseum. One of the referees for that game was my friend Bill May whose invaluable book *Tourney Time* (also available from the Hall of Fame) deserves a place in every Indiana basketball fan's library.

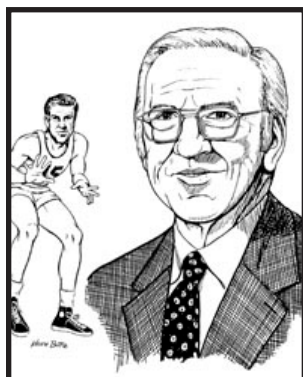
In 1931 a very respectable 18-6-1 record was placed in the books under new Head Coach Ken Peterman who would stay at the school in this position until the end of the 1946 season. Peterman's credentials were impeccable. After playing on Leb-

anon High School's fine and well coached teams he attended Franklin College where he played for two years on undefeated teams. His tenure at Shortridge was marked by highly competitive, well drilled teams who understood the game and played it with energy and intensity. Opponents learned that Blue Devils teams under Peterman's tutelage would be well prepared and a "tough out." He came to Shortridge from Terre Haute Wiley where he had led his team to consecutive Sectional championships in 1929 and 1930 generating records of 21-3 and 22-5. His Wiley teams had also captured two of the prestigious and hard fought Wabash Valley Tournaments which brought as many as 124 schools from both Indiana and Illinois together for two weeks annually from 1916 until 1972. At Shortridge in the years covered by this article Peterman's teams racked up 199 wins, 108 losses and one tie for a winning percentage of .648 against the toughest opposition the state could provide. That tie came in in Peterman's first year and was noteworthy in its own right. It occurred at Martinsville when the two teams had battled for three overtimes only to be deadlocked at 22. Peterman and Glenn Curtis mutually agreed that the exhausted players had been through enough and the game thus went into the books as a rare tie.

The Shortridge boys got off to a good start under their new coach, rattling off eight straight wins over Greenwood, Greenfield, Marion, Elwood, Tipton, Brownsburg, Bedford and Mooresville before that triple overtime tie in Martinsville. After that they dropped four in a row, to Seymour, Tech, Cathedral and Rushville, ending the slide 22-18 over Manual. Then came a pair of losses to Peru and Shelbyville. The regular season ended with wins over Terre Haute Garfield and Indianapolis Washington providing some momentum for what would be a deep run into the State Tournament. First came a Sectional championship with wins over Broad Ripple, 14-12; New Bethel, 21-15; Manual 25-22; and Southport 31-23. The Anderson Regional title was captured by defeating Danville, 29-18 and Alexandria, 22-18. It was on to the Sweet Sixteen for the first time ever where the Blue Devils ran into the defending champion Washington Hatchets and their Hall of Famer, Dave Dejernet in the first round in front of 15,000 enthusiastic fans at the Butler (not yet Hinkle) Fieldhouse. The Shortridge season ended in a nail biting 23-22 first round game when Dejernet scored four points in

the last 27 seconds, the final basket as time expired. Washington would not cut down the nets for the second year in a row, however, as they lost a tough one themselves by a single basket in the semifinals to the eventual champion Muncie Central Bearcats.

Peterman's second year at 34th and Meridian, though not as strong as his first, did result in another winning record for the Blue Devils. The season opened encouragingly with four straight wins over strong opponents. Greenwood was taken down 41-15; Greenfield overcome 30-15; Brownsburg upended 28-15; and Marion's Giants beaten, 36-25. These were followed by a close loss to Alexandria, 24-22 and a not-so-close loss to Tipton, 29-15. A victory over Mooresville, 23-18 was prelude to a trouncing at the hands of the Broncos from Lafayette Jeff, 45-16. The remainder of the season consisted of wins over Seymour, Crawfordsville, Rushville, Manual, Greencastle, Terre Haute Garfield and Washington, the latter three by very thin margins. The 23-22 win over Greencastle was particularly noteworthy as the Tigers were in the midst of a very impressive four year streak, winning 95 games from 1930 through 1933 while losing only 27. Shortridge losses came at the hands of Martinsville, Washington (in the City Tournament), Cathedral, Shelbyville, Rushville, Peru and Tech (in the Sectional). The final count showed 13 wins and 8 losses.



The 1933 season developed as one of the brightest lights in the Shortridge firmament. It marked the emergence of James "Sunny Jim" Seward as a genuine star, later to be recognized as a Hall of Famer. (See citation). At 6'7" Seward towered over most players

of the time and he became adept at the center spot, learning how to score from either side. In this, his senior year, he was truly a force to be reckoned with by every team on the Shortridge schedule. Seward was joined by three other Shortridge starters who stood 6' tall or more, a very imposing group indeed. Of four regular season losses, two were administered by Tech, one in a 40-38 thriller, the other in a not-so-thrilling

for Devil fans, 40-19 game in the City Tournament. Sweet revenge was to come in the Sectional final, 25-20. The only other regular season losses were to Marion by a single basket, 26-24 followed immediately by Tipton's 30-19 drubbing. The season began with three convincing wins over Greenwood, Seymour and Greenfield prior to the Marion-Tipton sequence. Following that, impressive wins were accomplished over Alexandria, Tech, Lafayette Jeff, Martinsville, Terre Haute Garfield and Manual in the city Tournament. After the loss to Tech an eight game winning streak gave the Blue Devils momentum heading into the Sectionals. Wins were recorded over Cathedral, 18-16; Shelbyville 25-23; Crawfordsville 26-18; Rushville 31-26; Manual 35-20; Greencastle 20-18; Bloomington, 25-23; and Washington, 28-26. Clearly the Satans knew how to win the close ones! The Sectional opened with a romp over Akron, 47-11 and another over newly formed Decatur Central (a merger of West Newton and Valley Mills), 40-15; and closer wins over Washington 19-15 and Tech 25-20. The Indianapolis Regional at Butler was won by defeating Greenfield and Pittsboro handily, 27-15 and 41-25. It was on to the Sweet Sixteen and a return to Butler Fieldhouse with sights set on bringing the city of Indianapolis its first ever state championship and placing it in the trophy case at 34th and Meridian. That goal seemed well within reach when Kokomo was dispatched 36-15 in the first round and Vincennes was sent home 38-26 shortly thereafter. The semi-final game was a hard fought one but Greencastle's Tigers ultimately prevailed in a heart-stopping overtime game by a 31-28 count, avenging the regular season loss. Martinsville went on to defeat Greencastle that night, also by three points, 27-24. Some solace for Shortridge fans came when Sunny Jim Seward was selected as the school's first and only Gimble Award winner.



Left to right: Bob Bryant, Joe Mooney, Ralph Burns, Harry Yelch, Dick Robinson, Jim Seward, Dick Dempsey, George Perry, Jack Berns, Jack Kitzmiller, Kenneth Peterman (coach).

Peterman's 1934 team did better than anticipated after losing Seward and three other starters from the previous year's squad to graduation. The Felixmen, as Nick Rico occasionally refers to them, won 14 games while losing six. Three of the losses came to a powerful Tech team which made it all the way to the final game of the State Tournament before losing to Logansport, 26-19. The Shortridge season started over briskly with wins over Greenfield, 27-25; Alexandria, 26-24; Greencastle, 21-17; and Marion, 35-19 before the first loss to Tech, 28-23. Lebanon was humbled, 36-5 before a loss came at the hands of Southport by a single point, 24-23. Impressive wins over the Seymour Owls, 31-26 and those pesky, Martinsville Artesians, 29-26 preceded the City Tournament. Shortridge received an unfortunate draw, losing a well contested first round game to Tech, 18-15. Following that the Devils beat Cathedral, 24-20 and lost to Shelbyville's Golden Bears, 23-16. Wins over Crawfordsville, 15-8; Rushville, 29-18; and Manual, 16-13, came before a loss to Bloomington, 30-20. The regular season ended at 12-5 when Shortridge defeated Delphi, 23-14. The Sectional saw the Satans upend Ben Davis, 30-23 and the Acton Blue and Red sidelined, 23-20 before the Blue and White met Tech for the third time, this one ending 23-16. (As a sidelight, the Acton teams were once actually called the Oreos! Later they were called the Redbirds and Wildcats as well.) It was in 1934 that Dr. George V. Underwood introduced a trophy to be presented to the player considered most valuable to the Shortridge varsity and reserve teams. The first varsity winner was forward Jack Berns.

The 1935 season was a similar story as Shortridge won a very respectable 15 games and lost only seven. The tables were turned on a Tech team depleted by graduation as Shortridge beat the Titans twice, 19-11 and 27-18, the latter in the City Tournament. The season started slowly with losses to Southport, 30-23; and Greenfield, 19-15, before the first win was recorded, over Greencastle, 23-19. The Oracles of Delphi then held the Satans to a single digit in a rough game, 14-9. Following that outing came an impressive win streak starting with the first win over Tech and followed by Lebanon, 31-25; Kokomo, 27-19; Martinsville, 18-16; Seymour, 32-24; and Tech again in the City Tournament. The streak stopped in the next round as Washington upended Shortridge, 36-24. Cathedral edged the Satans, 19-18, before the ship

was righted and another win streak begun: Crawfordsville, 26-18; Rushville, 18-16; Shelbyville, 29-24; Bloomington, 24-23; and Alexandria, 28-21. The regular season ended at 12-6 with a 29-25 loss to Manual. In the sectional Peterman's team defeated Broad Ripple, 34-18, and, in a battle of the underworld sent the Red Devils of New Bethel to the sidelines, 36-20. Shortridge then made it to the championship game by turning the tables on Manual, 27-16, before being edged by a strong Ben Davis team, 24-22. The Giants were beaten in the Indianapolis Regional by the Anderson Indians who would claim the State Championship the next week over another band of Red Devils, from Jeffersonville, 22-17, in the final Sweet Sixteen ever held. The second Underwood trophy was earned by guard Bill Kitzmiller.

In 1936 the IHSAA introduced Semi-state tournaments matching four Regional winners at four different sites around the state. Thus the era of the "Sweet Sixteen" which had brought all of the Regional winners together had come to an end. With only one returning starter that year the Satans got off to a somewhat expected slow start losing their first three games to Southport, 30-23; Greenfield, 24-16; and Noblesville, 22-17; before getting in the win column for the first time in double overtime against Greencastle, 28-24. Shebyville then won, 21-16, and Tech edged the Blue and White, 20-18, before their second win of the season came over Kokomo, 33-31. When Martinsville destroyed the Satans, 30-14, the record stood at a mediocre 2-6 heading into the City Tournament. Two wins in the tournament, Broad Ripple, 28-23, and Washington, 35-28, raised hopes for a first ever city title which were dashed by long time nemesis Manual, 30-23. Undaunted, the rejuvenated Devils reeled off eight wins in their next ten games with their only losses coming at the hands of Manual, 30-23, and Crawfordsville, 28-25. On the winning side of the ledger were Broad Ripple, 28-23; Washington, 35-29; Cathedral 34-19; Rushville 26-14; Lebanon 33-21; Bloomington 34-29; Manual 26-24; and Anderson 26-24. Shortridge was clearly ready for the challenge of the Sectional. And rise up to it they did: 36-29 over Decatur Central; 21-19 over Washington; and for the title 29-18 over Tech. The season ended, however, with a tough loss to the home team Indians in the first round of the Anderson Regional, 23-21. Still, what had started slowly wound up a very respectable 15-10. Named Underwood Award winner was forward Kelsey McDaniel.

The next year saw the Blueclads put together another winning record, finishing at 15-6. An impressive start resulted in six straight victories: Southport, 22-12; Greenfield 32-16; Noblesville 30-24; Greencastle 27-25; Shelbyville 25-24; and Bloomington 24-18. Two losses interrupted the streak, to Tech, 22-15 and Martinsville, 28-25. The first City Tournament game avenged the Tech game, 24-20, but Washington would once again dash the Shortridge hopes of finally winning that elusive crown, 24-22. The regular season resumed with wins over the Cathedral Irish, 27-16, and the Rushville Lions, 27-25, followed by a tough loss to the Crawfordsville Athenians, 25-24. Lebanon and Kokomo and Manual were next, all soundly defeated 43-16, 22-12, and 29-12. The Anderson Indians brought the team and its fans back to earth, 21-6, holding the Devils to the lowest point total since the Vincennes game in 1922. However, Shortridge bounced back winning two games in the Sectional, over Southport 18-13 and Beech Grove 36-20 before being sent home in a heartbreaking overtime loss to Ben Davis, 26-25, in the semifinals. Guard Jack Dawson received the Underwood trophy.

Shortridge was primed and ready for the 1938 season with high hopes riding particularly on the broad shoulders of their very accomplished center, Fred Krampe. This season a record 787 schools would contend for the state championship and Shortridge planned to be among those still competing deep into the month of March. The early season games reinforced that hope as the Felixmen placed six games in the win column while losing only two prior to the City Tournament. Victories were recorded over Noblesville, 37-27 and Greenfield, 23-20 before the first losses were incurred against Greencastle, 24-19. Then came a 21-16 win over Shelbyville and a 20-18 edging of Southport before Tech upended Shortridge by an equally close count of 26-24. A 26-24 trouncing of Bloomington and an impressive win over a strong Martinsville squad, 29-22, led to a first round win in the City Tournament, 30-23, avenging the earlier loss to Tech. The next round resulted in an all-too-familiar end to the City Tournament, a 27-15 loss to the Washington Continentals. Not once again in the regular season would the Shortridge team taste defeat as they reeled off an impressive eight victories. First came Cathedral, 36-32, and Crawfordsville, 39-30. Next was a Wizard of Oz run as Shortridge defeated the Lions and Tigers and Bears (well Grizzly Cubs), oh my, of

Rushville, 29-21, Lebanon, 28-25; and Franklin, 35-29. The last three regular season games were wins over Kokomo 39-31; Manual, 34-20; and a very strong defending State Champion Anderson Indian squad, 39-36. In the Sectional the Satans trounced Castleton, 44-19; beat Decatur Central, 41-35; edged Southport in a thriller, 24-23; and outlasted Tech in the rubber game, 32-29. On to Anderson and the Wigwam! In the first game there Shortridge sent the Brownsburg Bulldogs (or Cowboys, as Nick Ricos called them) to the sidelines, 46-33. The home team sent Fortville home, 23-18, in their first round encounter and regrettably were able to do the same to Shortridge that night by a similar score, 25-17. Once again there would be no state champion crowned from Indianapolis. Nevertheless, the Shortridge final record of 20-4 against the caliber of competition on their schedule was a record of which the entire school could be justifiably proud. Emory Schlake, who played guard for the Blue Devils, was named Underwood Award recipient.

With Dave Kramke being the only holdover starter from last year's 20-4 team the 1939 season, though another winning one, could not reach the heights achieved by its predecessor, finishing 12-8. The season began encouragingly with convincing wins over Greenfield, 45-27, and Noblesville, 44-16, followed by a closer victory over Greencastle, 24-19, before the first loss was incurred in a heartbreaker, 32-31 to Shelbyville. Wins over Southport, 32-21, and Tech, 37-28, were a precursor to a 32-26 loss to the Evansville Central Bears and a close win over Lafayette Jeff, 39-37. Shortridge was ousted in the first round of the City Tournament, again by Washington, again by two points, 40-38. Same old song, same old melody. Following that came wins over Cathedral, 38-23; and Columbus. 47-27; before the Devils were edged by Rushville, 32-31, and beaten by Crawfordsville, 39-34. Lebanon was trounced, 55-42, and Manual dispatched, 30-27,



*Dave Kramke
1939 Starter*

before the Satans lost their final regular season games to North Central Conference powers Kokomo in a close one, 32-30, and Anderson, 28-24. In the Sectional Shortridge won its first two games, 36-23 over Broad Ripple and 34-30 over Washington, gaining a measure of revenge over the Continentals before the Decatur Central Hawks ended the Shortridge season, 34-22 for a final record of 12-8. It was Dave Kramke who was awarded the Underwood trophy in 1939.

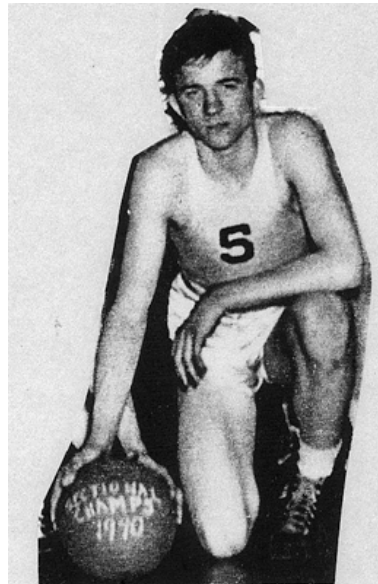
Once again Coach Peterman's 1940 team had only one carryover starter from the previous squad but the emergence of a junior forward named Dave Strack certainly helped fill the void. Before graduating in 1941 Strack would be Shortridge's team captain and MVP that year, attain All Sectional and All City awards, and be selected on the Indiana All Star team. All of this was prelude to captaining the University of Michigan basketball team for two years, playing in the East-West All Star game in Madison Square Garden and later coaching the Wolverines to two Big Ten Titles and two trips to the Final Four. Strack was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 1992.

The season started with two wins, over Greenfield, 36-28 and Noblesville, 35-19, before losses to Greencastle, 27-24; Shelbyville, 38-21; and Southport, 28-26, were registered. Tech was then edged, 28-26 before Martinsville dropped a 50-32 bomb on the Blueclads and Lafayette Jeff closed out the pre-City Tournament schedule with another loss for Shortridge, 32-27. In the City Tournament it was Shortridge humbling Howe, 42-16, before being ousted by Tech, 30-26. Four and six at the turn. Things looked much brighter after a 51-23 romp was placed in the books against Cathedral and the Columbus Bulldogs were beaten, 33-29. Rushville, however, dampened spirits a bit with a 27-22 win. Three straight victories followed the game with the Lions: 26-24 over Lebanon; 32-19 over Crawfordsville; and 32-29 over Manual. The regular season, though, ended dismally with losses to Kokomo, 42-36; and Anderson, 25-21. Nine and nine heading to Butler for the Sectionals. Shortridge raced through them in fine fashion, though: Broad Ripple's Rockets were

ousted 32-22; the Castleton Comets destroyed, 66-16; Manual's Redmen beaten convincingly, 31-22; and the nets came down to be placed in the Shortridge trophy case after the final game with the Hawks of Decatur Central went into the books as a 30-26 Blue Devil victory. The Indianapolis Regional was also held at Butler where Shortridge defeated the Pittsboro Burros handily, 43-22, before dropping the championship tilt to the Lapel Bulldogs, by a hard fought 39-36 count. That was hardly a bad loss at all as Lapel, a true Cinderella team, went on to win the Anderson Sem-state edging Rushville, 34-

33, and soundly defeating North Vernon, 42-25. The next week at Butler Fieldhouse Lapel lost the morning game by the narrow margin of 38-36 to Hammond Tech...and the Tigers were crowned Indiana State Champions that night following their much easier 33-21 win over the Blue Jackets of Mitchell. The Underwood Award went to Charles Benjamin.

With three starters returning, including Dave Strack, Shortridge fans had hopes for an even



Dave Strack - Shortridge MVP

better season and another Sectional crown in 1941, opinions shared by many objective prognosticators who expected the Blue Devils to be among the very best, perhaps the best, team in the state. The team did get off to a fine start. Wins were recorded in seven of the first nine games. Greenfield was the first victim, 30-28, followed by Noblesville, 40-28, before Greencastle won, 40-35. Then came wins over Shelbyville, Southport, and Tech before Martinsville won a 32-25 contest. Wins over Lafayette Jeff, 32-27, and Cathedral, 46-27 prepared the Satans for the City Tournament where they defeated Broad Ripple 46-27 before losing to Tech, 34-26. Three close losses then came at the hands of Columbus, 32-31; Rushville, 37-35; and Crawfordsville, 31-28 before Shortridge put the Lebanon and Manual games in the winning column, 44-40 and 35-20. Madsion County teams ended the Shortridge reglar season on a

low note, Lapel, 36-29, and Anderson, 35-30. In the Sectional at the Tech gym Shortridge did win two games, over the Lawrence Central Bears, 44-18, and the New Augusta Red Devils, 33-27, before incurring a season ender at the hands of Decatur Central's Hawks, 34-28. Once again it was proven how difficult it is to predict who will emerge as state champion in an environment as highly skilled and competitive as the Indiana high school tournament. In addition to his many other awards Dave Strack was also chosen to receive the Underwood Award.

Nine months after the end of the 1941 season the world was turned upside down. On December 7th, "A day that will live in infamy" the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the future of many young men, athletes and non-athletes alike were changed forever. Perspectives on what mattered and didn't in life were distinctly altered. Indiana high school basketball was changed for at least four years but who knew then how long it might have been. Still, life went on throughout the country. Sacrifices were made by all, family tragedies came with heartbreaking frequency to all too many Hoosiers and Americans everywhere.

Basketball and other sports were important to the morale of the country throughout World War II. They provided a necessary release from the unavoidable tension of the unpleasant circumstances the nation found itself coping with. Clearly the situation domestically was not of the level created by the combat encountered by citizens of many other nations but it was tangible and real nonetheless made acute by concerns about the young men and women "over there". So basketball in Indiana and elsewhere was encouraged and proved to be a valuable tonic.

The Shortridge season in 1942 was not as strong as had been the case for quite some time, coming in at 4-14. The only wins registered were over Columbus, 29-24; Howe, 22-21; Rushville, 42-30; and Manual 39-26. Even more importantly, as recorded by Laura Gauss in her excellent and definitive book on the school entitled Shortridge High School, 1864-1981 "it may have been the top high school in the country during World War II for student-led war bond drives. A spectacularly successful drive resulted in the sale of more than \$1.3 million in war bonds, "enough to purchase, in addition to a pursuit plane, two B-17 flying fortresses, which were appropriately christened Blue Devils." Guard Bernie Casselman received the Underwood

trophy.

In 1943 the Shortridge five did give their fans something to cheer about. With two starters returning a final record of 12-9 was achieved. The first four games were won over Greenfield, 32-30; Greencastle, 36-30; Shelbyville, 27-26; and Southport, 33-29, before the streak was ended by Ben Davis, 36-33, followed by a second loss, to Tech by a 35-19 margin. Next came wins over Cathedral, 46-37 and Washington, 38-29, before Columbus and Manual dropped the Blueclads, 33-26 and 41-34. Shortridge took the Broad Ripple Rockets to task, 40-30, before three losses were incurred, 40-29, to Howe; 42-33, to Crawfordsville; and 35-26 to Lafayette Jeff. The Devils returned to the winning column by upending Manual, 35-26; edging Martinsville, 31-28; and getting by Lebanon, 32-20 only to end the regular season on a losing note to the Anderson Indians, 32-27. This year marked the first year that the Crispus Attucks Tigers, who would one day bring such glory to the city and the state, were allowed by the IHSAA to compete in the sectional tournament. Who would their first opponent there be? None other than the Shortridge Blue Devils with whom they would have so many historic games in the not-too-distant future. (For a detailed account of the wonderful rivalry between Shortridge and Attucks in the memorable 1959 season and the emergence of the legendary Oscar Robertson on the scene see Chapter...of Hoosiers All.) That first game saw Shortridge emerge victorious by a substantial margin, 44-22. After sending the Beech Grove Hornets back to the hive, 39-26, Shortridge was eliminated by the Lawrence Central Bears, 35-33, for a final record of 12-9. Ft. Wayne Central won their lone state championship that year, defeating Lebanon, 45-40. The 1943 Underwood trophy went to forward Bruce Hilken.

The last season covered by Nick Rico was 1944 and it was a good one for his Shortridge Blue Devils who began with three impressive victories, over Greenfield, 47-29; Greencastle, 36-12; and last year's nemesis, Lawrence Central, 34-27, before Southport edged the Blues, 25-23. Back on track the Devils sneaked by Shelbyville, 46-44; dropped Ben Davis, 43-33; routed Tech, 37-22; and defeated the Irish of Cathedral, 34-22. They were 7-1 at this point, but Anderson put an end to the four game win streak in no uncertain terms, 41-25. After beating Manual, 34-23, Shortridge lost their third game of the year, to Howe, 33-28. Another streak began with a 37-33 victory over

Broad Ripple and continued with wins over Crawfordsville, 34-24; Martinsville, 23-21; and Manual, 27-25. Losses to Lafayette Jeff, 28-23; and Lebanon, 46-31, were followed by a 50-30 trouncing of Washington to end the regular season at 13-5. In the Sectional the Devils started by sending the Decatur Central Hawks home, 36-30; eliminating Southport's Cardinals, 35-32; and destroying the Greenclads of Tech, 50-33. "The final game of the tournament" in Nick Rico's words "was the most sensational played in recent sectional history. Coach Lewis Gilfoy's Howe Hornets grabbed the tilt and the crown with a well earned 53-48 decision. Both teams played a firehouse brand of ball...the lead changed seven times and the score was knotted on five occasions... the Blues finished their season in a blaze of glory." Multiple sport athlete Cecil Freihofer, whom I was fortunate to know at Eli Lilly & Co., was the final Underwood trophy winner named in this booklet.

Nick concludes his historic work on an optimistic note: "Thus brings to a close our running account of Shortridge cage activities...we call attention to Coach Roy Anderson's frosh whose teams feed the reserve and varsity machines. Through a unified coaching philosophy the future glows bright." And bright it would be with wonderful seasons under Cleon Reynolds in the fifties, the intense rivalry with Crispus Attucks, the four year stretch from 1967-1970 when George Theofanis' Blue Devils racked up 85 wins against just 20 losses against the best teams in Indiana, including Runner-up for the state championship to the Gary Roosevelt Panthers in 1968, and the 22-2 record for Coach Dan Thomas in 1973. Names such as John Hollett, Jim Loer, the three Williams brothers, Herschel Turner, George

Pillow, William "Bo" Crain, Oscar Evans, Clarence Crain, Charles Jordan and several others were in that bright future Nick Ricos prophesized. I hope he enjoyed those years as much as I did.

One final note about Nick: At the time his booklet was published, having graduated from Shortridge in 1944, he was in the United States Air Force stationed at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi. During his high school years,

in addition to his yeoman work on the Daily Echo he was also President of the Shortridge chapter of the National Honor Society, President of the Press Club and "received many other honors." The school principal was a wonderful man and educator named J. W. Hadley whom I got to know personally when my mother was teaching art there. His final sentence in the foreword to this booklet is indicative of the man and the school:

"There were years of defeat and seasons of great success, but through it all will be found the story of athletes of character and a loyal student body. Both are characteristic of Shortridge."

Emerson Houck
March 2017

