

# BOXSCORE

A Publication of the Indiana High School Basketball Historical Society

IHSBHS was founded in 1994 by A. J. Quigley Jr. (1943-1997) and Harley Sheets for the purpose of documenting and preserving the history of Indiana High School Basketball

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## THE 1959 INDIANA ALL-STARS

by

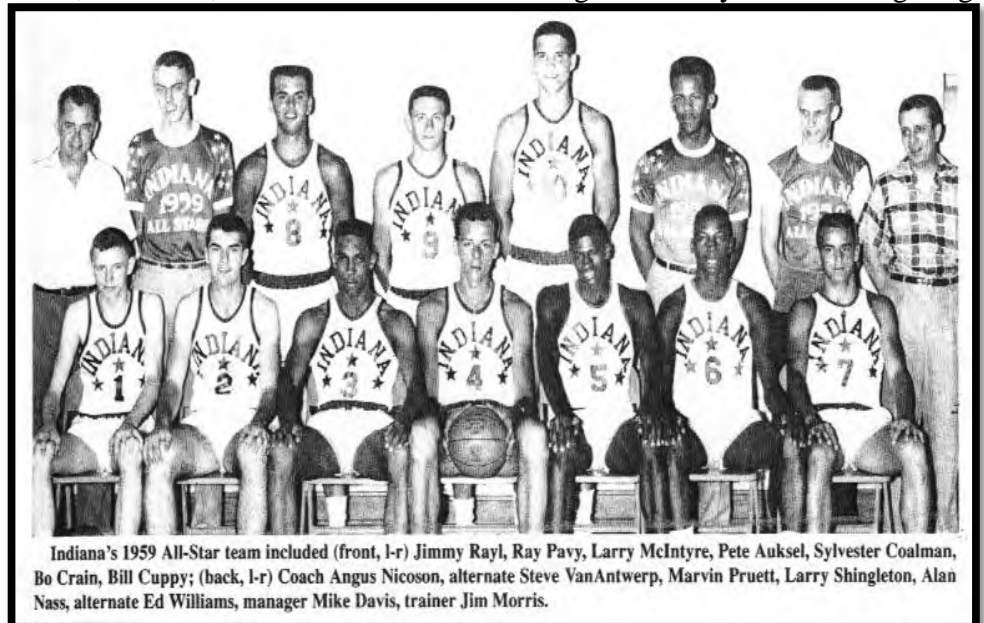
Cliff Johnson, Editor

Including this article, *Boxscore* has recounted for its readers all the Indiana All-Star team selections and annual classics that were played

against the Kentucky All-Stars from 1947 to 1959, inclusive. Beginning with our next issue, we will present the earlier classics that begin with the first All-Star selection and the accompanying game that was played on Friday, Aug. 18, 1939. Afterwards, all the rest of the annual events through 1946 will be recounted in subsequent issues. It is noted, however, that in 1943 and

would like to be advised by our readers whether sufficient interest exists to continue summarizing these annual classics on into the 1960s.

In mid-June 1959, two games were played between Indiana and Kentucky, just as in the four previous years. The first was at Louisville, the second at Indianapolis. The Indiana team was being led by 6-1 long-range



Indiana's 1959 All-Star team included (front, l-r) Jimmy Rayl, Ray Pavy, Larry McIntyre, Pete Auksel, Sylvester Coalman, Bo Crain, Bill Cuppy; (back, l-r) Coach Angus Nicoson, alternate Steve VanAntwerp, Marvin Pruett, Larry Shingleton, Alan Nass, alternate Ed Williams, manager Mike Davis, trainer Jim Morris.

1944 no games were held, owing to wartime travel restrictions. As a concluding note on the subject, we

sharpshooter Jimmy Rayl from state runner-up Kokomo. Rayl had earlier been voted Mr. Basketball for 1959.

Additional stalwarts on the team included 6-5 Sylvester Coalman from South Bend Central's 1957 state champions, 6-6 Pete Auksel from East Chicago Washington, 5-11 Larry McIntyre from 1959 state champ Indianapolis Crispus Attucks, and 6-2 Bo Crain from Indianapolis Shortridge. Other members of the team included 6-1 high-scoring Ray Pavy from New Castle, 5-9 Larry Shingleton from Madison, 6-2 Marvin Pruett from Springs Valley, 6-7 Alan Nass from Huntingburg, and 6-1 Bill Cuppy from state finalist Logansport. Angus Nicoson, the cagey Indiana Central College coach, was once again serving as the Hoosiers' coach.

The Kentucky All-Stars featured 6-2 Pat Doyle (Mr. Basketball there) from state champ North Marshall, 6-5 Julius Berrye from Lexington Dunbar, 6-0 Leland Melear from Louisville Manual, 5-10 Bill Bradley from Louisville Central, and 6-4 Louis Stout from Cynthiana. Fellow team members included 6-4 Don Ringstaff from Livingston Central, 6-0 Bob Barton from Covington Holmes, 6-6 George Atkins from Hopkinsville, 6-5 Bob Rice from Sandy Hook, and 6-2 Bert Greene from Olive Hill. Gene Rhodes, former star at Western Kentucky University and serving as 1958-59 coach at Louisville St. Xavier, was assuming the reins for the Kentucky All-Stars.

The first game, at Louisville's Freedom Hall on June 20, in front of 10,500 fans, went to Kentucky by the final score of 86-81. Kentucky led for the whole game, while displaying a surprising mastery of the backboards. Berrye alone snatched up 17 rebounds, while scoring 20 points. He was ably matched in points with another 20 by Doyle. Melear and Bradley, speedy guards, contributed 19 and 16, respectively. While it was a Bluegrass night from

start to finish, the bruiser Coalman and the sniper Rayl kept it within reach for the Hoosiers by netting 37 points between the two of them. Some last minute heroics by Rayl nearly turned the game around as Indiana pulled to within a single point of Kentucky after trailing by 10 late in the fourth quarter. But Doyle's final field goal, a critical rebound, and two free throws, put the game on ice for the Bluegrass squad.

The second game, played a week later at Butler Fieldhouse, was a stunning reversal of fortune for the Hoosiers as they pounded out a ten point margin for the win. Coach Nicoson's decision to neutralize Kentucky's prior game rebounding dominance by crowding the defensive keyhole area with 6-5 Coalman, 6-6 Auksel, and 6-7 Nass worked to perfection. It forced Kentucky to spread its offense and attempt longer shots. Indiana grabbed an overwhelming 39 rebounds to Kentucky's 20, in this game. Hoosier marksmanship was also on display, with Rayl arching in seven long range missiles and sinking 8 of 10 free throws for a game-high 22 points. Fiery Larry McIntyre put in 9 of 16 from the field, Auksel was 7 for 13, and Bo Crain made 7 of his 9 attempts. Indiana shot just shy of 50% from the field, which was a rare feat in those days. Kentucky was led by Melear and Berrye with 16 and 17 points, respectively. The final score was 88-77, which split the two-game match-up at one apiece. By this time, the Hoosiers had won 18 of the 23 games played in the now two-decades-old classic.

#### MEMBERSHIP NOTES

IHSBHS membership continues to be healthy. The roster shows a total of 126 active and paid-up subscribers, plus about 25 dues delinquencies. The HOF's list of

contributors appears to be holding steady too, so interest in Indiana's basketball history seems to be holding firm. Unfortunately, IHSBHS lost a few people to the grim reaper last year, including Ralph Pederson, Don Schwartkopf, and Pat Hennegan, so our roster update news isn't entirely positive.

The following is a list of individuals who are recorded as having joined our ranks in 2016. Please advise either Rocky or Cliff, if we've missed any new members.

Trent Anderson, Wilmette, IL  
 Mark Buxton, Springfield, IL  
 Don Chastain, Mitchell, IN  
 Scott Combs, Pulaski, IN  
 Richard Gill, Suwanee, GA  
 Richard Helton, Shaker Heights, OH  
 Jerry Lewis, Hilton Head, SC  
 Carl Miller, Thorntown, IN  
 Jeff Rasley, Indianapolis, IN  
 Rich Roberts, Indianapolis, IN  
 Bob Robinson, Barre, VT  
 William Schooler, Delphi, IN  
 Dick Stevens, Debary, FL

#### A NEW BOARD MEMBER

Hugh Schafer, a charter member of IHSBHS going back to its original inception in 1995, has been elected to the Board of Directors. He replaces Bill Ervin, former president of IHSBHS, who resigned from the board recently in order to tend to family obligations. Hugh has been a regular member as well as a frequent contributor to Boxscore contents for 22 years now. He continues to be active in Indiana basketball history research these days. A former basketball performer for Freelandville High where he graduated in 1961, Hugh now resides in Vincennes after concluding a lengthy career in high school coaching and teaching. Many honors have been bestowed upon him for those services over the years.

## PLUMP, AT 80, REFLECTS ON GOOD TIMES AND BAD

by

Mike Lopresti\*

The skinny guard who became immortal at 17 turned 80 last Sept. 9. The Milan story might never grow old, but time has moved along for Bobby Plump. It is autumn now for the kids from 1954, and the most famous of them all sat in his office the other day and talked of life as an imminent octogenarian. He has come so far from the house in Pierceville with no running water, or—until he was 13—electricity. The shy kid who figured anybody from the big city had to be smarter. “I guess the best thing I can say about being 80 is, I’m still here. There’s been a lot of pleasures, a lot of good times, and a lot of bad times,” he said. “When you come from a background like I did, you appreciate things. I’ve been fortunate enough to be able to appreciate an awful lot of things. Hitting 80, I honestly don’t think about death. I’m not afraid of it; it doesn’t scare me. I’ve seen enough of it.”

In his office are the trappings of a fairy tale: A huge team picture of the 1954 Milan state champions, a poster from “Hoosiers,” the working tools of his career in insurance and financial advising. Symbols of a life richly lived. If there were an Indiana basketball Mount Rushmore, Plump would be on it, staring at us from between Oscar Robertson and Larry Bird. But there has been more than the legendary jump shot and what followed it—the million autographs, handshakes, stories retold and smiles eagerly flashed. It has not all been Hollywood fantasy and clear-blue skies. The core of Bobby Plump’s identity is victory, but there is also heartbreaking loss.

“A lot of things have happened,” he said. “None of them were easy.” One brother was gone at 53, another

at 55, his father at 66. Bobby is the last male in the family standing. “I thought when I reached 70, I’m on free time,” he said. He was only 5 when his mother died. He helped bury a sister two weeks ago, leaving only two of the eight—he and 85-year-old sister Ginny—from the Plump family of Pierceville.

His marriage with Jenine—the girl he met by chance at a dance when both were with other dates—has lasted 58 years and produced three children. He was in Evansville on business in 1991 when she called to tell him she had just returned from the doctor’s office, and the diagnosis was breast cancer. Jenine vowed to beat the disease, which she did. “She came up with a thing that I’ve used with a lot of people who faced cancer. I’ll never forget it,” he said. “She said, ‘Cancer is a word, it’s not a sentence.’”

A lot of personal trials are on that list. Plump had one more to add, in a halting voice. “Joshua ... the grandson ...” Then he paused and took off his glasses and fought the tears that still come to a mourning grandfather. “I’ve found that, the older you get, the emotions aren’t as stable.”

Five years ago, he lost his grandson to depression and suicide. In a life so brightly lit, there has not been a darker day. “It’s harder to talk about it now than it was then. I think the thing that got me through that was just realizing how my father dealt with things in general. I never heard him raise his voice. I never heard him cuss. He kept things even.

“When my dad died, I could get through the funeral, but it was more difficult to talk about it later. I don’t know what it is about emotions.” But no somber moment lasts for long. Soon enough, there is the smile again, the easy laugh--Bobby Plump being Bobby Plump. After all, that’s been his mission since 1954. To so

many, he will forever be the fearless Milan Indian, delivering a Cinderella story for the ages.

He was once on a business trip with a colleague and after three days of watching strangers come up and glow at meeting Plump—“Are you THE Bobby Plump?”—the man said it was no wonder Bobby was always happy, amid such lifelong adulation. All those people who never forgot, they’re everywhere. “I had never even thought about that, but I think that is the thing that has helped me,” Plump said. “People have gotten me through a lot of things, even though they didn’t know me. They didn’t allow me to get down. If I would have been a recluse and shut up, I probably couldn’t have survived. “One of the worst things that happens to people is, when tragedy strikes, they have a tendency not to want to talk to anybody. And I never had that option.”

So in a way, the state championship game from so long ago is a gift that keeps on giving. That and the family he cherishes have made the fairy tale last, even on days it didn’t feel that it would. Now 80 beckons and maybe he can’t cut down trees or fish or work around the house like before--too little energy and too much back pain. Maybe he still has to take eight prescriptions, going back to the heart attack and open-heart surgery in the 1990s. But he is still in the office every day, even on weekends. He is still Bobby Plump, taking an incandescent look at life. He knows he has many blessings to count: that he double-dated with a friend who brought Jenine to a dance; that he chose Butler—partly because bigger schools scared him—and earned an important supporter and adviser in Tony Hinkle; that he found insurance and financial advising so fulfilling (he sold his first policy on his 27th birthday; that insuree is still alive

and still has the policy); and that the shot in 1954 went in. It meant the spotlight for life, and his teammates have never begrudged him for it—another blessing.

He has shared his life with a gazillion strangers, even though he was once terrified of public speaking. He was invited to give his first talk only weeks after the '54 championship, and was so fearful, he asked a couple of Milan teachers for help. They advised him to open with a joke. He didn't know any, so they gave him this one: Two guys were playing golf, and one's ball came to rest on top of an ant hill. He took a swing and whiffed, while wiping out a third of the anthill. He swung again, same thing. Then he swung again, same thing. That left two ants, and one asked the other what they should do to survive. The other ant answered, "We need to get on the ball." The joke bombed, and he never told it again. Twenty years later, he was at a corporate function in California listening to a \$10,000 motivational speaker. Halfway through the talk, the high-priced orator began a joke: "There were these two guys playing golf ..." Plump laughs deeply when he retells that. He laughs deeply at most things, and why not? "I don't know how anybody could have had a better life," he said. He pulled out a folder with index cards and aging papers—notes from all the talks he has been asked to give going back to the 1950s. It's a testament to a public affection that has never died.

An 80th birthday seems a good time to ask a man what he hopes his legacy will be—something more than being the player who gave the world Jimmy Chitwood. "I'd like for people to say, 'He lived a good life, and anybody who has met him was maybe a little happier for the fact he has been in their life. I hope they say that I cared for people and tried to

help where I could. But it's important for them to know luck has an awful lot to do with this. It's not something that I set out to do. It just happened."

And some of it has been a lot harder than that jump shot against Muncie Central.

*\*Mike Lopresti is a lifelong resident of Richmond and a graduate of Ball State University. He was a columnist for USA Today and Gannett newspapers for 31 years; he covered 34 Final Fours, 30 Super Bowls, 32 World Series and 16 Olympics. His syndicated column appears weekly. He can be reached at [mlopresti@ibj.com](mailto:mlopresti@ibj.com).*

### COMMENTARY ON SEATING CAPACITIES AT ANDERSON, MUNCIE, AND NEW CASTLE

by

**Cliff Johnson, Editor**

*This article recaps a dialog I recently had with Doug Bradley, a long time IHSBHS board member. Doug is a virtual walking encyclopedia on Indiana high school basketball history, especially as it pertains to state schools and related statistics. One of his specialties is old high school gymnasiums and their seating capacities.*

D.B. recalls that the Anderson Wigwam's publicly acclaimed seating capacity at the time it was constructed in 1961 was 8,189. He declares that this number was used for its first two years and probably for several years after that. However, he believes there is reason to suspect that this simply was an estimate based upon the number of tickets sold at the Indians' ballgames (nearly always sellouts in earlier years), rather than a true seat count. The issue is further clouded by the fact that there was a large built-in stage at one end of the gym that

could accommodate about a thousand added spectators whenever folding chairs were set up. Using those added seats, sellout ballgames typically were attended by 9,122 fans. For several decades, the Wigwam stood as one of the two largest indoor playing arenas in the entire nation—probably in the entire world—designated specifically for high school basketball. There were larger arenas, of course, but those were built for college or professional-level competition.

Occasions arose in subsequent years when the total number of tickets sold at presumably "sellout games" was reported in the local Anderson newspaper as 8,996. Other figures may have appeared in print, as well. But as the Wigwam began to experience drops in attendance as the years wore on and the golden age of Hoosier basketball did a disappearing act (especially after multi-class basketball came on the scene in 1997), it became evident that the gym's days were numbered. Just as it was appearing that demolition day might be right around the corner, D.B. decided to take a drive to Anderson and see if he could execute a physical count of the seating capacity, to settle the unsettled issue. His built-in seat count came to 8,240. With the stage floor maximum seating capacity added on, there was room for 9,122. These figures indeed made it one of the largest high school basketball arenas (if not the largest) in the United States. But the Wigwam closed its doors in 2011, and only vacant echoes remain today.

Controversy has arisen as to whether Anderson's Wigwam or the New Castle Fieldhouse has the largest seating capacity of any high school gymnasium. It is generally recognized by most "official" sources that New Castle owns that honor, with a reported capacity of

9,325. Its gymnasium was completed in 1959, two years earlier than Anderson's, and so was bestowed that honor right from the beginning of its scheduled games—when there could be no question about that claim. D.B. tried to settle that controversy recently, too. On October 16, 2016, at 9 a.m., he walked into the transportation and maintenance building at New Castle's high school and asked if he could take a look at the old bleacher section that once served as temporary seating for the Fieldhouse. The seats in that section had always been included in the total seat count, even though an ongoing dispute over the actual number of seats existed. There was a difference of 76 seats between the bleacher drawings and the school's apparent counting of those seats. Not only that, but the bleacher seats were not usually all set up for use in the school's games.

D.B. is pretty certain about the seat count variation at New Castle because he has actually seen the architect's drawings. Ralph Legemen, the architect for this facility as well as many others across the nation (many below ground level), had prepared the seating charts and had designed those bleachers for temporary use, when necessary, at the facility's corners. However, D.B. recalls attending the regional there in 1997 which (as always) was a sellout, and saw no corner bleachers in use. They may have rarely been installed, if ever, perhaps owing to the difficulty of the work involved in installing and dismantling them. This uncertainty may call into question how many seats were actually available to spectators at New Castle. D.B. strongly suspects that the Anderson gym housed more spectators than New Castle's did during the period that both were simultaneously in use, from 1961 to 2011.

The results of D.B.'s research on this subject have bothered him. He indicates that thirty years ago his findings, if put into print, would in some minds have constituted blasphemy. "But today, nobody cares," he says. D.B. hates to see inaccuracies in print. That's perhaps the reason for his e-mail handle that contains the word "truth." It might also be why he associates with IHSBHS.

Another of the recognized largest high school gyms in the state is at Muncie. It has a long and glorious history. However, D.B. says that its seating capacity may never be known for sure until someone, someday, comes across the original architect's blueprint—if it still exists. The facility was erected in 1928 and originally was reported to have a seating capacity of 6,500—the largest in the nation at the time. After subsequent modifications and re-arrangements were made, the total number became 7,635. It has experienced many, many, sellouts over the years of course, but those were always reported to the press as the total number of tickets sold—not the number of seats. To D.B.'s knowledge, a seat count there has never been made, nor has the total seating at maximum capacity ever been officially established.

Other large high school arenas in the state these days include John Baratto Athletic Center in East Chicago with a reported 8,296 capacity, Lloyd Scott Gymnasium in Seymour (8,110), Tiernan Center in Richmond (8,100), and Bill Green Athletic Arena in Marion (7,560). Of note is the fact that of the fifteen largest high school basketball gyms in the U.S., twelve are in Indiana. The three others are the Alfred Loos Fieldhouse in Dallas (7,500); Chinle, Arizona's Wildcat Den (7,000); and Kentucky's Pulaski County High School Gym (also 7,000).

*Boxscore welcomes any comments or further information regarding the state's basketball arenas, either existing or former ones. We'll run more articles about them in the future. It's an enticing subject.*

### LONG LIVE THE ADAMS COLISEUM

*Editor's Note: In the last few issues, Boxscore has been recounting facts & figures about various basketball gyms in Indiana. This fascinating article was furnished to us by new board member Hugh Schaefer and is about a 90-year-old arena at Vincennes Lincoln High School. It was recently posted on the internet and attributed to "The Hoosier Hardwood Project." The Project was initiated in March, 2016 by high school basketball historians and photographers Chris Smith and Michael Keating. Its purpose is to share photographs and stories with the general public about historic basketball scenes & sites, mainly those of old high school gymnasiums.*

Two principal theories persist regarding the origins of the Vincennes Lincoln team nickname, "Alices." Did the name come from a novel, later a musical, set against the backdrop of the American Revolution? Alice of Old Vincennes is the story of the orphan girl Alice Roussillon. In 1778 the French outpost of Vincennes, Indiana revolts against the British and swears allegiance to the American cause. Hoisting her hand-made American flag over the fort, Alice provides the rallying symbol of the cause of liberty. When the British retake Vincennes, the rallying cry Viva la banniere d'Alice Roussillon is heard throughout the land.

Did the name come from the Vincennes basketball team, State Champions in 1923, who were an unlikely lot that played wonderfully?



It is said that their run was likened to a fantasy story, not unlike the fantasy tale penned by Lewis Carroll (not his real name) called "The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland," published in 1865. Like the team's championship, it was a tale that toyed with logic and promoted gamesmanship--thus making it a story whose popularity is lasting and appealing to all ages. Basketball, anyone?

Historians have settled on the "Alice of Old Vincennes" novel as the likely source of the nickname, but please remember that history is subject to revision. It is a story with depth of character, a narrative that inspires, and a lasting legacy that binds Vincennes to history.



**The Adams Coliseum was built in six months. It was named after legendary Vincennes Coach John Adams who led the Alices to their first State Championship.**

In Indiana high school basketball history, the Adams Coliseum, once a permanent home to the Vincennes Alices, ranks among Indiana's most prominent venues. Home to state champions in 1923 and 1981, the Alices have been a state runner-up in 1984 and finalists in 1916, 1925, 1968 and again in 1969.

Completed in 1926, the gymnasium was built by the Vincennes Public School Athletic

Association. Fans noted that after winning its first state championship in basketball there was a need for a new gymnasium. Construction started on May 1, 1926 and the Alices played their first game in the new gymnasium on November 12th of that same year, beating Mitchell 39-38. It was such a big deal at the time that area schools cancelled their games to attend the inaugural event in Vincennes.

The coliseum featured a \$22,000 Moller pipe organ at one end of the playing floor, located above the seating area. It also featured four rows of wooden chair seats around the perimeter for prominent boosters of the school. A portable stage was at one end of the original playing floor

and was made with maple wood shipped in from northern Michigan.

Perhaps the most unique feature was an arched panel of bricks located in the main lobby. A local sportswriter asked fans from cities around the state to send bricks with engraved plates to commemorate what was then the largest gymnasium in the state. The panel contains 57 inscribed bricks from 47 towns and cities. Notable brick

contributions came from President William Henry Harrison's home, Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello, and from Corydon, the state's first capitol. Originally called the Vincennes Coliseum, it was re-named Adams Coliseum to honor John Adams who coached the Alices to that 1923 state championship in basketball.

The venue was also used for live concerts and special events over the years. Vincennes native son, Red Skelton, performed there. Gene Autry, Will Rogers, and even Dick Clark and his Caravan of Stars featuring popular rock-and-roll acts, played there. The Harlem Globetrotters appeared there, keeping with the basketball tradition.

It is now owned by the Vincennes Education Foundation. It is a non-profit organization that serves to further educational opportunities for the student and faculty of VCSC; stimulate teaching and teaching methods; introduce state of the art technology to the schools; provide scholarships; and promote partnerships with business and industry. A recently completed renovation that saved the building from what many feared was an inevitable destruction, the venue can now be rented for a wide range of events public and private. Most of all, the building remains a gymnasium, a temple where basketball was and is still occasionally played.

With the lights illuminating the playing floor and wooden chair-like seating around the perimeter, the silence is broken by conversation between two Vincennes veterans walking around in the empty gymnasium. Tom Nonte, a notable Vincennes school official and unapologetic Alices booster, and Lincoln standout Jerry Memering, recalled the halcyon days of Vincennes basketball.

Memering, an Indiana Basketball Hall of Famer (inducted in 2005) was on the 1968 and 1969 Final Four teams. He holds the school scoring record with 1650 total varsity points.

coached three other teams to the Final Four: his Vincennes teams in 1968 and 1969 and his Tell City Marksmen team in 1961. Wyman won 75 percent of his games as a

Wyman believed in setting goals for himself and his team. By following that outline, Wyman could visualize success, more often than not.

Another Wyman plan involving his headstone says much about his passion and penchant for having the last word. A particular photograph showing Memering and a few of his teammates, a former school athletic director, and an assistant coach, is one of those treasures that illustrates the spirited rivalry between some schools at a personal level. The group posed for a photograph around Wyman's headstone that bears an inscription on the back of the stone. It reads, "I'd rather be here than in Jasper, Indiana." Perhaps Wyman was channeling a bit of "Alice" from the Wonderland book in that he likely believed that "it is better to be feared than loved," a quote from the Red Queen in "The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland."

Rivalries aside, the Adams Coliseum remains a crowning achievement in preservation. In our travels across Indiana during the past three years, our Hoosier Hardwood crew has seen far too many basketball gymnasiums that have



The 1923 State Champions, bottom, and the 1981 State Champions from Vincennes Lincoln.

He was on four Sectional winners, three Regional winners and 2 Semi-State winners. He played in 100 of 102 possible varsity games and started in 97 of those games. The Indiana All-Star team member went on to play three years on the Indiana University varsity and was on the IU 1973 Big Ten championship team that made it to the NCAA Tournament's Final Four.

"In playing all those years, when I walk around this town I can always say that we won all of the Sectionals I got to play in. That's probably my best memory...something to be proud of," Memering said. Memering is also proud of playing for and getting to know legendary coach Orlando "Gunner" Wyman. Wyman guided Vincennes to the 1981 state championship and

coach and was twice named "Coach of the Year" by the Indiana Sportswriters and Broadcasters Association. He was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 1991. Wyman died in 2008.

Nonte didn't put up any championship winning shots for the Alices, but he has certainly championed many things to assure the ongoing vitality of the Adams Coliseum. His goal is to establish the legacy of the Alices so that younger fans and followers can link to the past and be inspired going forward. An example of that is a room adjoining the playing area that recalls the Alices' achievements. Filled with photographs and Alices' memorabilia, the hand-written charts and inspirational notes of Wyman are among the most treasured items.



Building Plaque For Coliseum

been forgotten. In our most recent trip into the southwestern portions of Indiana our spirits have been buoyed by the efforts of people in places like Haubstadt, Ft. Branch, Owensville and Vincennes.

It is especially good to know that when the Adams Coliseum faced an



uncertain future just a few years back that the rally cry of those willing to work to save a treasure was answered. Vive le Colisée d'Adams...Long Live the Adams Coliseum!

## THE ILLINOIS MILAN

By Tim Puet

You know the story. A small high school has a once-in-a-lifetime group of basketball players talented enough to go a long way in their state's one-class basketball tournament, and a young coach who shares the dream. In their junior year, they go far, but fall short of a state title. That only whets their appetites, and the following year, they beat all odds and become champions – something no other small school will accomplish again until the one-class system is replaced by class basketball.

The team's return home the day after the tournament becomes the stuff of legend in its own right, with cars backed up for miles and the procession to the high school growing with each stop.

Their success enables all the starters to go to college, paving the way to successful careers – something that probably never would have happened without basketball.

As adults, the team members meet for regular reunions and continue to be honored for decades. And today, any time someone enters their hometown, he or she is reminded of those feats of long ago because the championship victory is immortalized on the community's water tower.

Of course, I'm talking about ... the 1952 Hebron, Illinois, Green Giants. Yes, two years before the Milan Miracle, Illinois had a team whose story parallels the 1954 Milan tale in many ways. It's a tale that may be even more improbable than Milan's, if only because Illinois is

somewhat larger than Indiana. But no one made a movie about it.

The Hebron story is retold in a book titled "Once There Were Giants," by Scott Johnson and Julie Kistler, published in 2002 by the Illinois High School Association to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hebron's championship. When I wrote this in late June 2016, 25 copies were available on amazon.com, starting at \$4.14. I bought the book at a Barnes & Noble Store in Columbus, Ohio, when it came out, and took it to the office of The Associated Press in Columbus, where I was working at the time, with the intention of reading it on lunch breaks. I left the AP in 2003 before getting around to the book, and it sat unread for the next 13 years in a box in back of a closet at my home with other items from my AP desk. I figured this past January that I ought to look into that box. Discovering the book was a most pleasant surprise.

Many of you may already know the Hebron story. I didn't, and so I enjoyed it because of the Milan parallels and because it's very well-written, relying extensively on newspaper accounts and surviving radio and TV play-by-play of the championship game.

This was the first televised Illinois state championship. The announcers were Jack Drees, also known for his boxing and horse racing commentary over the next several decades, and a young Chick Hearn, who became the Lakers' legendary broadcaster. You can find a kinescope of the second half of that telecast on YouTube. The first half was lost to a control-room error.

There is one great Hoosier connection to the story. I'm sure that Harley Sheets and Kermit Paddack, as Lebanon's basketball historians, know it. Hebron's coach, Russ Ahearn, was a graduate of Streator

High School in Illinois, where for 28 years the coach was Lowell "Pug" Dale, the leader of Lebanon's 1912 state title team. Ahearn's ultimate goal was to follow in Dale's footsteps at Streator. The dream came true, but Ahearn was let go as Streator's coach after two successful seasons because of what the book describes as "a dispute within the athletic department (which) turned personal." Ahearn stayed on as a teacher at the school until his retirement in 1974 and died two years later at age 64.

The book ends with a good "Whatever Happened To ...?" section which details in brief the subsequent lives of all the team's players, other principals in the story, and the school itself, which like Milan High, continues to exist.

## The Zionsville Eagles—1906-2016 A Newly Released Book

Kermit Paddack, IHSBHS board member, has just written and released a detailed narrative on the history of the Zionsville basketball teams from the school's first year on the courts (1906), down through the school's most recent season (2016). This book provides a year-by-year account of all the Eagles' seasons, their principle players, the coaches, a few explanations for their successes or failures, and even some accounts of key games played each season. Statistical charts are also abundant, listing such things as the top 200 career scorers, best individual game performances, all-time opponent series records, and even a player index that contains game and total scoring data. This book may be ordered directly from Kermit, using the order form on page 12 of this issue of Boxscore. It is also available online by keying in zionsvillebasketballhistory.com. The price, which includes shipping & handling, is \$25.



## **BECOME AN IHSBHS MEMBER**

**(Indiana High School Basketball Historical Society)**

Join a statewide group of sports-minded individuals who have a common interest in the history of high school basketball, Indiana's favorite sport. Membership dues are currently just \$10 per year. Established in 1994, and loosely associated with the Hall of Fame in New Castle, IHSBHS (pronounced "ish-bish") publishes four seasonal newsletters for its members, each issue usually 12 to 16 pages in content, known as Boxscore. This newsletter contains diverse items, including short stories that recount tales of former Hoosier ballplayers and their schools' teams. Members are invited, but not required, to submit their own personal stories for inclusion in Boxscore.

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High School and graduation year \_\_\_\_\_

Check or money order to IHSBHS for \$10 enclosed? \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: IHSBHS Treasurer Rocky Kenworthy, 710 E. 800 S., Clayton, IN 46118**

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## IHSBHS MEMBER PROFILE FORM (Tell us about yourself)

**Complete this form and mail to: Rocky Kenworthy, IHSBHS, 710 E, 800 S, Clayton, IN 46118. Profiles may appear in Boxscore from time to time.**

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## Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame Annual Membership Program

The Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame is committed to recognizing Indiana's Basketball Legends and inspiring Indiana's basketball future.

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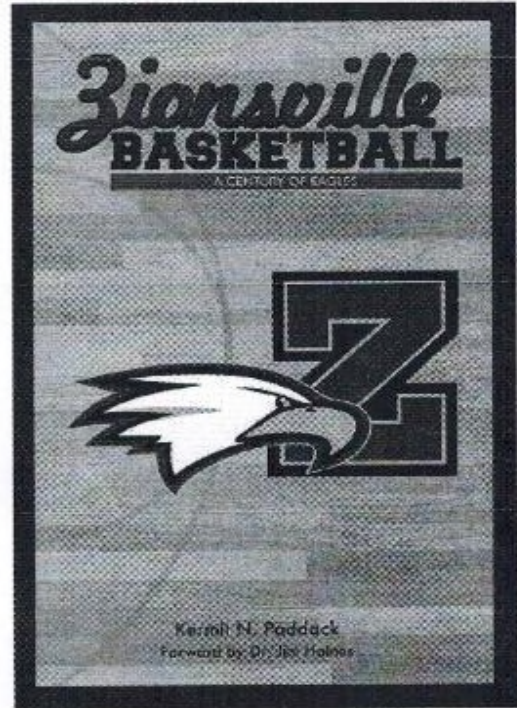
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