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John Roberts

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A GLORIOUS STORY, A MODEST MAN

Frank Selvy, Coal Miner's Son recounts the life and career of Furman's greatest athlete.

BY JOHN ROBERTS

Most Furman alumni know the story of **Frank Selvy '54**. Or at least they should.

Selvy was arguably the finest athlete Furman has produced and one of the best college basketball players to ever grace the hardcourt. From 1950 to 1954, Selvy led some storied Furman teams and brought a national spotlight on the small then-Baptist college.

A two-time All-American, the native of Corbin, Kentucky, twice led the nation in scoring. On Feb. 13, 1954, Selvy scored an incredible 100 points against Newberry College in Greenville's Textile Hall, a single-game scoring record that stands today. Selected first overall in the 1954 NBA draft, Selvy went on to play nine seasons in the pros. The two-time NBA All-Star was a teammate of Jerry West and Elgin Baylor on some of the best Los Angeles Lakers teams.

Selvy's rise to national fame is one of Furman lore. And it has been told many times, particularly in the pages of this publication. But no one has told it as well as Jack McIntosh '52, a retired Anderson, South Carolina, attorney and Selvy's classmate, in *Frank Selvy, Coal Miner's Son*.

Published in 2016 and available on Amazon.com, the 126-page work provides a colorful and richly detailed account of Selvy's youth, his rise to national fame and a rough and tumble NBA career that was interrupted by a two-year stint in the U.S. Army. In particular, McIntosh does a masterful job of re-creating Selvy's days growing up as the son of a coal miner in Corbin, a hard-scrabble town near the Appalachian Mountains.



Named after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who helped ease the Great Depression in the region through the New Deal public works projects, Selvy was one of 10 children. The large family lived in a two-bedroom home. Selvy's father, James, began working in coal mines at the age of 12 and continued until a mining accident forced him to retire at 54.

Frank Selvy was spared a life in the mines. Instead, at the age of 12, he began traveling to nearby Indiana during the summers to pick tomatoes as a migrant worker. After sending money home, the young Selvy cobbled together enough cash to buy basketball shoes, a purchase he

soon put to work on the outdoor basketball courts of the Corbin YMCA.

A gifted athlete, Selvy was only able to play a season and a half of basketball at Corbin High School because he had to work. Still, he was selected to play in a series of all-star games where he was named the most valuable player. Like most young basketball players in the area, Selvy hoped to attract the eye of Adolph Rupp, the legendary basketball coach at the University of Kentucky for whom the Wildcats' current arena is named. Rupp, who coached Kentucky from 1930 to 1972, did recruit him for a short time but decided that Selvy, then 150 pounds and six feet tall, did not

have the size to successfully compete in college. It would be one of the worst recruiting mistakes Rupp would make in a coaching career that spanned more than 40 years.

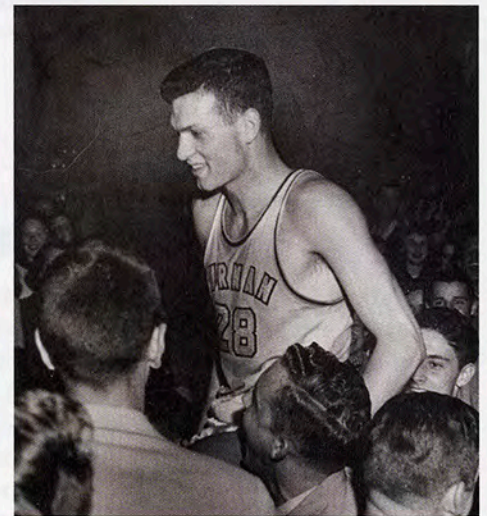
Another coach who attended Selvy's games was Furman's Lyles Alley. Coach Alley recognized talent when he saw it and invited Selvy to Furman. During the summer after his high school senior year, Alley put Selvy to work at Camp Pinnacle (near Hendersonville, North Carolina), where the 17-year-old ate well, honed his skills and grew three inches and gained 30 pounds.

When Rupp heard of Selvy's growth, he sent a group of coaches to Greenville in an effort to lure Selvy back to his home state. When the coaches arrived, though, Selvy was tucked away at Camp Pinnacle. They asked around and even called the home of Furman President John Plyler, who was not there. No one on the small campus seemed to know where the young prospect was.

The coaches, much perturbed, left town. But it did not matter. Selvy had decided to stay true to Furman.

Selvy's path to Furman is just one of many richly told stories by McIntosh in *Frank Selvy, Coal Miner's Son*. Others include:

- How James Selvy and his family traveled six hours to see Frank score 100 points against Newberry. It was only the second time James had seen his son play.
- How Coach Alley, a consummate showman and meticulous planner, orchestrated that magical evening in Textile Hall (the state's first live television broadcast of a sporting event) by arranging for a seven-piece jazz band to play and instructing his team at halftime to "feed Frank."
- A harrowing account of how Selvy and his Lakers teammates survived a 1960 plane crash by landing in an Iowa cornfield.
- How Selvy and his wife, Barbara, befriended Hollywood celebrities Doris Day, James Gardner and Pat Boone during Frank's playing days with the Lakers.



Frank Selvy '54 and Jack McIntosh '52 (above) participated in a book signing late last year. Selvy reached the pinnacle of his professional career while playing for the Los Angeles Lakers. (bottom left)

AN ACCURATE PORTRAIT OF AN UNASSUMING, HUMBLE AND SOFT-SPOKEN MAN WHO REMAINED GROUNDED AS HIS BASKETBALL STAR ROSE.

McIntosh devotes his greatest prose, though, to capturing Selvy's intensely competitive and gritty drive to excel during an NBA career that was rife with setbacks. He also paints an accurate portrait of an unassuming, humble and soft-spoken man who remained grounded as his basketball star rose. *Frank Selvy*,

Coal Miner's Son is captivating and compelling, a remarkable recount of an extraordinary journey. ●

The author may be reached through email at jackmackt@aol.com.