

Collection #  
M 1370

**ROBERT DONALD WOOD COLLECTION  
1921–1951 (BULK: 1940S)**

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Processed by

Lyndsey Blair  
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: **Manuscript Materials:** 1 half-sized manuscript box  
**Visual Materials:** 4 photograph folders, 1 oversized graphics folder

COLLECTION DATES: 1921–1951 (Bulk: 1940s)

PROVENANCE: Joyce Bruton, April 2015

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2015.0124

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Donald Wood was born 10 May 1927 to Robert C. and Lucretia Wood (née Wilson) in New Augusta, Marion County, Indiana.<sup>1</sup> He had three older siblings: Vivian, Dorothy, and Clarence. The family attended Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, which was the center of community life for Pike Township's black residents at the time.<sup>2</sup>

Robert, who often went by "Don," and his brother Clarence attended Pike High School (originally called New Augusta High School). Both served on their respective class's student bodies in 1943: Clarence as Senior Class Vice President and Don as Junior Class President. Both brothers also played varsity football and basketball.

Of the two sports, Don shined brightest on the gridiron. In 1944, Pike switched from six-man games to traditional eleven-man games, and the team had immediate success under this change. In fact, the Red Devils won the 1944 Marion County championship with an undefeated season. Don, who played fullback, had a major role in the team's success by scoring seventeen touchdowns that year. In addition, his scoring total of 107 points set a new record for Marion County football players at that time.

Robert graduated Pike High School in 1945. Shortly thereafter, he enlisted in the Army and arrived in Japan to aid the U.S.-led Allied Occupation that followed Japan's surrender and the end of WWII. After completing his military duties, Don returned to the Hoosier state and enrolled at Indiana University.

At IU, Don studied dentistry in the School of Medicine. He was also a member of the Skeleton Club, a former organization for medical students on campus. Outside of his studies, Robert was an active member of the Gamma Eta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha (ΑΦΑ), a historically black fraternity.<sup>3</sup> His brother Clarence, who graduated Indiana University with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting in 1950, served as the fraternity's Vice President.

Don received a Bachelor of Science in Dentistry in 1951. Shortly thereafter, he married Mary Newsom and started a family. The couple had three sons: Eric, Joseph, and Brian. During the late 1950s, the family lived in Marion, Grant County, Indiana, where Dr. Wood practiced dentistry at 309 1/2 South Adams Street.

Robert and his family moved to Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee in 1964. Dr. Wood spent the next several years working as a Professor of Dentistry at Meharry Medical College, a historically black institution for health care professionals. He also taught at Tennessee State University, another HBCU.

Dr. Robert Donald Wood, D.D.S died 15 October 1991 in Nashville, Tennessee.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert's maternal grandparents were the first members of the Wood family to live in Pike Township. They moved to the area during the late 19th century. On 1 January 1970, New Augusta became part of the City of Indianapolis when the city's boundaries expanded to include all of Marion County under UniGov.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1930s, the church moved from its original location to the area that is now Eagle Creek Park. Park development in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in another move. Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church has been at its current location of 5111 W 62nd Street since 1972.

<sup>3</sup> The Gamma Eta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity was founded March 29, 1947 by Roswell Bibb, William Bradley, Garret Cope, Henry George, Bert Larke, James Perry, and Charles Williams.

Sources:

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"Vivian Hill, 73 [Obituary]." *Recorder* [page 25] (Indianapolis, IN), June 1, 1991.  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/cgi-bin/indiana?a=d&d=INR19910601-01.1.25>

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection contains materials related to Robert Donald Wood's early years. Specifically, it covers his time at Pike High School, Indiana University, and in the military. High school items include report cards; commencement, reunion, and event programs; school newspapers; senior class photos; photos from formals; and newspaper articles about Don's 1944 football scoring record. College items from IU, meanwhile, include course manuals; a Greek Week program; and invitations to Founders Day and graduation events. Finally, military items cover Robert's service in Japan during the Allied Occupation and include correspondence; worship guides; a Japanese phrase book; and a promotional poster for a football game Robert played at Koshien Stadium.

The rest of this collection contains materials related to Robert's family: correspondence; commencement, religious, and music programs; and photographs.

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Test Booklet for Robert's Indiana University Chemistry Course and Manual for Laboratory Studies in Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy Course, 1947, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 8
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