

Memories of Vaughnsville Girls' Basketball

1940 Vaughnsville High School – Girls Basketball Team

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Jane (Stemen) Wright, Columbus Grove, was born in 1925. That was the year that Calvin Coolidge was inaugurated. Al Capone took over as boss of Chicago's bootlegging mob. Pretty Boy Floyd started his nine-year siege as a bank robber, scotch tape was invented and Clarence Birdseye developed a deep-freezing process for cooked foods. You could buy a Model T Ford for \$300. The first motel opened in San Luis Obispo, Ca. It was a year that changed how people traveled and opened up the country.

Some of Jane's fondest memories were her high school years at Vaughnsville High School playing basketball. Her greatest memory was when she was a freshman and played basketball. "It was the 1939-40 season, the last year that they allowed girl's state competition in basketball." (In 1940 the state decided that basketball was too strenuous for girls and it was stopped.)

But for Jane's freshman year, it was wonderful. "Dorothy Peters was our coach and there were eleven of us on the team," she said. "We played nine other teams in our league before the state finals began. Practice was every Tuesday and Thursday night."

The boys had the gym for practice every Monday and Wednesday night. Friday night was game night for all of them. The first game on Friday nights was the boy's junior varsity game, the second game was the girl's team (They got the prime time) and last was the varsity boys. All three games were played on Friday night.

"After every away game, we returned to Lefty Litten's restaurant in Vaughnsville for a snack," Jane said. Since there was no athletic department to supply funds for the girls, the hosting team's school gave each girl 50 cents to spend for an after-game snack.

"We had cheerleaders too," said Jane. "And they were not all girls either." The 1940 basketball

season ended with three wins, five losses and one tie."

Girls basketball was different in 1940. There were six girls on the floor at one time, three forwards and three guards. The forwards were the only ones who were allowed to shoot the ball. That was true even if it was a guard who was fouled. The girls were only allowed to play on half of the court. Guards could not cross the line and neither could the forwards. Teams members were only allowed one dribble before passing the ball. The game started when the referee threw the ball to one team. It was not the physical sport that it is today.

It was our tournament game against Columbus Grove and the last two minutes of the game," said Jane. "They put me in because Betty Seaman had fouled out. We were down by two points. I got the ball and I was the closest player to the basket. I had been coached to feed the ball to Peg Benroth and so, even though I could hear my parents and the other fans yelling 'shoot Jane, shoot', I did as I was coached and threw the ball to Peg. She took a shot and missed. We lost the game 16-14."

It was a very disappointing loss and the last of its kind for many years. In 1976, the state sanctioned girls' basketball as a state competition sport.

Team Members – Margaret (Peg) Benroth, Jean Heidlebaugh, Pearl Basinger, Evelyn Mobouk, Louise Stemen, Betty Seaman, Norma Best, Betty Sobosly, Donna Rohrer, Rosemary Hershey and Jane Stemen. The Coach was Dorothy Peters.

Girls basketball during this time period did not have a state sponsored tournament. They did participate in the Putnam County Tournament along with the boys. But when the PCT was finished, only the boys' teams that qualified moved on to the Ohio High School Athletic Association's sanctioned tournament. The first one was in 1924 for the boys and 1976 for the girls.