

University of Missouri

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# MIZZOU

## Mizzou Basketball Memories

Daughter of former MU basketball coach shares Big Seven tournament memories.



Head Coach Sparky Stalcup (bottom right) and team captain Bill Stauffer (No. 43) led the 1951–52 Tigers into the Big Seven Basketball Tournament in Kansas City, Mo.

*Photos from the 1952 Savitar*

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*Editor's note: Every year around the holidays, Susan Stalcup Gray, daughter of former Mizzou basketball Coach Wilbur "Sparky" Stalcup, writes a short story to share with family and friends. The following is her 2001 installment, a quaint retrospective just in time for the Tigers' trip to the 2013 SEC Men's Basketball*

Tournament beginning March 13 in Nashville.



Wilbur "Sparky" Stalcup coached Mizzou basketball from 1946–62, finishing with a 195–179 (.521) record.

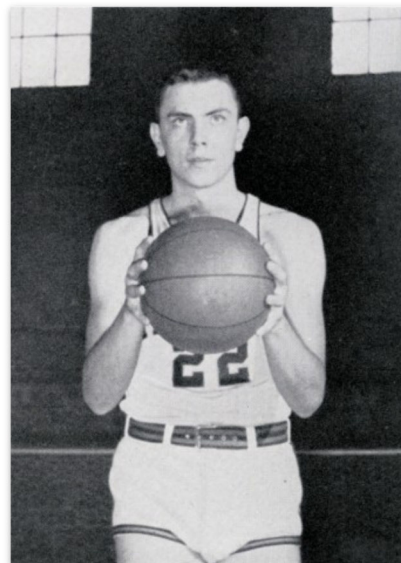
**W**hen some people think back to their childhoods, they remember Christmas as a time when their families gathered together and celebrated with gifts, religious services and lots of wonderful food. When I think back on childhood Christmases, I can hear bouncing basketballs on wooden floors and yelling fans. I can smell popcorn and hot dogs, and I can see the players warming up for their hard-fought games.

It never seemed unusual to me that my family rarely celebrated Christmas on Dec. 25. My father, Sparky Stalcup, was the basketball coach at the University of Missouri from 1946 to 1961. We would pack up near Christmas and go to Kansas City, Mo., for the Big Seven (later the Big Eight) basketball tournament.

We stayed at the Muehlebach Hotel downtown. Generally, we had a small suite with room for my dad to have meetings and for my mother and him to entertain friends and family. What a different time it was in the '40s and '50s! I remember the wonderful downtown Christmas lights. I would look forward to the spectacular window displays at Macy's and Harzfeld's. Our family would have one dinner at the Italian Gardens, and mother and I would lunch at Wolferman's gourmet food store and restaurant. There didn't seem to be much worry about children

and their friends going to the movies, shopping by themselves or just running around Municipal Auditorium during the games without much adult supervision. This was a magical time.

One tournament game stands out in my mind: MU-KU in 1951. To help me reconstruct the events of that night, I looked through the scrapbooks that my mother, Isabel, kept about my dad's career. Many articles were written about the '51 championship game when Missouri played a ranked Kansas team. My favorite article, reprinted here, did not have a byline and was written as a special to the Columbia Missourian.



Freshman forward Win Wilfong played at Mizzou and later the University of Memphis before an NBA career with the St. Louis Hawks and the Cincinnati Royals.

### ***Hawks Win Crown, But Missouri Wins Glory***

*Kansas won the trophy, but Missouri won the glory in Saturday's Big Seven Tourney final here. The Tigers, who had to upset twice—Iowa State and Oklahoma—never let up on Dr. Phog Allen's fifth national ranking cagers, and they almost caught up in the third quarter. But Sparky Stalcup won the good sportsmanship honors in the last three minutes of the game when huge Clyde Lovellette took a walk over Win Wilfong. Out went Lovellette, and for a minute or so it looked as if the whole Tiger team was going to go chasing after him. But the Missouri boys were brought under control. Not so the crowd. From then on, whenever KU took the ball, a chorus of*

*boos poured over them. In the hectic three minutes before the game ended, another Kansan, Bill Houghland, and two Tigers, Dick Adams and Wilfong, also left the game on fouls. And as Bruce Drake, Oklahoma coach, moved up to present the tourney trophy to Dr. Allen, the crowd kept on booing. Lovellette, who was tourney high scorer, started to walk over to the MU bench apparently to apologize. Stalcup met him with outstretched hands. Meanwhile the crowd roared its boos as Drake attempted to quiet them. Reeves Peters, Big Seven commissioner, also said a few words. Then Stalcup took the mike and told the crowd, "The University of Missouri enjoys this rivalry with the University of Kansas. Dr. Allen is a great coach." And the Tigers—who had just lost a hard game to a great team—swarmed to the Jayhawk bench, shaking hands and slapping backs. The crowd quieted down. Kansas was given the trophy as the crowd—which had been booing a minute before—cheered. But they weren't cheering Kansas' great basketball alone; mixed in was the appreciation of Missouri sportsmanship.*



Gene Landolt (No. 25) skies for a layup during Mizzou's 1950–51 season opener against Central (Iowa) College.

I was never prouder of my father. Through the years, I have often thought of the message he sent to his team, sports fans and family. Good sportsmanship can indeed be a way of life.

— Susan Stalcup Gray, BS Ed '63, MS '71

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