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John Wooden

A Revised Beginning, Part 1

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John Robert Wooden, a native of Morgan County, Indiana, passed away on June 4, 2010, at the age of 99. He was an extraordinary individual whose advantageous mix of abilities, personal characteristics, family life, mentors, religious faith, and background in Indiana basketball enabled him to become an exemplary person and an exceedingly accomplished basketball player, coach, and teacher.

As residents of Wooden's hometown of Martinsville, Indiana, the authors have had a long-standing interest in him and his family. What we knew about the Woodens was derived from written materials, the media, local stories, and research. Over time it became apparent that accounts of Wooden's early life frequently repeated the same stories and contained a noticeable amount of inconsistent, inaccurate, and unsubstantiated information. As a result and in celebration of the 100th anniversary of his birth in 2010, we made a focused examination of the family history, trying to determine what was correct and what was incorrect, add details to the published stories, and discover previously unknown information. Our primary objective was to provide an accurate, documented, chronological narrative of the family's history in Morgan County.

We made a concentrated effort to use documentary evidence and to base our statements and conclusions upon a wide variety of sources (see Selected References in Part 2). These sources provided much new information from which an altered and more detailed family history account has emerged. Our efforts demonstrate the value of consulting a wide variety of records, both primary and secondary, in addition to conducting personal interviews. Although multiple references could be cited for a great many of the statements in this two-part article, we have used a narrative style of citation within the text in order to improve readability.

John Wooden (nicknamed "John Bob" and "Pert") was an All-State basketball player at Martinsville High School and a member of Martinsville's state championship team in 1927. At Purdue, he was a three-time All-American basketball player who, as a senior, was college player of the year on the university's 1932 national championship team and was awarded the Big Ten Conference medal for combined proficiency in athletics and scholarship. According to the Registrar's Office at Purdue, Wooden majored in physical education and graduated in 1932 with a bachelor's degree in physical education.

After graduation, Wooden did quite well as a high school basketball coach in Kentucky and Indiana. His high school coaching and teaching career was followed by a successful two-year coaching stint at Indiana State Teachers College in Terre Haute where he also served as athletic director (1946-1948). While there, according to school records, he earned the degree Master of Science in Education and wrote a thesis titled "A Study of the Effect of the Abolition of the Center Jump on the Height of Outstanding College Basketball Players." Also at Terre Haute, he played a significant role in helping to break racial barriers in college athletics. Blacks were not allowed to play in the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB) tournament. Since his team included a black player, Clarence Walker, Wooden refused to participate in the tournament without his black teammate. The same situation occurred the following year. This time, in response to Wooden's stance, the NAIB modified its rules, making Walker the first black player to play in the tournament.

In 1948, Wooden went to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and proceeded to redefine success as a college basketball coach by winning ten National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) national

championships in a twelve-year span. He coached at UCLA until he retired from basketball in 1975. Wooden is a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame, both as a player and as a coach, and in 2009 *Sporting News Magazine* selected him as the greatest coach of all time, irrespective of the specific sport.

Nevertheless, in Wooden's mind, he was foremost a teacher, and basketball was not his top priority. In *The Wisdom of Wooden* (John Wooden and Steve Jamison, 2010) he writes: "I am a teacher. Next to parenting itself, I believe that teaching is the most important profession in the world. Coaching is just another word for teaching; you may have a whistle, but you're still a teacher. . . . At its highest level, teaching allows you to be a person who helps others become the best they can be. What can be more important—or fulfilling—than that?" Wooden was an outstanding teacher who also possessed a great capacity to learn. In addition to all of his basketball honors, he has been acknowledged and honored repeatedly for his ability to teach basketball, classroom subjects, and life lessons as well as for his personal character, conduct, and perspectives on life. Among the great many awards that he received is the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award given by the United States, which was presented to him in 2003.

Wooden was also a man who did not forget his roots. He was a loyal, caring person who had good experiences growing up in Morgan County and maintained a lifelong attachment to the area. His parents, siblings, and other close family members, including his wife, were Morgan County people, as were four of the five people Wooden credited as having the greatest direct influence on his life: Joshua Hugh Wooden, his father; Earl Warriner, his principal, teacher, and coach at Centerton (Morgan County) grade school; Glenn Curtis, his high school basketball coach; and Nellie (Riley) Wooden, his wife. The fifth person was Ward Lambert, his basketball coach at Purdue. Wooden kept in touch with friends and family members and returned to Morgan County for visits. Friendly and unassuming, he could be seen with family members or former UCLA basketball players at Poe's Cafeteria in Martinsville, at the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Martinsville, or other places where he would talk with people as just another member of the community.



Map of Morgan County. (Courtesy of the Indiana Department of Transportation)



Robert Sanford Wooden, John Wooden's grandfather, thought to have been taken about 1903. (Courtesy of Jerry L. Gott Jr. of the Eminence, Indiana, Masonic Lodge)

Wooden's parents were Joshua Hugh Wooden (1882-1950) and Roxie Anna (Rothrock) Wooden (1887-1959). Based upon obituaries and a genealogy of the Yager and Wilhite families (Hettie Duke, 1939), Hugh, as he was often called, was born in Adams Township not far from the little village of Hall in Morgan County, the son of Robert Sanford Wooden (1845-1913) and Cordelia Jane (Wilhite) Wooden (1852-1885). Robert was a farmer and reportedly taught school for a number of years, as related by newspapers, obituaries, and a one-hundred-year history of the Masons in Eminence, Indiana (Noble Littell, 1972).

Roxie was born near the little town of Centerton in Morgan County, the daughter of John H. Rothrock Sr. (1847-1917) and Harriett (Landers) Rothrock (1848-1903), according to obituaries. John Rothrock farmed, was involved in the grain elevator business at Centerton, owned a substantial amount of real estate in Morgan and Marion counties, and became well-off, as referenced in newspapers, obituaries, and real estate records.

According to marriage records and newspapers, Hugh and Roxie were married at the home of her father and stepmother, Hattie (Sargent) (Williams) Rothrock, at Centerton on April 19, 1905, by Pastor M. W. Yocum of Martinsville Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

During their forty-five-year marriage, Hugh and Roxie had six children: Maurice Leroy (1907-1985), Harriett Cordelia (1909-1913), John Robert (1910-2010), an unnamed daughter who died at birth (1913), Daniel Joshua (1917-1997), and William Hugh (1922-2001). Harriett Cordelia was apparently named after her grandmothers and John Robert after his grandfathers.

After their marriage, according to newspapers, Hugh and Roxie lived at or near Hall from 1905 until June 1907 when they moved into a small cottage at 204 North Wayne Street in Martinsville. Based upon Sanborn fire insurance maps, the address today is 240 North Wayne. The couple, who were expecting their first child, soon moved into a house at 460 North Jefferson Street which, according to real estate records, had been purchased by Roxie's father in September 1907. Evidently, Hugh and Roxie had moved to that property by October 1907 based upon a newspaper item stating that "Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Wooden are improving their residence property on North Jefferson street by the addition of a front porch." A birth announcement for son Maurice (later known as "Cat") appearing in the *Martinsville Republican* in November 1907 is the earliest known record specifying the Wooden family's address as 460 North Jefferson. A similar newspaper announcement for Harriett Cordelia's birth in March 1909 states that the family lived on North Jefferson.

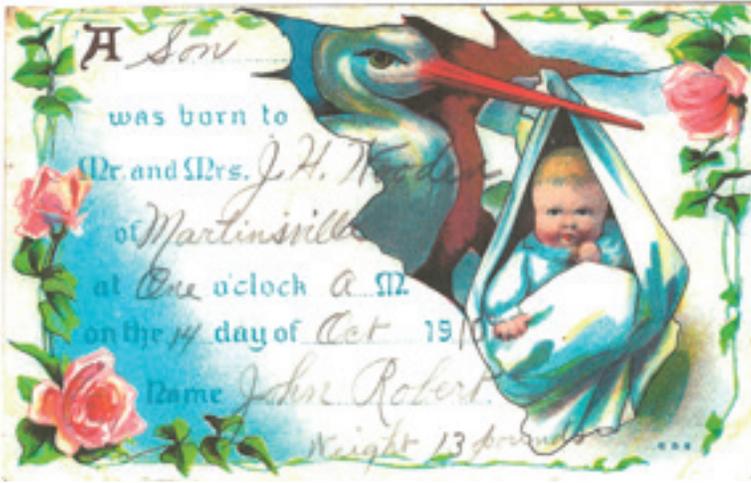
Records show that the Wooden's son John was born on Friday, October 14, 1910, while they were living at 460 North Jefferson Street in Martinsville. However, the standard story has been that John was born at Hall. For example, the book *They Call Me Coach* (John Wooden as told to/with Jack Tobin, 1972/1988) states that he was born at Hall. If his birth had occurred at Hall, considering all of the miscellaneous tidbits of information that appeared in Martinsville newspapers of the time, it would probably have been mentioned, especially since Martinsville newspapers regularly contained news from other towns and communities, including Hall. However, despite a diligent search, no item could be found in any newspaper or other record stating or even suggesting that John or any of the Wooden children were born at Hall. In 1910 Morgan County births were not always officially recorded, and no birth certificate or other official record of John's birth has been located. Other relevant documents exist, however.



The Wooden family, ca. 1918. Left to right: Hugh, Daniel, Maurice, John, and Roxie. (Courtesy of Mildred Swisher)



John Wooden's grandfather John H. Rothrock Sr. (seated) and his children. Standing left to right: Joshua Rothrock, Roxie (Rothrock) Wooden, and John H. Rothrock Jr. Identifications are made according to labeling on the back of the photograph and by Mildred Swisher, daughter-in-law of Lenna Swisher, a daughter of Joshua Rothrock. This image appears to have been taken in the side yard of the Wooden family's home at 460 North Jefferson Street in Martinsville. It was taken prior to January 1917 when John Rothrock Sr. died and is thought to have been taken during the period 1907 to 1914, when Hugh and Roxie Wooden and family lived in this house. (Courtesy of Mildred Swisher)



John Wooden's birth announcement postcard mailed October 15, 1910. (Courtesy of Fred Hawkins)

birthplace is furnished by a birth announcement in Martinsville's *Daily Reporter* for October 14, 1910: "Born to Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Wooden, North Jefferson street, a son – John Robert." Bearing directly on the question are significant documents that actually state that his birthplace is Martinsville. Among them are early school enumeration records, John's 1932 marriage application, and his 1941 Social Security application. Since there was no hospital at Martinsville and it was customary for children to be born at home in 1910, it would appear that John was born in the house at 460 North Jefferson Street.

The Woodens resided in Martinsville from 1907 to 1914. This is an important discovery evidenced by various other records besides those mentioned above. Records of the Knights of Pythias, of which Hugh was a member, list his address in 1909 as Martinsville and his occupation as laborer. A Christmas postcard in Roxie's handwriting sent on behalf of her daughter, Harriett Cordelia, was mailed in 1909 to Morgantown, Indiana, with greetings "From H. Cordelia Wooden Martinsville Ind." Records of the First Christian Church of Martinsville state that Hugh and Roxie became members on January 18, 1910, and the 1910 church directory gives their address as 460 North Jefferson Street, as does the 1910 federal census, which adds that Hugh was employed at a creamery. Their residence from 1911 to 1914 is documented by numerous newspaper items exemplified by a December 1911 paper stating Mrs. Hugh Wooden and children of Martinsville visited her father, an April 1912 item stating Hugh Wooden and family of Martinsville attended a family reunion, an obituary for Hugh's father in September 1913 mentioning that Hugh lived on North Jefferson Street, and an August 1914 newspaper stating Hugh Wooden and family of Martinsville visited his stepmother near Hall. Newspapers also indicate the kinds of work Hugh was doing during this time. An October 1910 item states that Hugh had just become a clerk at Martinsville's Hill-Sadler grocery, another in February 1911 relates that he and the "state agent" were taking orders for manure spreaders, and papers for May and July 1912 indicate that he was installing lightning rods.

In September 1914, according to newspaper reports, the Woodens left Martinsville and moved to Hall. In *They Call Me Coach*, John states that his father worked there as a tenant farmer for Cash



Photograph taken in 2010 of the house at 460 North Jefferson Street in Martinsville. This is where the Wooden family lived from 1907 to 1914 and is thought to be the birthplace of Maurice, Harriett Cordelia, John, and their unnamed sister. (Photo by Curtis H. Tomak, courtesy of Herbert A. Knieper and Florence Yvonne Knieper)

Ludlow. Newspapers, real estate records, and the federal census indicate Ludlow to have been Casius C. Ludlow who farmed east of Hall.

The reasons the Woodens moved to Hall are unknown, but the move may have been related to misfortunes the family suffered in 1913. Newspapers report in January 1913 that the family made a holiday visit to the home of Hugh's father and stepmother, Sarah Ellen (Fisher) Wooden, close to the community of Lippitt, near Hall. While there, their children came down with diphtheria. Maurice and John recovered; however, on January 5, three-year-old Harriett Cordelia passed away. She was buried in the Centerton Cemetery, but, since the house was under quarantine, her parents could not attend her burial.

Making matters worse, Hugh's father was seriously ill, and Roxie's father's farm at Centerton was inundated by the "Great Flood" of March 1913. In April, tragedy struck again. Newspapers report that Hugh and Roxie's newborn daughter died at birth. Never given a name, the child was buried within a day alongside Harriett Cordelia. The loss of two young daughters, especially in such a short period of time, had to be heartbreaking for the family. In *Coach Wooden One-On-One* (John Wooden and Jay Carty, 2003), John writes: "Mom wanted a daughter desperately, and those two events hurt her more than anything else life threw at her. She carried a sense of loss on her shoulders forever." Unfortunately, the misfortunes of 1913 continued. Newspapers provide accounts of an August fire that destroyed the Centerton grain elevator owned by Roxie's father and the death of Hugh's father in August from cancer.

After being in Hall for a year, the Woodens moved about five miles to the small town of Monrovia in Morgan County in September 1915. Newspapers report that they moved into a house owned by Flora Henley. That house no longer exists, but real estate records indicate it was at a location whose current address is 15 East Main Street. An obituary for Hugh states he had been a mail carrier there, and in *They Call Me Coach*, John writes that at Monrovia his dad was a rural mail carrier and worked a small farm. In that same book in reference to Monrovia, John relates that "It is here that my earliest memories come into focus." One of those memories was his love for his dad's horse and buggy and his joy in accompanying him on his mail route. Did John also remember the family trip to Owen County in June 1916 in the new five-passenger Maxwell automobile his mother received from her father in April, as mentioned in newspapers? Monrovia is also where John reached school age and, based upon dates, newspapers, and school enumeration records, is evidently where he attended most, if not all, of his first year of school (1916-1917) before the family moved to Centerton in 1917.

The move to Centerton was occasioned by the death of Roxie's father in January 1917. Real estate records document that Roxie inherited three properties. The first two were their former house at 460 North Jefferson Street in Martinsville and a town lot in Centerton. The Woodens sold both these properties within three years. The third piece of property was a fifty-eight-acre farm with house at Centerton. They moved to the farm in early March 1917. This is where Daniel ("Danny") was born in June 1917 and William ("Billy") in May 1922.



Page from the 1928 Martinsville High School yearbook showing John Wooden, nicknamed "Pert," as a young boy on a mule. (Courtesy of the owner)

Real estate records show that the Woodens increased the size of their farm to about eighty-three acres by purchasing nearly twenty-five acres from Roxie's brother John Rothrock Jr. in June 1922. Their farmhouse was essentially a four-room structure without a front porch and differed from the remodeled house pictured in books about John Wooden. In *My Personal Best*, John describes their home as a "white farmhouse with its sparse living room and kitchen --- a black potbelly stove in the former, a wood-burning stove for cooking in the latter. There were two small bedrooms for the six of us; my brothers and I slept two to a bed. Near our old barn was a smokehouse for curing meat, and next to that, a well where we pumped our water by hand. Over to the side, all by itself, was the outhouse. . . . We had no electricity, plumbing, or conveniences. . . ." This is the farm that is prominent in narratives about John's boyhood. His strong affection for it is well expressed in *My Personal Best*: "For my brothers and me, growing up on that little farm in Centerton was almost perfect."

Maurice, John, and Daniel attended school at Centerton, and Maurice and John graduated from the eighth grade there in 1921 and 1924, respectively. In those days, it was not unusual for children to finish school at eighth grade. Graduating from the eighth grade (common school) was a formal event and involved passing examinations in about ten subjects. Both Maurice and John did well on those examinations, according to township trustee records. Maurice's overall average was 90. John's overall average was 93, with a high score of 96 in music and low scores of 91 in writing and in U.S. history. It is interesting that John's high score was in music because in *They Call Me Coach* he tells a story relating that he was a terrible singer and that his teacher, Earl Warriner, had to give him a licking with a willow switch to get him to sing. At his eighth grade graduation, as John states, his father gave him a card containing a poem and a "seven-point creed" advising how to live a good life. That act and the content of the card were extremely meaningful to John and greatly influenced him the rest of his life. Although money was tight, his father also gave him a worn two-dollar bill which, as of 2004, was still in the family's possession.



Recent photograph of the house at the Centerton farm where the Hugh Wooden family lived from 1917 to 1925. (Courtesy of Elmer Reynolds)

After graduating and while living at Centerton, Maurice and John commuted about six and one-half miles by interurban train to Martinsville High School. However, it would not be long before the commutes and Centerton farm life ended. John's books indicate that the family stopped farming at Centerton in 1924 or 1925. As written in *They Call Me Coach*: "There was a mortgage on the farm and things weren't going well, so dad decided to raise hogs. He borrowed the money, bought the feed and vaccine for the cholera shots which all hogs must have. But instead of protecting them, the vaccine gave them cholera and they all died. Since another investment had turned out to be with a fraudulent company, dad couldn't repay the loan so we lost the farm and moved into Martinsville." The book *My Personal Best* states: "The end came suddenly . . . and the bank took the farm."

However, the farm does not appear to have been lost or taken by the bank. Although the Woodens left the farm by 1925 and moved to Martinsville, real estate records show that they owned the farm until November 1930 at which time they sold it to Roxie's nephew Roy Rothrock and his wife, Wilma, for \$7,500. The Rothrocks also assumed the Woodens' mortgage on the property. It seems likely that the Woodens received some income from the farm during the period 1925 to 1930 because on three occasions (September 1925, April 1926, and February 1928) newspapers identify families who occupied the Woodens' farmhouse. After selling the farm, Hugh and Roxie evidently never again owned real estate.

Part 2 of this article will begin with the Woodens' move from the Centerton farm in September 1925 to 410 East Pike Street in Martinsville, the first of the two documented places in Martinsville where John Wooden lived while in high school.

John Wooden

A Revised Beginning, Part 2

Curtis H. Tomak, Joanne Raetz Stuttgen, and Norma J. Tomak

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In Part 1 of this two-part article, the authors established that John Wooden's parents, Hugh and Roxie Wooden, had lived in Martinsville, Indiana, from 1907 to 1914 and determined that during that period John was born at 460 North Jefferson Street in Martinsville. They documented that the Woodens moved to Hall in 1914, to Monrovia in 1915, and to the farm at Centerton that Roxie had inherited from her father in 1917. The family lived on that farm from 1917 until 1925 at which time the Woodens moved back to Martinsville. As evidenced in Part 1, although they left the farm in 1925, Hugh and Roxie owned the farm until 1930 when they sold it to Roxie's nephew Roy Rothrock and his wife. Part 2 begins with the move to Martinsville in 1925.



Photograph taken in 2010 of the house at 410 East Pike Street in Martinsville. The Hugh Wooden family moved into this house from their Centerton farm in 1925 and lived there until 1927. This is the first documented Martinsville house that John Wooden lived in while in high school. (Photo by Curtis H. Tomak, with permission)

Based upon Maurice Wooden's records at Franklin College, real estate records, and newspaper accounts, the Woodens moved from the Centerton farm to 410 East Pike Street in Martinsville during the first week of September 1925. The large, two-story, brick home at that address was the first of the two documented Martinsville houses that John Wooden lived in during high school and, at least in appearance, was quite a change from the Woodens' small and quite modest Centerton farmhouse. The Pike Street house was owned by Jesse C. and Emma (Schnaiter) Hale, uncle and aunt of Mary Schnaiter. Mary was the best friend of John's high school girlfriend, Nellie Riley, so it may not be a coincidence that the Woodens moved into that house. The house is on the corner of Pike and Ohio streets and currently has the address 219 North Ohio Street.

After moving back to Martinsville, Hugh Wooden worked as a bath attendant at Home Lawn, considered to be the city's finest mineral water sanitarium. His tasks included giving baths, rubdowns, and massages and applying hot packs. We are not sure how long he worked at Home Lawn (an obituary says he worked there about 15 years and John Wooden stated it was more than twenty-five years), but evidently he worked there for many years until his death in 1950. Harry Johnson, who was associated with Home Lawn from 1943 to 1968 as head accountant, treasurer, and shareholder, indicated in an interview with the senior author that tips from patrons contributed noticeably to Hugh's income. In *They Call Me Coach* (John Wooden as told to/with Jack Tobin, 1972/1988) John also mentions the substantial part tips played in his father's income. This may have been Hugh's only employment after returning to Martinsville. However, Purdue University reports that John's records there (1928-1932) give his dad's occupation as "clerk," which is also what is recorded on John and Nellie's marriage application in 1932.

Roxie also contributed to the family income. Local residents report that Roxie worked at the National Sanitarium in the late 1920s and sometime later at the Martinsville Sanitarium. Several individuals have mentioned that Roxie was a very good seamstress and made clothes for people, which may have added to the family's income. She worked at Louise Petro's dress shop in Martinsville in the 1940s, according to a newspaper item and according to her friend Gloria Blake and her relative Mildred Swisher, both of whom worked

at the shop when Roxie worked there. In addition, in *The John Wooden Pyramid of Success* (Neville Johnson, 2004), Hugh and Roxie's son William states that his parents made extra money by renting out bedrooms in their home.

The Woodens resided at 410 East Pike Street until March 1927 when, based upon a newspaper item, real estate documents, and the 1928 directory of the First Christian Church of Martinsville, they moved to the Charles Younger property at 165 West Washington Street. The foregoing records, a 1929 city directory, and the 1930 federal census show that the Wooden family lived at 165 West Washington Street from 1927 to 1930. Since John Wooden graduated from high school in 1928, the Washington Street house was the second of the two documented Martinsville houses where he lived during his high school years.

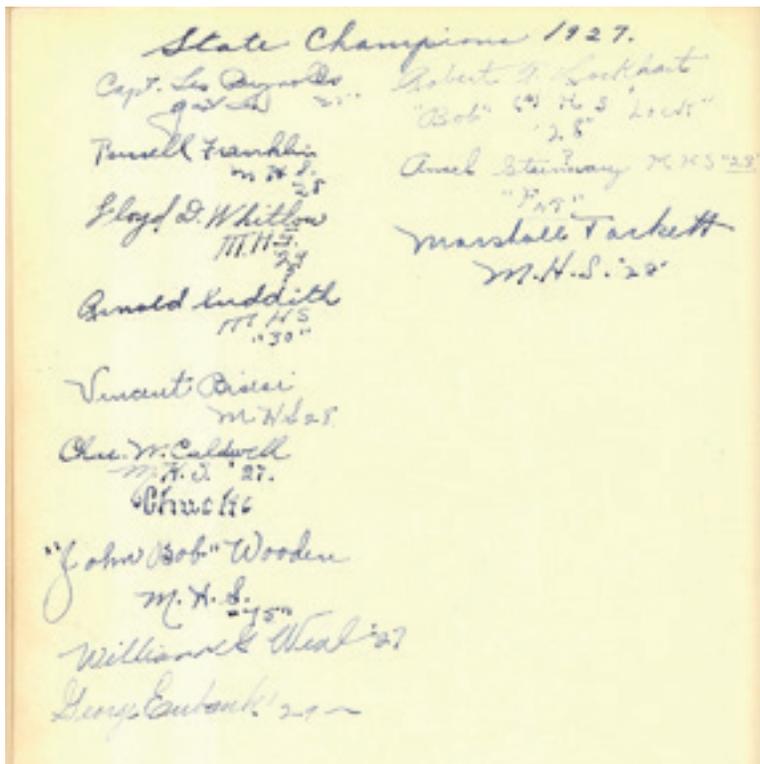
In March 1927, John was a junior at Martinsville High School and was one of the star members of the basketball team. The Wooden family's move to West Washington Street occurred right around the time that John and his teammates were playing in the state high school basketball tournament. The finals were in Indianapolis that year, and Martinsville won the state championship by defeating Muncie on March 19. Basketball was so popular and meant so much in Indiana in the 1920s that on more than one occasion John Wooden referred to the 1927 championship as the highlight of his basketball career.

John was a great high school basketball player, but sometimes his achievements and status have been overstated. The standard story has been that he led the team to the state finals three years and that he was All-State three years. However, game accounts, All-State lists, and related basketball items in newspapers and elsewhere show that he was All-State two years and was the team leader his senior year.

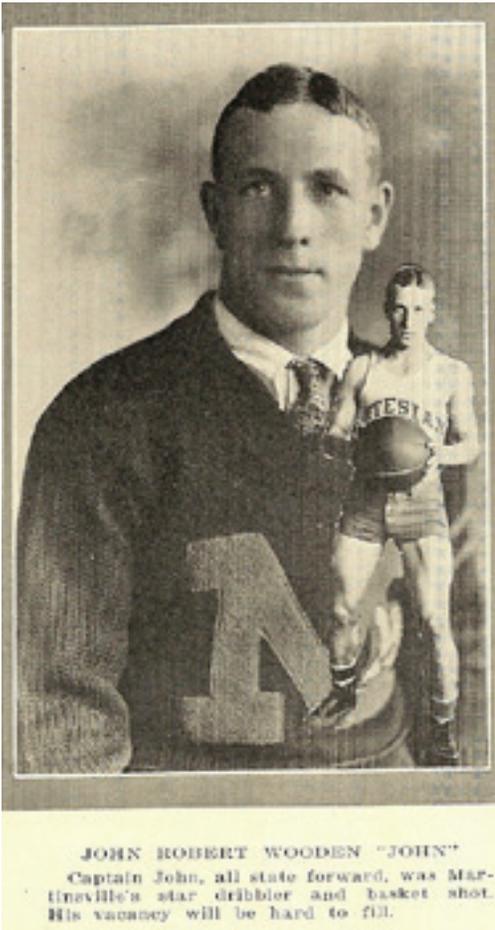
John was on the reserve team his freshman year. He was a varsity substitute his sophomore year, and we have found no evidence that he was a team leader, star, or an All-State player that year. He blossomed as a junior, became a starter, All-State, and one of the stars of Martinsville's team along with Lester Reynolds, who was the captain of the team and a senior that year. Lester was the established star, a two-year team captain, and a three-year All-State pick. John became



Photograph taken in 2010 of the house at 165 West Washington Street in Martinsville. The Hugh Wooden family moved into this house in 1927, and they were still living there in 1930. This is the second documented Martinsville house that John Wooden lived in while in high school. (Photo by Curtis H. Tomak, courtesy of Sharon R. Richardson)



Page from a 1927 Martinsville High School yearbook signed that year by members of the Martinsville High School state championship basketball team. John Wooden signed as "John Bob," a name he commonly went by in those days. He displays a sense of humor by giving his high school graduation year as "75," evidently meaning that he would not graduate until 1975. Coincidentally, 1927 is the year of his first basketball championship, and 1975 is the year of his last championship (UCLA) as well as the year he retired from basketball. (With permission of the owner)



JOHN ROBERT WOODEN "JOHN"
Captain John, all state forward, was Martinsville's star dribbler and basket shot. His vacancy will be hard to fill.

Senior picture of John Wooden from the 1928 Martinsville High School yearbook. (Courtesy of the owner)

Nellie was baptized into the church in December 1923. The records also state that brothers Maurice and John Wooden were baptized into the church on Easter Sunday, April 17, 1927.

Easter 1927 would have been near the end of John's junior year in high school. In fall 1928 he enrolled at Purdue where, as related in Part 1, he was very successful in both academics and athletics. His stellar basketball career was not without difficulty, however. According to *They Call Me Coach*, he was hospitalized in December around Christmas every year he was at Purdue: scarlet fever his freshman year (1928); leg injury his sophomore year (1929); injury in practice his junior year (1930); and tonsil operation his senior year (1931). The latter may indicate a recurring condition since newspapers for June 1931 report John having a tonsil problem resulting in a throat operation at a Lafayette hospital that month.

The leg injury during his sophomore year is of particular note. As newspapers relate, it resulted from being hit by a Minardo Brothers' fruit truck in West Lafayette and caused him to miss the Butler game (which Purdue lost). The incident was serious enough for John and his father to file a lawsuit against Minardo Brothers for \$1,500 in damages, as reported in a Lafayette newspaper in April 1930. However, we have found no record of the outcome of the case.

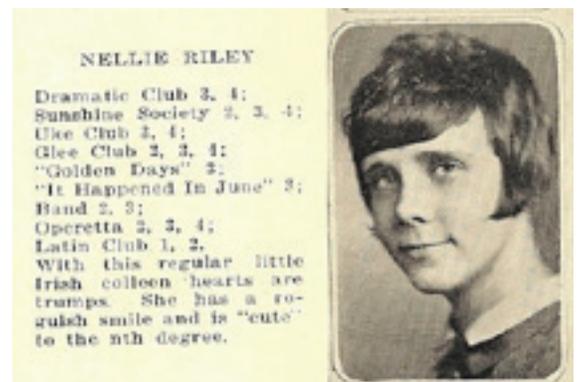
According to the Office of the Registrar at Purdue, the 1932 Purdue yearbook, and a Martinsville newspaper item, John graduated in June 1932 with a bachelor's degree in physical

team captain and was the team leader, a star player, and All-State his senior year.

John Wooden's high school girlfriend and future wife was Nellie Carlotta Riley (1911-1985). Greene County, Indiana, birth records state that Nellie was born at Bloomfield on June 26, 1911, and was the daughter of John and Christine (Fields) Riley. Based upon newspaper items, church records, school enumeration records, real estate records, and the 1920 federal census, the Rileys had moved to Martinsville from Bloomfield in September 1919 and lived at 289 East Pike Street, a property owned by Cliff Schnaiter. The Schnaiters were the Rileys' neighbors, which is likely how the lifelong friendship between Nellie and Mary Schnaiter, Cliff's daughter, began.

In 1921, according to real estate records, the Rileys purchased a house at 90 South Wayne Street. As documented by various directories, this is where they lived when John and Nellie were in high school. The Wayne Street house was approximately five blocks east of the Woodens' home at 165 West Washington Street and was just east of the home of Glenn Curtis, John's high school basketball coach, who lived at 89 South Sycamore Street. As related in John's books, Coach Curtis had a curfew for his players and a prohibition against dating during the basketball season, which made it difficult at times for John to visit Nellie since the Curtis house and the Riley house were so close together. Nellie was a junior at Martinsville High School when John was a senior. She graduated in 1929, and her senior yearbook records her participation in a number of school activities, characterizing her as a cute "little Irish colleen."

Like the Woodens, the Rileys were members of the First Christian Church of Martinsville. Church records state that Nellie's parents, John and Christine Riley, became members in March 1920 and that



Senior picture of Nellie Riley from the 1929 Martinsville High School yearbook. (Courtesy of the owner)

education. He and Nellie were married soon after his graduation, and John's books tell about an anxious situation that occurred just before their wedding day. The Martinsville bank where John held his savings failed, and John unexpectedly lost all of his savings. Fortunately, Cliff Schnaiter came to the rescue by loaning the couple \$200, telling John there was no hurry to repay it. Thereafter, the marriage took place on the planned date.

Marriage records and newspapers show that John and Nellie were married on Monday, August 8, 1932, by Reverend J. Ambrose Dunkel, pastor of the Indianapolis Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, at Dunkel's Indianapolis home at 3815 North Delaware Street. Accounts given in *They Call Me Coach* (John Wooden as told to/with Jack Tobin, 1972/1988) and in *My Personal Best* (John Wooden with Steve Jamison, 2004) state that John and Nellie spent their wedding night in Indianapolis and that they had to get up early the next morning to go to Martinsville where Purdue basketball coach Ward Lambert was meeting John. According to the two books, coach Lambert was taking John to Vincennes to participate in a week-long basketball clinic starting that morning which, according to those accounts, resulted in John and Nellie having to spend their first week of marriage apart.

It seemed odd to us that John and Nellie would get married the day before John was going to be away from Nellie for a week at a basketball clinic. However, newspapers provide a different scenario, indicating that they did not spend their first week of marriage apart and that John was not at the clinic that week.

John did participate in a basketball clinic at Vincennes. However, the clinic did not take place during the first week of their marriage (August 8-14) but was conducted the following week (August 15-20), as documented in Vincennes newspapers. Moreover, some of John and Nellie's activities during their first week of marriage, as well as at other times in August 1932, are mentioned in Martinsville newspapers. The dates of those activities are given below:

Sunday, August 7: John's parents attended a Wooden family reunion near Hall; John played in an afternoon baseball game at Martinsville.

Monday, August 8: John and Nellie obtained their marriage license in Martinsville and were married in Indianapolis.

Wednesday, August 10: After visiting Nellie's brother in Indianapolis, John and Nellie returned to Martinsville.

Thursday, August 11: John and Nellie went to Bloomfield to visit.

Sunday, August 14: John played in an afternoon baseball game at Martinsville.

Monday, August 15 to Saturday, August 20: John participated in a basketball clinic at Vincennes.

Tuesday, August 16: Mary Schnaiter and Merza Cox gave a wedding shower for Nellie.

Friday, August 19: Thelma Williams gave a wedding shower/bridge party for Nellie.

Thursday, August 25: Audrey and Ray Curtis (Nellie's sister and brother-in-law) took John and Nellie to Dayton, Kentucky, where John began his coaching career.

John and Nellie had planned a small wedding, and Nellie wanted to have it conducted by Reverend Dunkel, who had officiated at the

Name	Riley, Nellie
Name Changed	
Address	614 90 S. Wayne
Date Admitted	Dec. 30 1923
How Admitted	By baptism
How Departed	
Remarks	
Name	Wooden, John
Name Changed	
Address	614 165 W. Wash
Date Admitted	April 17 1927
How Admitted	By baptism
How Departed	
Remarks	

Record cards of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Martinsville documenting the baptisms of John Wooden and Nellie Riley into the church. (Courtesy of Reverend Mark Poindexter)

WOODEN-RILEY

Mr. and Mrs. John Riley announce the marriage of their daughter Nellie to John Robert Wooden, son of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Wooden, which took place this afternoon in Indianapolis.

The ceremony was performed by the Reverend J. Ambrose Dunkel at his home, 3815 North Delaware street. The bride and groom were accompanied by Miss Thelma Williams and Maurice Wooden, brother of the groom.

The couple started from Indianapolis on a short wedding trip.

Mr. and Mrs. Wooden will leave Martinsville the latter part of August for Dayton, Ky., where they will have a furnished apartment. Mr. Wooden has accepted a position as coach and physical education director in Dayton, a town of about ten thousand, near Cincinnati.

Both are graduates of the local high school, and the groom was graduated from Purdue university in June. Mrs. Wooden is a member of the Tri Kappa sorority and he of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity.

Mr. Wooden's fame as a high school and college athlete has been widespread. Both have many friends.

Marriage announcement for John Wooden and Nellie Riley in the Martinsville Daily Reporter on August 8, 1932. (Courtesy of the Martinsville Reporter-Times and the Morgan County Public Library)

marriage of her brother, Julius Emil, in 1924. Even so, we wonder why John and Nellie were not married in Martinsville by the minister of their home church and why, apparently, none of the parents attended the wedding. In attendance at John and Nellie's marriage were Maurice Wooden and his wife-to-be, Thelma Williams. The roles were reversed at Maurice's wedding, which also took place away from Martinsville. Maurice and Thelma were married in July 1933 at Watseka, Illinois, by a minister of the Christian Church, according to marriage records and an October 1933 Martinsville newspaper item. John and Nellie were witnesses at the marriage, and afterward the two couples travelled on to Chicago to attend the Century of Progress Exposition.

Although all of their sons eventually moved elsewhere, after moving back to Martinsville in 1925, Hugh and Roxie Wooden remained there the rest of their lives. During that time, as evidenced by various sources, they moved quite a bit, living in at least seven different places in Martinsville. One of those places was 159 South Jefferson Street. That house is pictured in the Fall 2006 issue of the *Indiana Basketball History Magazine*, stating that it had been John's high school home. However, we have found no documentary evidence to support this claim. Instead, various sources (directories, telephone books, newspapers, school records, and Knights of Pythias records) indicate that the Woodens only resided there from 1936 to at least 1943, long after John had graduated from high school (1928). The house was owned by Hugh's uncle William H. Wooden. William passed away in 1935, and the property was owned under trust by his widow, Julia, until it was sold in 1945, as documented by real estate records and by William's will and estate records. According to a newspaper item, by December 1944 Hugh and Roxie had moved to the Barskin Apartments at 45 1/2 South Jefferson Street.

Hugh Wooden passed away in 1950 from leukemia or multiple myeloma, as reported in obituaries and death records. At the time of his death, Hugh and Roxie were living at the Barskin Apartments, and Hugh was working as a bath attendant at the Home Lawn Sanitarium on East Washington Street. His obituary states that he had been a member of the Masons, Scottish Rite, Eastern Star, Knights of Pythias, and the First Christian Church of Martinsville, where he had been a deacon. His funeral was conducted by Reverend Ervin L. Thompson of the First Christian Church of Martinsville, and Hugh was buried in Centerton Cemetery alongside his two daughters.

After Hugh's death, Roxie continued to live in or near Martinsville. City directories give her address for 1951 as "general delivery" Martinsville; for 1954 as 240 West Washington Street, Martinsville --- where she is listed as a housekeeper; and for 1957 as 40 North Marion Street, Martinsville --- where she is listed as retired. According to obituaries and death records, she was living at 40 North Marion Street when she passed away from heart problems in 1959. Her obituary states that she was a member of the Eastern Star and the First Christian Church of Martinsville, having been in the Art Society and the Faith Circle Class and treasurer of her Sunday school class. As mentioned above, Roxie had worked at various jobs, and for recreation, she played cards and was a member of a bridge club, according to Martinsville newspaper items. Newspaper accounts of her death state that her funeral was conducted by Reverend George W. Adams of the Baptist Church at Paragon, Morgan County. Reverend Adams had for years been a Baptist minister in Martinsville and had been a neighbor of the Woodens when they lived on South Jefferson Street. Roxie is buried alongside Hugh and their daughters at Centerton.

All four of Hugh and Roxie Wooden's sons played high school basketball, graduated from Martinsville High School, and married girls from Martinsville. As mentioned above, Maurice (class of 1925) and Thelma Williams (class of 1927) were married at Watseka, Illinois, in 1933; and John (class of 1928) and Nellie Riley (class of 1929) were married at Indianapolis in 1932. Daniel (class of 1934) and Kathleen Phyllis Hendrix (class of 1934) were married at Connersville, Indiana, in 1935; and William (class of 1940) and Ruth Harriette Goss (class of 1941) were married at Martinsville in 1943.

All of the Wooden boys earned college degrees. Maurice graduated from Franklin College in 1931, John from Purdue University in 1932, Daniel from New Mexico State Teachers College in 1949, and William from Purdue in 1944. All went on to earn master's degrees. As presented in John's books, his parents placed a high value on learning, education, and hard work. It had to be extremely satisfying to them, and quite a compliment to them as well, that all of their sons not only graduated from college but also had successful careers in education: Maurice in Indiana, New Mexico, and California; John in Kentucky, Indiana, and California; Daniel in New Mexico; and William in Indiana.

John spent most of his life in California. After graduating from Purdue, his career as a teacher and coach began at Dayton High School in Dayton, Kentucky (1932-1934). He next went to South Bend Central High School in South Bend, Indiana (1934-1946, which includes serving in the Navy from 1943 to 1945); then to Indiana State Teachers College (now Indiana State University) in Terre Haute, Indiana (1946-1948); and finally to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA; 1948-1975). As indicated in Part 1 of this article, he was an extremely successful individual. This is true whether using the usual definition of success or using John Wooden's definition --- "peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming."

Our research project has focused upon John Wooden's family history and his life in Morgan County because we noticed discrepancies across numerous accounts and felt those topics could and should be addressed more completely and accurately than they had been. In addition to conducting personal interviews, we researched a wide variety of official and other written records, which to our knowledge had not been done before. In so doing, we found much new information, identified differences between what was found in the records and what is contained in previous accounts, and made some interesting discoveries.

One particularly significant discovery is that the Hugh Wooden family lived in Martinsville from 1907 to 1914, prior to their later move to Martinsville in 1925. In addition, we not only found strong evidence that Maurice, John, and their two sisters were born in Martinsville during that initial period of residence but also



The first year that black athletes were allowed to play in the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball tournament was 1948. The year before, Coach John Wooden of Indiana State Teachers College (Indiana State University) in Terre Haute, Indiana, had refused to allow his basketball team to play in the tournament since their one black player, Clarence Walker, was not allowed to play. Pictured here is Wooden (coach, left) with his 1948 team which played in the 1948 tournament (Walker, front row middle). (Photo from the 1948 Indiana State Teachers College yearbook, courtesy of the owner)

located the house in which the Hugh Wooden family lived during that time and in which we believe those children were born. Although the standard story has been that the Woodens had lost their farm by 1925 and moved into Martinsville, real estate records show that they sold the farm in 1930, five years after they had moved back to Martinsville. Two Martinsville houses in which John Wooden lived during high school have been identified, and, although it has been thought that the family lived at 159 South Jefferson Street during his high school years, our research indicates otherwise. In addition, a number of other meaningful aspects of John Wooden's life and career have been clarified. We believe that these and other results of our research project contribute to a fuller and more accurate view of the Wooden family.

Afterword

There is a reasonable chance that we would not have written this article if Roxie Wooden had not been ill in November 1919. If she had been well, John Wooden's life may have been much different than it was.

At the beginning of Part 1, we referred to John's "advantageous mix of abilities, personal characteristics, family life, mentors, religious faith, and background in Indiana basketball," all of which contributed to his enormous success in basketball, teaching, and coaching. How much of that success was due to John Wooden himself and how much to accompanying circumstances? He had inherent beneficial qualities and much ability, but is this also a case in which key elements of family life and other aspects of personal environment came together for the right individual to significantly contribute to the abilities and accomplishments of that individual?

The following interesting auction advertisement appeared in the *Martinsville Democrat* on September 5, 1919: "As we have decided to quit farming and move to Florida, this fall, we will offer for Sale at Public Auction, on the Hugh Wooden Farm . . . SEPT. 18, 1919 . . . All Our Personal Property, consisting of. . ." The listed sellers were Hugh Wooden and Hattie Rothrock, Roxie's stepmother, and the personal property included farm animals, farm equipment, crops, and "Other articles too numerous to mention." Following the auction, newspapers for September 19 and October 24, 1919, stated that the Hugh Wooden family would move to Florida for the winter and that they would be going by auto. However, the paper of November 7 stated: "Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Wooden and family have given up their trip to Florida on account of recent ill health of Mrs. Wooden."

Having sold the farm animals and equipment, what was Hugh planning to do for a living in Indiana after wintering in Florida or for that matter in Florida? Miami was being developed at the time, so there were likely many jobs available. According to newspapers, Myron Stanton, Hugh's future brother-in-law, had gone to Miami in October 1919 to work. Myron wrote home that the climate was wonderful, jobs in the trades were plentiful, and he gave the pay scales for several different trades such as carpentry, masonry, and chauffeur-ing. If the Woodens had travelled to Florida, they might have decided to stay. If they had, would John's career

PUBLIC SALE

As we have decided to quit farming and move to Florida, this fall, we will offer for Sale at Public Auction, on the Hugh Wooden Farm, one-fourth mile East of Centerton and one and one-half mile south of Brooklyn, on

THURSDAY, SEPT. 18, 1919

at 10:30 a. m. All Our Personal Property, consisting of:

<p style="text-align: center;">7 HORSES 7</p> <p>1 6-yr-old Bay Mare, sound and good worker;</p> <p>1 5-yr-old Gray Mare, sound and will work any where;</p> <p>1 3-yr-old Bay Mare, a good one;</p> <p>1 3-yr-old Bay Mare, blind, but will work anywhere;</p> <p>1 2½ yr-old Gray Colt, sound, broke;</p> <p>1 Weanling Mule Colt, black, 52 in. high;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 COWS 4</p> <p>1 6-yr-old Black Cow, in full flow of milk, an extra good one;</p> <p>1 5-yr-old Red Cow, a good one, gives about 3 gal. milk a day;</p>	<p>1 Extra Good Milk and Butter Cow;</p> <p>1 4-yr-old Black Cow, will be fresh 18th of October;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10 SHEEP 10</p> <p>10 Head Shropshire Ewe, Lambs;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOGS</p> <p>20 to 30 head Feeding Shoats, weight from 60 to 100 lb.;</p> <p>4 Brood Sows, one to farrow by sale day;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CORN</p> <p>Entire Corn Crop of 22 acres to be sold by acre, with privilege of cutting; -Also 200 bales of fine Wheat Straw;</p>
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IMPLEMENTS—1 3¼ Studebaker Wagon, a good one; 1 Hay Frame; 1 Gravel Bed; 1 Manure Spreader, used one year, good as new; 1 14-inch Gale Riding Breaking Plow; 1 13-inch Walking Breaking Plow; 1 14-inch Walking Breaking Plow; 2 Riding Cultivators; 1 Land Roller; 1 10-ft. Spike Tooth Harrow; 1 10-Disc, 3-horse Wheat Drill, good as new; 2 5-Disc one-horse Wheat Drills, fertilizer attachment, bought last season; 1 5-Hoe one-horse Wheat Drill; 1 Set Breaching Harness, good as new; 1 Set Chain Harness. Other articles too numerous to mention.

TERMS—All sums of \$5.00 and under cash; on sums over \$5.00, a credit of 6 months will be given with 6 per cent interest from date of sale, purchaser giving bankable note with approved security. Notes to draw 5 percent from date if not paid at maturity, 2 percent discount for cash on note sums.

Hugh Wooden & Mrs. Hattie Rothrock

Cols G. R. BROWN and HENRY EDWARDS, Ascts.
C. O. ABBOTT, Clerk

Lunch will be served by Ladies of Centerton Church

Auction notice for the sale of Hugh and Roxie Wooden's personal property from their farm at Centerton, Indiana, which appeared in the Martinsville Democrat on September 5, 1919. (Courtesy of the Morgan County Public Library)



Coach John R. Wooden
October 14, 1910 - June 4, 2010

John Wooden from the bulletin of the June 27, 2010, memorial service of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Martinsville. (Courtesy of Reverend Mark Poindexter and Kenneth Costin)

Kenneth Costin, Richard and Joyce Hamilton, Harry Johnson, Herb and Yvonne Knieper, Elmer Reynolds, Mildred Swisher, Ralph Tedrow, and Gertrude Wright, Martinsville; Gloria Blake and Mary Catherine Lotti, Indianapolis; Brenda Brittain and staff, Morgan County Assessor's Office; Dannett Burns and Reverend Mark Poindexter, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Martinsville; Melody Carducci, Alumni Office, and Registrar's Office, Purdue University; Brian Culp, *Martinsville Reporter-Times*; Connie Davis, Paula Dillender, and Jana Gray, Morgan County Recorder's Office; Russell Goff, New Mexico Association of Educational Retirees; Jerry Gott, Masonic Lodge, Eminence; Ted Green, *Indianapolis Star*; Fred Hawkins, Owen County; Eric Holt, Registrar's Office, and University Archives, Indiana State University; Mike Hughes and Steve Knieper, Morgan County; Cassie Jones, Krista Ledbetter, and Jennifer McKinley, Morgan County Public Library; Jeanne LaFary, Morgan County Health Department; Barbara Martin, Order of the Eastern Star, Martinsville; Marilyn Metcalf and Vicki Shireman, Morgan County Auditor's Office; Danielle Moffett, Alumni Office, and Registrar's Office, Western New Mexico University; Joann Shrake and Marcia Terrell, Centerton; Margee Stamper, Franklin College; Charles R. Vaughan, Lafayette; Judy Wallace, High Rolls Mountain Park, New Mexico; and Ralph Willis, Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias, New Castle.

The authors wrote a different and shorter account of the Wooden family which was published in the Fall 2010 issue of the *Indiana Basketball History Magazine*. The Indiana Historical Society Press and the authors thank the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, publisher of that magazine, and its editor, Becky Beavers, for readily agreeing to the publication of the present article.

Selected References

The authors used many types of sources for this two-part article, included among which are birth, death, cemetery, marriage, hospital, school, church, fraternal organization, census, military, Social Security,

have been in basketball or even in sports? Would he have become famous? We think that he would have done quite well and very possibly would have made a name for himself, but his life might have been one of quiet success.

In Florida John would still have had his abilities, personal characteristics, immediate family, and religious faith. However, extended family was an important element in his life, and much of his family as well as his family history were in Indiana. Would there have been a Florida equivalent to the Centerton farm? In regard to basketball, there was not the same interest and passion in Florida as there was in Indiana. Would he have found mentors to replace coaches Earl Wariner, Glenn Curtis, and Ward Lambert? How different would John's life have been if he had not married Nellie Riley who was so conducive to his career? In Florida would John have experienced the "interconnected whole" such as he experienced in Indiana? Without it, could Florida have produced the same John Wooden? Thankfully, because the Woodens cancelled their trip to Florida in 1919, we will never know.

Acknowledgements

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real estate, property, court, and tax records. They also used family histories, genealogies, obituaries, wills, city and county directories, telephone directories, books, articles, manuscripts, newspapers, letters, post-cards, photographs, maps, and personal interviews. Some of the many sources utilized are listed below.

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