



Ralph Shaw



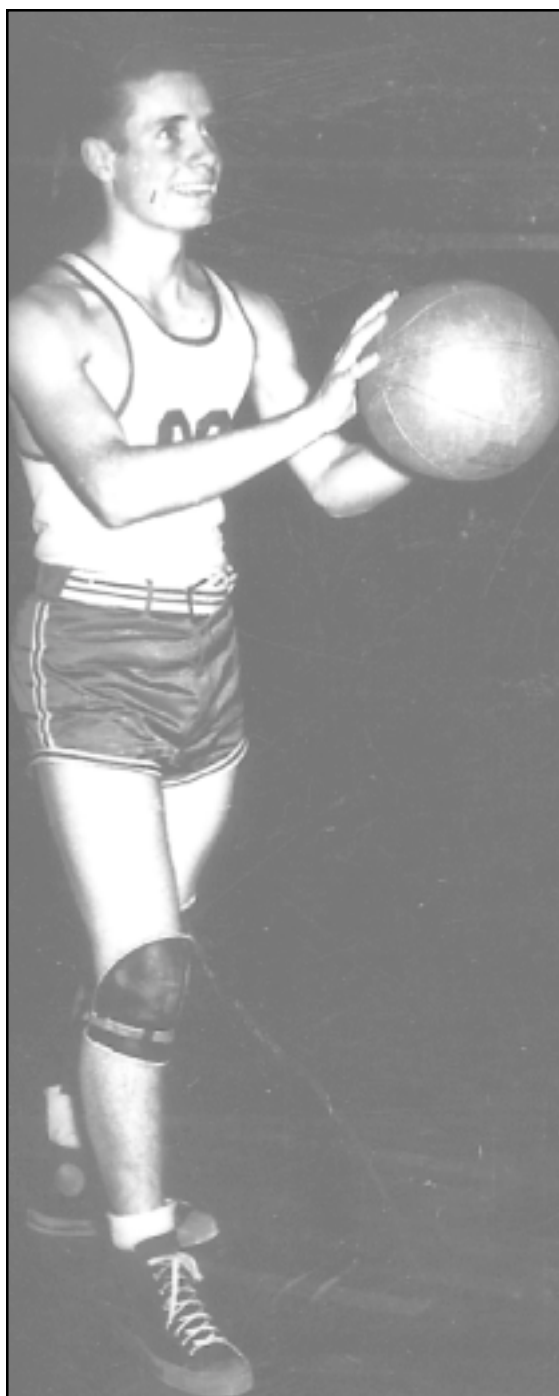
Phil Nemeth



Gale Harold



Leo (Junior) Van Vleet



Raye Brown

Memories vivid for 1948 player

By MARY LOU OLSON
 Memories of a basketball streak at Decatur Community High School which took the team to state competition three years in a row are vivid for Ralph Shaw, a member of the Class of 1948.

That is a record that Mr. Shaw believes has never been broken. Members of the starting team were Phil Nemeth and Leo (Junior) Van Vleet, forwards; Gale Harold, post; and Raye Brown and Mr. Shaw, guards.

"Some of that team had played together since fifth grade," he recalled. "Coming from the grade school to the high school, we realized we were running only about half speed. It took a lot of pushing by each team member to get up to our top speed and condition to the point where we could go home and not have leg cramps."

"Early in our high school practice, there was a cut list posted on the locker room bulletin board and each player held his breath to see if they had been cut from the squad. Fortunately the teammates who went on missed the cut and from there on, it was a lot of hard work, but a world of fun. Winning is fun!"

"Basketball and playing with that team was one of the highlights of my

life. We stayed in training — no smoking and no junk food — so we were all in top physical condition."

In 1945-46, Mr. Shaw said, the team ended the season second or third in the league, but they beat Hays High in an overtime on their own court, so received an invitation to help fill the state tournament bracket. In 1946-47, they didn't win the league, but won the regional to qualify for state.



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"In 1947-48, we were faced with a new, young coach, Bill Cummins, who was just out of college," Mr. Shaw recalled. "We would do anything for him. He was strong on discipline, and at the beginning of the season, we were having a Christmas holiday practice. Three of our team went to Colorado to ski, so the next game found the three sitting in the audience as spectators."

"Coach Cummins could put any five players on the floor and we could run four fast quarters without substitution. The first five usually played a whole game unless someone fouled out."

"Our top goal was to make the top 10 or traveling squad. Other team members were Dennis Campbell, Don Eicher, Wayne Waldo, Don Campbell and Gene Lindemann.

The first year that Mr. Cummins was coach, we were undefeated in league play.

"We played a checking man-to-man, leaving no one uncovered. We practiced a pattern of three down and three back full court, hour after hour. Three men running, one going down the center of the court and one on each side of the court as hard as we could run, passing the ball after taking only two steps and no dribbling of the ball. The ball had to go hard and timing had to be good, but it made a fast break real effective. We used the same pattern off the opponent's free throw goal. I lost two front teeth on this maneuver, as I tripped from behind on a fast break off of a Colby goal."

Mr. Shaw said the coach cured them of bouncing the ball before they shot. He referred to that as the "grade school bounce." Missing a set-up was a cardinal sin; they went as high as they could jump with the body and arm fully extended with a soft shot.

"We'd better not miss that lay-up," Mr. Shaw said. "Our team didn't pay much attention to how many points any player made. Everyone put points on the board, and together we won the game."

In 1948, the Red Devils clinched the league title by downing the Norton Blue Jays in a close contest, 35-30, to qualify for state. That game brought 800 fans from Norton and Oberlin, who squeezed into the gym to watch.

The Northwest Kansas League at that time played a double round-robin involving Oberlin, Norton, Atwood, St. Francis, Colby, Goodland and Hoxie, and they won all of these. The Devils also won non-league games with Almena and Phillipsburg, but lost to Hays once and to Norcat by two points in an overtime.

Jerry Oppey, a sportscaster at KXXX Radio, said after watching the Red Devils play, "The Oberlin team is like a smooth-running machine. It was the passing that made this team great."

Mr. Shaw and his wife, Violet, are avid basketball fans and still enjoy watching the Red Devil basketball teams.



WINNING ALL 12 GAMES in the Northwest Kansas League, the 1947-48 Oberlin Red Devils continued to defeat all opposition at the regional tournament at Colby to qualify for the state tournament in Salina. Members were (front row, from left) Phil Nemeth, Leo (Junior) Van Vleet, Ralph Shaw, Raye Brown and Gale Harold; (second row) Coach Bill Cummins, Dennis Campbell, Don Eicher, Wayne Waldo, Don Campbell and Gene Lindemann.


The Decatur Dictator —
Club Corner

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Voice of Decatur Community High School



Decatur Dictator

By the DCHS Dictator Staff

The Way I See It

By Grant Reichert

School Menus

