

THE MAYOR OF INDIANAPOLIS

By John D. Wilson
Rush County Historian

This is the 29th article I have written to commemorate the Rush County Bicentennial in 2022. The subject of this writing is the Mayor of Indianapolis, Joseph Hadden Hogsett. I interviewed Joe on October 25th at the City-County Building. He was gracious enough to spend about an hour and a half with me.

Joe was raised in Rushville. His parents are Richard Hadden Hogsett and Martha Mary (Williamson) Hogsett. His father was an aeronautical engineer for Allison Gas Turbine. His mother accompanied Richard for a period of time in Darby, England, when he was working on a design for a “jump jet” that could be launched from an aircraft carrier. Joe has one older sister, Mary Marr (Hogsett) Owens.

Joe Hogsett’s early days were pretty typical for a young man in Rushville. He played Little League baseball and was active in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. He attended Graham Annex for elementary school, and the old Graham High School building for junior high classes. He began attending Rushville Consolidated High School in 1970. They lived at 1204 Perkins Street at the corner of 12th and Perkins Streets.

The year 1970 was a transitional year for Joe. His parents separated and later divorced. His mother raised him during the rest of Joe’s formative years at the Perkins Street address. Richard Hogsett passed away in 1992, and Martha passed in 1997.

In 1970-71 the RCHS Freshman Basketball Team included a guard named Joe Hogsett. There were twenty players on the team. In those days RCHS played both a Freshman A Team and Freshman B Team schedule. The late Bill Houk coached the A Team, and a first year high school coach named John Wilson coached the B Team. When it came time to measure the players’ heights in the game program, Joe measured five feet tall. Coach Houk overheard the measurement and told the managers, “List him at 5’2.”



The main sport for Joe at RCHS was tennis. He earned three letters. His coaches were Eugene McMahel for his freshman year and Tom Romary his last three years. In those days boys tennis played split seasons, fall and spring.

RCHS did not have a swimming team, but Joe put his swimming abilities to work as a lifeguard at the city pool. He worked as a lifeguard every summer from 1972-1978. Others that worked at the pool during that time included Bruce Levi, Cynthia Suttle, Brian Bess, and Becky Suttle Webb. Becky had been Joe's baby sister when he was young. Joe credits Parks Director Nick Singleton with being a very positive influence in his life.

Joe's high school friends included Greg Cook, Brian Bess, Larry Dusing, Don O'Neal, Brian Burns, Dan James, Terry Showalter, and Keith Rice. He still maintains contact with several of them.

His memory of influential teachers includes Les Fenimore, Merrill Carrigan, Karmen Gulde, Becky Webb, John Webb, Marcia Blair, and Al Hodge. Marcia was the writer and director for the Slabtown Players at the Homer Festival of Arts and Crafts. Al was director of the Homer History Workshops, and he was the History Club sponsor at RCHS.

After graduation from RCHS in 1974, Joe Hogsett attended Indiana University. He graduated with a double major in political science and history in 1978. In 1981 Joe graduated from the Indiana University School of Law at Bloomington. Over the years he has added Master's Degrees in English (Butler), Theological Studies (Christian Theological Seminary), and History (Indiana University).

Since entering politics, Joe has worn several different hats. He served as Indiana Secretary of State from 1989-1994, and he was Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff to Governor Evan Bayh from 1995-1997. He then practiced law with Bingham McHale before being nominated by President Barack O'Bama to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana. Since 2016 Joe has served as the 49th Mayor of the City of Indianapolis.

Hogsett is 66 years old, but he doesn't look a year past 40. Over the years he has stayed in shape. He has run a multitude of road races including over 50 marathons. He ran the Boston Marathon five years in a row. He also ran in the JFK Ultramarathon in the year 2000, a race that covers 52 miles. His race time was nine hours. Today a walking regimen has replaced his running days.

Joe Hogsett's blended family is very important to him. His son, William Hadden Hogsett, is in his first year in law school. His daughter, Eden Marr Hogsett, is a senior in high school. Joe and Stephanie (Connolly) Hogsett have been married for twelve years. Her son, Shine Duncan, is a Thoracic Surgery Physician's Assistant at an area hospital. Joe and Stephanie are now "empty nesters".

So there we sat, the Mayor and the old coach exchanging stories about the past. I couldn't help but ask a few questions about the present and future:

Question number one – "What is your biggest challenge as Mayor of Indianapolis?" Joe's response – "Gun violence." His team has instrumented a three-year antiviolence program. At this writing homicides are down seventeen percent.

Question number two – "What are your future political plans?" Joe's response – "I haven't made a decision but need to soon." Joe has one more year on his present term as Mayor. I sense that a part of him wants to finish some of the initiatives he has championed. He didn't mention any other political ambitions.

Last question – “Would you ever consider moving back to Rushville?” Joe’s response – “We are there pretty often, especially Stephanie.” Right now they are happy living in Indianapolis.

Joe Hogsett’s responsibilities as Mayor of Indianapolis are immense. I believe his Rush County background has served him well. In a way Rush County values have had an impact on governing our state’s capital city.

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