

Physical Education as a Way of Life — the Story of Nathan Taylor Dodson

by

J. EDMUND WELCH

West Virginia Institute of Technology

Taylor Dodson was born in 1922 and grew up on a farm in Rockingham County, North Carolina. He died in 1969 as a result of a heart condition. As an adult, he lived with knowledge of his heart impairment, but shared it only with his family and a few close friends.

Dodson's contributions in the field of physical education can be grouped into five main areas: 1. his work as advisor in physical education for the State Department of Public Instruction of North Carolina; 2. his work as Professor of Physical Education and Intramural Director for Men at Wake Forest University; 3. his work as a sports official; 4. in summer camps; 5. and in professional organizations.

During the years 1950-1957, Dodson was with the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, gaining the deepest respect of his associates, working ceaselessly for improved programs in physical education for all children. During his remaining years as intramural director at Wake Forest, his work was exemplary. Marjorie Crisp, Director of Physical Education for Women at Wake Forest, wrote that "one will never know the principles of correct moral character that were outcomes of his leadership upon the hundreds of young men on this campus." Dodson was a wise and skilled certified official in football basketball, baseball, and wrestling.

Summer camp work was an integral phase of Dodson's professional life. A close friend noted that:

Taylor knew well how to live in and with the wilderness. He taught the hidden magic of the trees and flowers, the tricky currents of swift rivers, the sweet taste of spring water, the vast green of rolling mountains and the intricate structures of the individual leaves.

The work which Dodson did in summer camps and in local, regional, and national physical education organizations was a perfect example of his blending theory and practice. Dodson made Phi Beta Kappa, contributed 49 published articles, and served at various times on 33 professional organizations. But he never forgot that physical education is mainly action in the form of games, sports, camping, and dance. Barbara Forker, current president of AAHPER, did notice that N. T. Dodson was a man in a hurry, "but now we realize why . . . His consideration was always for the membership, for those we serve. He gave of himself completely . . ."