

Dr. James Naismith, inventor of basketball, who came to the University of Kansas in 1898 and taught here until his death on November 28, 1939, said of basketball, "It is a game easy to play but difficult to master." So here is your challenge, you men of the Ninth Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, see if you can master this great game that a modest man originated for 18 troublesome athletes at Springfield College, way back in 1891.

Young Naismith, left an orphan at eight years of age in Almonte, Canada, was raised by an old bachelor uncle, Peter Naismith. In early youth young Naismith found that necessity was the mother of invention. Those rugged northmen did much skiing and skating. Naismith, having no money, took two old files and clamped them between wooden supports for his first pair of skates. He was always an inventive genius, a noble gentleman, a generous competitor but a tough man to whip.

One June day in 1926 I sat with Dr. Naismith under a spreading Canadian Maple at Bennie's Corners in Almonte, Canada. Here I met Uncle Peter who reared young Naismith. I even saw the casket which Uncle Peter, after the fashion of Canada's frugal pioneers in their northern woods, had skillfully built and polished so that it would be in readiness for the time which would inevitably overtake him. Of late, Uncle Peter had taken to sleeping in his casket--perhaps to get accustomed to it.

It can be said of such men, ^{as Dr. Naismith} that only those who can accept and meet a great challenge are worthy to be great leaders. A man who could claim that group of contemporaries for friends could not have been an ordinary man. Robert Tait McKenzie, Dr. Luther H. Gulick, his classmates, Amos Alonzo Stagg and a host of others. From them, as well as from his genteel origins, he learned the manners of a gentleman and the glories of unselfish achievement.