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UA1D We Were One and Two Teammates

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I was born at Sonora, Kentucky in Hardin County, this side of Elizabethtown. I was raised on a farm. My parents were Albert Hornback and Roddie Sullivan, who had married my dad. I had a flock of brothers and sisters. Raymond, Porter, and Walter were my brothers; my sisters were Verna and Evelyn were my sisters. There were six of us altogether.

My dad was the postmaster at Sonora for years and years. That was the top job in the small towns. He had a good farm which he ran as a sideline. We raised it all. We were tobacco raisers, corn and stock. We had a big red barn and a tobacco barn, a silo, and everything. We did the job right!

I went to elementary school at Glendale. I played basketball early, in the seventh or eighth grade. We played on an outdoor court.

I played high school basketball at Sonora. We built a gymnasium by going to Fort Knox and tearing down some old army barracks. The carpenters around Sonora built us a nice gymnasium, and we played Elizabethtown, Glendale, Horse Cave, anybody that wanted to play, we would play them.
I played guard, running guard. I was a shooter. If I got that long shot with nobody on me, I'd bust it. I could hit it.

I came to Western from Sonora in 1925, and I graduated in 1930. I played basketball and tennis.

Mr. Diddle recruited me. I can remember when I was in high school he used to referee our ball games. People thought he was a pretty good ball player because at half time he would stand in the center of the floor and shoot at the basket, and he hit the basket, or the backboard, and that was long-shooting. Folks would say, "Oh, my God, that man is really strong, isn't he."

I remember when I was a senior, he came in the dressing room one night. I was stretched out on the floor, and he walked up and kicked me in the butt. He said, "I'll get you down to Western, and you'll quit smoking them old cigarettes, and you won't get tired like that, you'll be able to go the whole game full blast" and he laughed. He said, "I'll kick Hell out of you if I ever get you down to Western." I never did think of going anywhere else.

There wasn't much to Western when I came there in 1925. On scholarship I got room and board. I had a room down at the Henry Watterson boarding house at the foot of the hill. A fellow by the name of Bernie Kitchener ran the place. Kitchener had a large basement room with tables in it. I would help put the food on the tables and waited tables for
my meals. Mr. Diddle saw to it that my room, which cost six
dollars a month was paid for.

I played for Western from 1925 to 1929. I never did
play as a substitute. As a freshman I beat a senior who was
six foot six or seven out of his position. (I won't name
him, because he is a good friend of mine.) I came down from
Sonora and played as a regular in the old red barn for Mr.
Diddle.

That old red barn had a chicken wire fence built up on
standards all the way around the inside of it to keep the
ball from going into the stands. It didn't have many seats.
People would line up against that fence and watch the game.
By the time I graduated we played in the gymnasium in the
training school. We were quite proud of it because it had
seats and a nice hardwood floor. We could probably get 1200
people in the building by crowding them in.

The star on the 1925 team, Pap Glenn, was one of the
best and greatest basketball players that ever played at
Western. He could hit that long basket. He was also a great
football player. He was one of the first great athletes at
Western. He was All-State for everybody. In 1925 he was a
senior and I was a freshman. When he graduated he went to
Male High School in Louisville and did all of his coaching
there.

We had a good ball club, as good as anybody in the
state, because they had the same trouble going some place
that we did. We had some good boys--Bootser Mansfield, Ed Stansberry, Winkenhofer, Pap, Ray, Martin, and Pitchford.

Mr. Diddle was a good disciplinarian. Boys knew what he wanted done, and they tried to do it. If they didn't, they had to pay the price. Sometimes the price was serious. He might see that you wouldn't play as much as you would like to play. For a basketball player, someone who liked to play, that was a serious penalty. I wouldn't have liked for him to have kept me out of a ball game. I liked the game. I liked to play.

We behaved pretty well. He had us under his finger. We had some pretty tough boys. He never used his fists. He would just grab you by the shirt and shake you up a bit.

In those days we travelled in automobiles. We'd get in any kind of car they had and go.

When I graduated, I became a coach. I went out on my first job in 1930 coaching in high school at Corinth, Kentucky. It was a consolidated school and a bunch of country boys. They were the greatest bunch of kids I ever saw.

I coached there a whole year, and had a great bunch of country boys. They would put it on the line for me. We won our district tournament. We won our regional tournament. We went on from the regional tournament and won the state tournament. In the finals with Kavanaugh, we led them to the well, but we wouldn't let them drink.
And then we went into the national tournament at Chicago. Old Alonza Stagg was putting on the tournament, the high school national tournament, and my people in Corinth, after we won the state tournament championship said, "Coach You are going to the national championship"

I said, "We dont have the money to do that"

They said, "We'II make up the money."

So they made up the money to send me and my boys to the national tournament. And a lot of people from Corinth went to the tournament. Just country people.

We figured we would do a pretty good job, because we had a bunch of country boys that put it on the line.

So we got busy. We won five ball games out of six. We lost out in the finals in the national tournament in Chicago with a bunch of great kids. The Lawrence boys were the stars of the ball team, David and Frank ("Bear" they called him). Two or three of them made the All-American team.

I think Bear was the only one of the group that graduated. He came to school at Western. He was a guard about 5' 9" of 5' 10" in height. Heavyset. He came to Western and did a great job for Mr. Diddle.

I stayed at Corinth one year after winning the state championship and going on to the national tournament. That was something a bunch of country boys didn't usually do. I left Corinth and went to West Virginia. I had a friend there that I had to gone to school with at Western.
He called me and said, "Ted there is a job open here at Elkhorn District High School in Switchback, West Virginia. They've got a nice gymnasium, a swimming pool, and other things. All the faculty stay on the campus, in a club house. You would like it! The job is yours! You would like it!"

He told me what it paid, and it paid well, so I said "I'll take it."

So I left Corinth and went to West Virginia. It was a beautiful place with a beautiful club house. The faculty all stayed in the club house. I think it cost me $45 a month for room and board and everything.

We had a great season. We went to the state tournament--didn't win it, but we did well. And they were happy.

I left Switchback then and came back to Kentucky to the Ludlow High School in northern Kentucky, right there next to Covington and Newport. We played those good teams.

I had a bunch of good ball players at Ludlow. We played the good boys--went over into Cincinnati and played there. I stayed there eight years. I had great teams, a good salary. I built a gymnasium and a stadium.

About then Mr. Diddle was looking for somebody to help him. People back home were trying to get him to take somebody else. He said, "Aw naw. Hell naw. I know who I want."

They said, "Who do you want?"

He said, "I want old Teddy. He's my boy. He's the one I want."
I had won the state championship in 1930, and then I could go anywhere. I could have gone to Vanderbilt—I did go to Vanderbilt—I accepted the job, but I didn't keep it too long. I went to Vanderbilt as coach. I went down there and stayed a while. The people of Bowling Green were saying to Mr. Diddle, Listen, you are not going to get Ted Hornback up here now. Why don't you go on and get you a coach?"

Mr. Diddle said, "Hell, I'm not going to get anybody but Ted. He's not going to stay down there. I'll bring him back up here."

He kept after me, and finally I couldn't leave. He made it possible that I could come back. And I did.

Mr. Diddle said to me, "Hell, you're not going anywhere. You are going to stay with me."

So I stayed with him the rest of the time. I never wanted to coach anywhere else. He was a great character to work with. I came back to Western and stayed with Western for 38 years.

So I came back to Western in 1938 to help Mr. Diddle. I stayed with Mr. Diddle — After Mr. Diddle's death I became the athletic director. I left Western in 1976. I was at Western a long time with Mr. Diddle. He and I were one-two teammates. We had great ball clubs.

Mr. Diddle was an old fox. We worked together well. He didn't worry much about the fundamentals, and all those new things coming up, because he knew that I was working with it awfully hard—on all the new things and everything.
We always had a good fundamental ball club. That was one reason that we could win. We'd win over the boys that just played by ear. We could play by ear, but we also had the fundamentals to go with it. And that was necessary.

We worked on drills--ball-handling--offence. A lot of people said, "Western doesn't do anything, they just run and gun". Those people were just crazy. We ran all kinds of offences against the zone, the man-to-man, or anything.

We could do the fast break because we had big boys like Towery who could get the ball out. And we had boys like Gibson or Emery, Johnny Oldham, and those boys who knew how to use the fast break and get that three on two--two on one--or four on three. They knew what to do. On the fast break they threw finger-tip passes--just barely catching it and passing it on. Towery was great at that. Most all of them were.

We were prepared for it. We had good guards; we had the big boy under the basket--boys who could cut and move, and shoot outside. We were pretty well fixed. When we hit that floor, Mr. Diddle would say, "Ted, what are we going to do today?" I would say, "We're working on fundamentals." He would say, "O.K., Go get 'em." And we would.

Mr. Diddle was a man who always had the last word. But he would come to me to see if it was alright. If it was fundamentals, he knew it was alright because he knew I was a fundamentalist. I had played for him and with him. I had
come up under him and learned those things. He said, "I don't have to worry about those it. That's Ted's job."

Mr. Diddle was a good disciplinarian. The boys stayed with him in Diddle Dormitory. We had no trouble. He would take care of that--if it had to be physical, to go after them, he would.

We didn't have any discipline problems on our ball club. He would let them know what he expected of them. He would say, "Now listen boys, you are playing for me. You are good boys. You know what's right--you know what's wrong. You are going to be gentlemen, and if you are not, you are going to come to me. Ted and I will take care of you, but you are going to play ball for us. You are going to play with us, play the way we want you to play, and that will be the right way. We are going to get out there, and we're going to knock the pants off of them, but we are going to do it according to the rules."

He never permitted rough or illegal play. He believed in good, honest, hard playing ball. Good, rough and tough, but according to the rules. He could really hold a pep rally. And he loved kids.

We played the best, and we didn't pick 'em. He was a great man to work with. He treated me like I was his son. He told them, "Listen, Ted and I will get the job done." And we would. I worked with him all that time, and we played the best.
I enjoyed every year of it. We had good ball clubs—we had a good following, we had good crowds. We played the best ball clubs in the nation, and we were always up there in the top ranking with the best of 'em. I enjoyed every minute of it.

We recruited players in a quite different way than the players are recruited today, because we didn't have all the fancy things. We didn't have much to offer. We would hear about them, and go see them play as often as we could.

We would bring them in, make sure they would be fed, and that was about all of it. We would put them in the car, take them out to eat, take them home with us, let them come and see us play, and talk to them.

We did a pretty good job of picking the boys that we thought could play; whether they were good boys—whether they were good students—whether they could really put it on the line for us. We liked them to be pretty well-built, but we never had any really big boys. We demanded a whole lot of them.

We always had a well-disciplined ball club; a well-controlled ball club, and a ball club that was in good physical condition. They knew what the rules were, and they tried to behave, and take those rules to heart and do what they were supposed to do. We never were a great big ball club. We had some average size boys. We demanded that our boys fight, put it on the line. And they did—they would go out there and
get somebody. As the old saying goes, we would get with them, and we always had good records.

I did the scouting all the time. I was on the road a whole lot. It didn't matter where I had to go—if it was one of the Southeastern Conference teams at Knoxville, or some place like that, I would get in my car and go. I would get somebody to go with me, and go, scout, and come back that night, and make an eight o'clock class the next morning.

Mr. Diddle would call me up and say, "Ted, can we beat 'um? I would say, "Yeah, but it's going to take a lot of hard work on these boys. A lot of individual work, because they are a good ball team."

He would say, "How do you think we ought to play 'em?"

I would say, "We're going to play 'em just like we play 'em all. Good hard-nosed basketball; good defense; and we'll be after 'em. They'll think lightning struck 'em after we get through with 'em."

We worked hard at it, but we loved it. We got a bunch of good boys. Usually they would put it on the line for us, and we could play with the best of 'em.

We liked to play in New York, Philadelphia, and Buffalo, the big teams. They liked to bring Western there, to New York and the Garden, because we would put 'em on a show.

We had a Western warm-up drill that we worked, and that people liked to see. We had a lot of ball-handling in it. We had a bunch of boys who could just do things with that ball.
We had two or three different kinds. Figure eight—we would run them off on just a double line—we would dunk the ball—we had boys of only six feet height who could dunk the ball. We would put them on a show wherever we went. We would give them their money's worth.

The people loved Mr. Diddle at Madison Square Garden. Ned Irish knew that he was a character, and he used it to his advantage. He would carry on with Mr. Diddle and the characteristic things he would do. We enjoyed going to the Garden, and the Garden enjoyed us. They like to have us.

All of the sports writers would come around and get some sayings of Mr. Diddle so they could print 'em. They would play him up. Some of the writers would come around and egg me on. They would say, "Ted, why in the world don't you tell the old man to sit down, and let you do the job, and quit carrying on the foolishness that he does?" I would say, "You leave him alone. He is having his fun, and I'm having mine, too." I wouldn't have taken anything for it.

If Mr. Diddle had heard 'em, he would have hair-lipped 'em. That's what he would have done.

There is no question that Kelly Thompson helped make Mr. Diddle, but Mr. Diddle deserved it. He did a good job. He got the best out of everybody and himself. Kelly was a good public relations man. He would write him Mr. Diddle up and try to make him look as good as he could. That wasn't hard to do.
Mr. Diddle never made much money, but people were good to him. He would walk downtown on the street, looking in the windows. He might have someone, Bill McCormack or other friends along with him. He would see a suit of clothes, and they would say, "Coach, what do you think of that suit of clothes? Well, go in there and get it, and he would go in and get it.

People were mighty good to Mr. Diddle. He had lots of gifts, a lot of things.

And with regard to some things, he just took them. Vegetables from my garden, for example. There was one house between his house and mine out on Normal Drive, the old Burton place was between us. He cut a hole in the wire fence so he could crawl through and get into my garden.

My wife would see him back there in the garden with his basket picking. He would yell at her and say, "Elizabeth, Ted's letting this stuff get too big."

She would say, "Well, you won't let it get too big too long."

He would steal out of my garden. Then I would hear something in the morning—maybe on a Saturday morning—and I'd look out the window, and he'd be cutting my grass. What he was doing was paying me for the garden stuff he was swiping. He knew, of course that it was all right.

There weren't many like him. He could have gone anywhere in the country, but Western was his—he started with it.