

It didn't take long after James Naismith nailed his first peach basket to a gymnasium balcony for Franklin to produce a basketball guru.

Some 30 years later, in 1923, and under the pen name "Old, Old Fan," a guy was writing letters to "the sporting editor" of The News-Herald, pretty much declaring himself The Authority of all things hoops around Franklin.

"...feeling confident that I have probably seen at least twice as many games as any other resident of our fair city, I think I am qualified to judge the playing ability of a player..." OOF wrote.

I bet you didn't think the "*talkin' hoops, baby*" types existed 100 years ago. Ha!, well, they did.

In one of his letters, OOF disputed that "Teddy" Pierce's 10 baskets in a game was a record for a girl. In three *long* paragraphs, OOF scoffed that, why, other girls have made 11 or 12 field goals in a game – not that 10 was anything to sneer at.

But that wasn't what caught my attention.

It was this: "If I remember correctly," OOF wrote, "in a game three years ago this winter with Clarion Normal, Miss Louise Smiley caged the ball no less than 16 times from the floor, besides adding nine fouls, giving her a total of 41 points."

Now we're talking. OOF's claim would make Louise a candidate to join Franklin's all-time single-game scoring list – *with* an asterisk since this is six players to a side basketball.

Well, I looked and looked but couldn't find the game OOF was talking about. So no all-time list for Louise. I did, however, run across this:

When she was 13 years old, Smiley put her own life on the line, saving 14-year-old Kathryn Annis from drowning. This happened on Aug. 6, 1916, when Louise was vacationing with her family in Maine. She heard the screams from Annis, who was 100 feet from shore in Davenport Cove where the water was 12 feet deep.

Smiley never hesitated, took off and using the skills she learned from physical director William McCool at the Franklin YMCA saved this girl's life. Four years later Smiley received a Carnegie Hero Commission bronze medal for her bravery.

But, wait, there's even more to Smiley's storied *How I Spent My Summer Vacation of 1916*. She also won a silver cup in the Maine state tennis tournament featuring the best players from the East.

Whether or not she had the big 41-point game in basketball, I guess we'll never know. She was no doubt a great player, though.

Smiley's name first appeared in the basketball box scores during the 1918-19 season. Then came the write-up that stamped her as, well, the cat's meow.

"As has been the case during the past half dozen games, the real star of the evening was Miss Louise Smiley. She is developing rapidly as a basketball player, having learned in one short season what it takes a good many girls, and boys, too, two or three years to acquire," The News Herald wrote.

"There has not been a girl here this year who can dribble (the) ball from one end of the floor with two or three (players) trying to get it away from her, as can Miss Smiley, and she usually ends her trip down the floor with a shot at the basket."

Not only that, but she could play defense. The Herald article continued, "As a guard she is a wonder, the points made off (her) being few and far between. Saturday, she was opposed to Miss Jones, one of the cleverest workers who has been here with any team of girls in several years, and Miss Jones made just one basket; all told she did not get over three or four shots."

I came across 20 games for Smiley between 1919-21. She scored 182 points with a high of 18, another of 17 and two more of 16. Not 41, but nothing to sneeze at.

I will say I did find two games during the 1927 season that would have OOF drooling. That's when Ruth McAlevy and Gladys Nadig terrorized Oil City with these numbers as Franklin's "Little Tractor" team romped 81-10 and then 77-4:

Game 1, Jan. 22 – McAlevy 42 points (19 field goals), Nadig 37 (18)

Game 2, Feb. 18 – Nadig 42 points (21 field goals), McAlevy 35 (15)

Three years before that, forwards Helen Ellis and Theresa Cather bucketed 12 field goals apiece and teamed for 49 points in a 49-13 victory over the Alumnae – which included Louise Smiley and her modest seven points.

And there is a footnote to all this: A year later, in 1925, Louise Smiley would marry and begin her life's work in Youngstown, Ohio. Her maid of honor? An old high school basketball teammate named Margaret Feldman.