

Hamilton College Library

“Home Notes”

House of David Basketball Team Photos

By Mark Tillson

A recent Special Collections acquisition at Hamilton College of about thirty photographs presented us with a small mystery upon arrival. The subject of the photos is the House of David basketball team. All in black and white and in varying sizes, the photos show the bearded boys in promotional shots, team poses, and while playing. While our archive of House of David items includes a large selection of baseball ephemera and photos, our basketball archive is not nearly as impressive, so we were excited to have them.

A set of twelve photos in the group are all of the same size and were quite obviously taken at the same event. Where and when was the mystery. The only clue as to their origin is stamped on the back of the photos in blue ink: “Ryan’s Photo Finishing Metlakatla, Alaska.” We knew that the team traveled extensively, but to Alaska?

A Google search for Ryan’s Photo Finishing yielded no informative results even when including Metlakatla. A little more searching brought up an advertisement in the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* of Monday, January 30, 1950. The game was scheduled for February 3rd against the Sitka Alaska Native Brotherhood team (A.N.B.). With this information, I accessed newspaperarchive.com to see if there were other issues of the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* that mentioned the game. There were in fact two games scheduled for that week. The other would be against the Sitka All-Stars on February 2nd.

Unfortunately, according to a February 7th article, the games had been cancelled due to poor traveling weather. The game against the A.N.B. was rescheduled for February 11, 1950, and was indeed played to a standing-room-only crowd. The House of David beat the A.N.B. by a score of 70-56.

A brief mention of the game is also found in a book by Loel Schuler entitled *Alaska in the Wake of the North Star*. While his version of the story places the game in Hanger No. 3 on a new gymnasium floor, the *Daily Sitka Sentinel* claims it was in the newly renovated Hanger No. 1 at Mt. Edgecumbe recreation center, which was dedicated between games that night.

Of special note is the mention of George Anderson wowing the crowd during half time with his pepper-game performance, of which we have a photo! The photos include action from the game and a meal that was shared between members of both teams.

H. Witte, the business manager, appears in the team photos. House of David players that night were George Anderson, Nick Bloom, Vince Stankewitz, Keith Larsh, Bob Bottinger, Bob Wegner, and Bob Hallisey (team captain). Also mentioned in the *Sentinel* game recap were the referees, Tony Herman and Bill Arthur. A.N.B. players included Moses Johnson, Herbie Didrickson, Gil Truitt, M. Williams, Henry Lang, Roger Lang, Kenneth Leask, and Charlie Didrickson.



House of David team in back row, left to right: H. Witte (business manager), George Anderson, Bob Bottenger, Bob Hallisey (captain), Nick Bloom and Keith Larsh (cannot identify which is which), Vince Stankewitz, and Bob Wegner. The Alaska Native Brotherhood team is kneeling in front.



Pre-game introductions and speeches.



House of David team discussing strategy.



House of David players in their pre-game warmup.



Action shot.



George Anderson wowing the crowd with his pepper-game performance.



Post-game dinner shared with players from both teams. George Anderson is in the foreground looking at the camera.