

Dear Michelle,

Let me begin by repeating the compliment I gave you after this year's Wright City Alumni Banquet and Dance: You did a very commendable job of directing the proceedings, and you and the other officers put together a refreshingly lively program. Music for the dance was great to listen to in spite of my dancing career having come to a halt. I am, of course, prejudiced since most of the band members are long-time friends of our family.

I promised to send you my memories of Prof. Lindell F. Gooch. I failed to recognize his kindness to me personally until I was well advanced in years. I hope that what I write now will serve as the thanks I never had a chance to express to him.

I cannot guarantee the accuracy of the year of his arrival in Wright City as the new school superintendent, but I believe he took over in the fall of 1930. Surely, this date can be verified.

At any rate, he brought to our small school a feiry spirit that was contagious, though not well accepted at first by what might have been a few die-hard conservatives. His burning ambition seemed to put the Wright City High School on the map with winning basketball teams. I must hasten to say, that his interest in developing a good athletic program did not interfere with his classroom duties. You must consider that his faculty that first year or two consisted of only one teacher besides himself. She was Miss Helen Hackman. There were two elementary school teachers: Miss Mattie Keithley and Miss Lydda Vahle. (I hope to locate a picture of the four of them which I have placed in a book somewhere to take the curl out of it.)

Physically, Lindell was not a large man, but what he lacked in stature, was compensated for in character. No parent needed to worry about entrusting a daughter with him. His eyes were the bluest of blue under a shock of black hair. I can't recall ever seeing him in anything but a black pin-striped suit with shirt and tie. We knew nothing in those depression days of casual attire. Personal wardrobes were sparse, and we still clung to a degree of formality.

As to the reasons I think of Prof. Gooch as the Father of School Spirit in Wright City, let me enumerate: He beat the

bushes around Wright City to locate children who were not in high school and gave parents every incentive to send them. A case in point is that of Neoma Wood who drove a horse and buggy seven miles each way to attend school. During the day her horse was stabled across the road at Ole Hedeman's. I am fairly sure that Prof. Gooch saw that increased school enrollment would include a greater potential for a good basketball program.

Looming big as a hindrance to serious participation in sports events was the lack of a gymnasium. These were times of deep economic depression, and the idea of erecting a structure of any kind was almost preposterous. But, hard times did not deter our new leader. I know that it required all kinds of hard effort and powers of persuasion, but a crudely constructed gym became a reality. The walls may have been thin, but the playing floor was first-class.

I am sure that Prof. was able to enlist help in his endeavors, but I was not aware of it. It seems to me that Prof. did most of the ~~of the~~ work and made most of the decisions on his own. I think he chose the school colors of blue and gold, and the title of Wildcats for our teams. I recall that Willie Lee Schmidt drew the first wildcat face that became our school emblem.. Beyond his development of basketball teams, was the organization of us non-players into a Pep Club. Gooch himself taught us the yells and songs. We still sing "Hail to thee, Wright City High School" as the official song at our Alumni gatherings. Another of his songs was "On, Wright City" Pep Squad members were furnished with individual megaphones--blue with the letters WCHS in gold. Our noble mentor insisted on the highest standards of sportsmanship, and "booing" was absolutely taboo!

Throughout all this development of winning basketball teams, Lindell F. Gooch was creating school spirit that extended well beyond athletics. Other very important areas of education were never diminished in importance. Our high school joined a tri-county alliance through which we participated in spring competitions in a variety of track events; dramatic contests in one-act plays, serious and humorous readings; vocal solos by both boys and girls; and academic tests that included spelling, typing for both speed and accuracy, shorthand artistry and dictation to name some that I remember. This variety of activities gave non-athletes a chance to shine. Along with the events outside the classroom, Lindell Gooch proved to be an excellent teacher. He had the math classes, and I have used all my life the shortcuts he taught in general math. He was able to show the same zeal in the classroom that he showed as a basketball coach.

Another facet in the personality that must not be overlooked was his character. ~~No parents ever had to worry about entrusting a daughter with Mr. Gooch.~~ He was decent in an old-fashioned sense. And he had a sympathetic heart. My own experience will

illustrate what I mean. Prof. knew that Marjorie Pitts and I had been "best friends" since we had started school at age five in Foristell. Marge was a forward on the basketball team. At one point I was showing some promise as a guard, but as soon as I was aware that Prof. was watching me, I developed "rabbit ears" and fell apart. Looking back I can see that he hoped to allow us to be together on the team. When he saw that I was hopeless as a player, he appointed me official scorekeeper for both girls' and boys' teams, and I was allowed to accompany them to all out-of-town games as well as those at home. I'm sure Lindell Gooch never dreamed that an old lady of eighty-two years would still remember him for his warm and understanding heart.

Ok, well -
Repetition
is a sign
of old age
Please edit,

Physically, Lindell Gooch was not a large man, but I think I have described him as large in many other ways. His eyes were of the brightest blue underneatly combed black hair. I can't recall him wearing anything other than a black pin-striped suit with shirt and tie. In those days, we had no casual clothes--only Sunday best or work clothes. He was a man always in a hurry. I have an impression that the toes of his shoes were turned up from hard walking; I'm not sure. He kept his home life very private, but he was married to a petite little blonde lady who seemed to be the soul of patience. She taught some of the years in the grades, and both conducted themselves in a professional manner. Their son, Wendell, was born during their time in Wright City. At the time of Wendell's birth, the Gooches lived in a little gray house along the south side of Highway 40 at the eastern edge of town. They later lived in what I would call the Edwards house just south of the easternmost railroad crossing. I believe they kept a cow and sold milk. Prof. would deliver milk in the mornings before school. One morning, he was hit by a train, almost to no one's surprise. Thankfully, he was not seriously hurt.

Lindell Gooch was still ~~was~~ Superintendent of Schools in 1940. By that time, the faculty had increased to seven members besides himself. I have no knowledge of the year of the Gooches' move from Wright City or where they went. I do know that Lindell Gooch should be remembered as one of Wright City's most unforgettable characters. Surely, he should be called the Father of School Spirit.

Imperfectly typed and presented by

Mariam Goltzmann Strunk