

Program: Butler University & Hinkle Fieldhouse

Speaker: William H. Dick, MD, Sciencetech Club Historian

Introduced by: self-introduction

Attendance: 96

Guests: Lou Chenette, Emily Chenette, Robert McCallum, Bill Merrill, Marty Osterhaus

Scribe: William Dick

Editor: Carl Warner

Ovid Butler was born in Augusta, a town in mid-state New York. He came to Indiana in 1817, married, passed the bar exam and then practiced law in Shelbyville, IN. In 1836, he traveled to Indianapolis to practice law with Calvin Fletcher and two others. They were very successful.

In 1849, he gave up his law practice and wrote a charter for a university – Northwestern Christian University. In 1850 the college was approved by the legislature. Butler helped raise the \$75,000 for stock purchase. The college opened in 1855 on land owned by Mr. Butler. It became Butler University in 1877 when it moved to Irvington on the east side of Indianapolis. Butler was named Chancellor of the University, which admitted both men and women, the second U.S. college to do so. Ovid Butler died in July 1881. He lived at Forrest House at 1306 N. Park Ave., which still exists.

Butler University moved to the Fairview Park section (its current location) of the city in 1928. In that year, Butler Fieldhouse was built; it would become Hinkle Fieldhouse in 1966. Paul D. “Tony” Hinkle was an all-American basketball player and team captain at the University of Chicago in 1919 and 1920. He followed his coach, Harlan “Pat” Page, to Butler in 1921 where he was assistant basketball coach. In 1924, Butler won the AAU Basketball Championship. Then in 1929, Butler was the mythical National Basketball Champion. Tony Hinkle helped to establish the “Butler Way”: Humility, Passion, Unity, Servanthood and Thankfulness.

The Fieldhouse was the largest basketball arena in the U. S. from 1928-1950. Indiana State High School Basketball Championships were held there from 1928-1971, except for 1943-45. The Fieldhouse was used for many other events: political speeches, ice shows, roller derbies, pro tennis matches, circuses, the first USA-USSR basketball game, track and field meets, bicycle races and the 1987 Pan-American volleyball games. But the best shows were the State Finals for men’s high school basketball.

The most famous game was the 1954 Milan-Muncie Central game, won by Milan 32-30. It was memorialized in the movie *Hoosiers*. Milan had lost in the 1953 semifinals. In 1954, Milan took out Crispus Attucks in the semifinals. Then it was Attucks’ turn to win in 1955 and 1956. With Oscar Robertson, they went undefeated in 1956, the first Indiana team to do so. Crispus Attucks was the first all African-American team to win a state title in Indiana and in the U.S. Attucks had an amazing record; state finals in 1954, champions in 1955 and 1956, runner-up in 1957 and champion in 1959! In seven seasons, they were 179-20. Coach Ray Crowe was never named Coach of the Year and Attucks never had a movie made about them.

Tony Hinkle coached not only basketball but also football, track and baseball. He was responsible for the change in the color of the college basketball from brown to orange. He helped make the rule change to eliminate the center jump after each made basket; and he helped begin the 3-second rule. With its motion offense and its great shot selection, Butler won many basketball games over Hinkle’s 41-year tenure.

Under Coach Brad Stevens, Butler reached the NCAA basketball finals in 2010 and 2011. Until 2018, Stevens was the highest scorer in Zionsville H.S. history. He played college ball for DePauw. His teams lost both final games but Butler looked like the Hinkle-coached teams of old, with great movement and passing.

Butler is a great university. It has fine music and dance programs; a great pharmacy school; an excellent School of Business and a fine School of Education, in addition to Schools of Communications and Liberal Arts. The “Butler Way” lives on.



William Dick