

Retiree profile: Bob White

by Sheryl Hanson - Thursday, March 13, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/614/retiree-profile-bob-white/>

In the history of UW Oshkosh, perhaps no other couple symbolizes school spirit like Bob and Shirley White. Together, they spent nearly 70 years as faculty members at UW Oshkosh.

This month, read about Bob's memories of UW Oshkosh. Next month, look for Shirley's.

Bob came to campus in 1964 and retired in 1993. For most of those years—1965 through 1984—he served as men's basketball coach. He led the Titans to an appearance at the national tournament - then called the NAIA tournament- during the 1967-68 season.

"That was the first time any team from Wisconsin had ever gone that far," he said.

During the five-day tournament in Kansas City, the Titans won three straight games and got beat in the fourth.

"We went on to finally get beat in the semifinals by a last-second shot. The next night we played the team that had beaten us before, and won third place in the national tournament," Bob said.

It may seem hard to believe, but the team only had one set of uniforms. So—you guessed it—Bob and Shirley visited the laundromat every night to make sure the team had clean uniforms for the next day's tournament game.

"As long as we won, that was fine," he said, laughing.

When you see those black Titan uniforms, you can thank Bob. He added black to the UW Oshkosh uniforms. Before that, UW Oshkosh teams only wore the official school colors, gold and white.

"The games were filmed in black and white, and when we wore gold and white, both teams often looked the same on black and white TV," he said. "So I am the guy who added black to the uniforms. Then the other sports followed suit."

The job didn't carry many perks when Bob began coaching. He didn't even have an office telephone.

"The department chair and athletic director at the time said I could come into their offices if I needed to use a phone. Things were pretty conservative when I first arrived."

With baby boomers entering college in the mid-1960s, enrollment at UW Oshkosh skyrocketed.

"We went through a period of growth when we didn't have enough staff to teach, and space became an issue too. Enrollment went from 5,000 to 11,000 pretty quickly," he said.

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The building of Kolf eased the situation in 1971. With it came new staff members and more classes. Suddenly, the department had more new faculty members than old.

"We had a tremendous amount of new people. It was quite an adjustment."

In addition to coaching and teaching, Bob also chaired the physical education department from 1966 to 1968.

Today, Bob and Shirley live in Stillwater, Minn., where they enjoy being close to their daughter and grandchildren. Many UW Oshkosh alumni still keep in touch with them, and some even periodically stay at their home.

Want to get in touch with Bob or Shirley? Contact the Alumni Relations office at alumni@uwosh.edu.