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# Biographical Sketch: James Winfield Whipple

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7 December 2016

Dr. Richter

Arkansas History

### Biographical Sketch: James Winfield Whipple

James Winfield Whipple was born in Crowley, LA on September 10, 1915 to Frederick and Pearl Whipple. Frederick owned a restaurant in Arkadelphia and was known for his quiet nature, while Pearl was known for her kindness and good cooking. James had two brothers and three sisters. The family moved to Arkadelphia and lived on 304 Hardin Street. As James grew up, he was so tall and thin, his friends started calling him "Skinny." The rowdy group of boys that grew up together on Hardin street called themselves "The Hardin Gang" and the boys spent much of their childhood playing games and getting into mischief right there in their neighborhood. During these games, Skinny's natural gift for the long jump was discovered, as he could jump significantly farther than his playmates. Little did they know that Skinny would be long jumping for the rest of his life.

In high school, Skinny competed in several sports, but the long jump or "broad jump" as it was called in those days was his specialty. Skinny steadily increased his jumping distance every year until he broke the national broad jump record his senior year, jumping twenty-four feet and ten inches. In order to compete in the official national competition and have a chance at officially breaking records, Skinny had to raise twenty-five dollars to travel to Memphis. The community of Arkadelphia all pitched in and

Skinny had just enough money just in time to make it to the competition. Unfortunately, Skinny was suffering from what he thought was stone bruises at the time and he was not able to perform in Memphis as was expected. He placed fifth in the national competition.

After high school, Skinny received a scholarship to jump for LSU, which was the top school for track and field in that time. Skinny had a fantastic college career, but it was cut short. Just when the Olympics were in sight, Skinny was diagnosed with cancer in his leg. What he had thought was stone bruises was actually cancer. In 1936, Skinny's leg was amputated and he passed away on February 2, 1937 when he was only twenty-two years old.