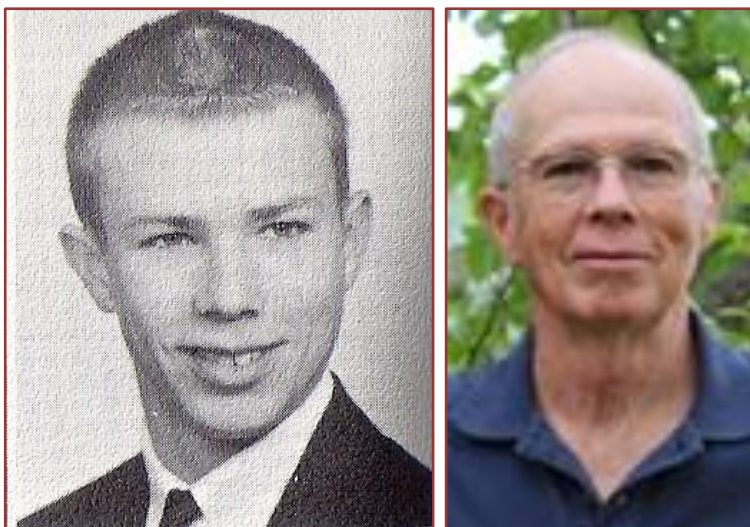


Chapter 1 – John Shick



John Shick (Then and Now)

Personal

John Charles Shick was born in Lansing, Michigan on August 28, 1943, to Charles Shick and Margaret Holloway. During high school, Shick also competed in track (low hurdles, high jump, and 880-yard relay).

Okemos High School

1957-58

As a freshman Shick (#15) played on the Reserve Team that racked up a 9-1 record (see the scoreboard further below). Okemos played in the Ingham County league that also included Dansville, Haslett, Leslie, Stockbridge, Webberville, and Williamston.



Score

WINNER

Okemos	38
Okemos	40
Okemos	48
Okemos	51
Okemos	46
Okemos	36
Okemos	53
Dansville	40
Okemos	54
Okemos	56

Board

LOSER

Mason	30
Stockbridge	23
Dansville	36
Williamston	43
Leslie	29
Haslett	29
Fowlerville	26
Okemos	30
Stockbridge	37
Williamston	46



Reserve Basketball Team

First Row: John Shick, Bob Yeoman, Jim Breckenfeld, Aldan Stampfly, Dan Hickey, Don Kiger, Dave Nelson, David Coats. **Second Row:** Alan Reese, Jim Liskey, Roy Haskins, John Sower, Tom Nothstine, Blaine Knowles, Coach Richey, Bill Martin, Mike Straud, Roger Stoll, Dave Halliday.

1957-58 Okemos High School Reserve Basketball Team

1958-59

During his sophomore year, Shick (#15) became a key scorer on the Reserve Team as reported in the yearbook.

The reserve basketball team had a fine season in two ways. The team, coached by Doug Richey, had a good year in the won-lost department, finishing second in the unofficial league reserve standings, and also gave valuable experience to many players, the primary purpose of a junior varsity squad.

The team was led by "Little John" Shick, a hustling guard with a fine outside set shot. John, the team's leading scorer with a 14-point average, contributed to the team spirit with his determined playing. At



1959 *Tomahawk* (p. 33 & 80)



Row 1: Chuck Gifford, Vernon Stehman, Tom Clark, Bob Breckenfeld, Dave Hatch. Row 2: Manager Dick Dorn, Roy Hoskin, Guy Sober, Bob DeLind, Bill Martin, Roger Stoll, Coach Doug Richey. Row 3: Dave Halliday, Jim Liskey, Topper Coats, John Shick, Stan Powell.

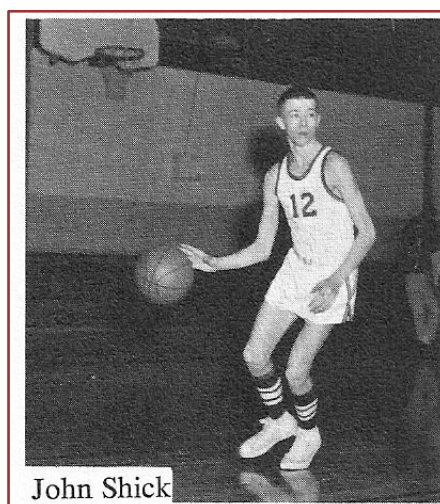
1958-59 Okemos Reserve Team (1959 *Tomahawk* – p. 33)

As the below scoreboard shows, the Chieftain Reserve Team finished their season with a 11-7 record.

SCOREBOARD			
46 Okemos	Mason 48	56 Okemos	Stockbridge 44
38 Okemos	Dansville 22	53 Okemos	Dansville 27
40 Okemos	Williamston 41	37 Okemos	Stockbridge 40
48 Okemos	Leslie 37	57 Okemos	Williamston 47
39 Okemos	Haslett 40	49 Okemos	Haslett 29
52 Okemos	Mason 70	58 Okemos	Everett 37
39 Okemos	Fowlerville 31	67 Okemos	Leslie 35
56 Okemos	Haslett 26	60 Okemos	Fowlerville 28

1959-60 – During his junior year, Shick (#12) made the varsity squad. With only four returning lettermen from the prior season's squad, "the outlook for the season was not very bright" (1960 *Tomahawk*) and the team won only three of its 16 games as shown in the scoreboard below.

	Okemos		Opponents
	Okemos	Opponents	
Fowlerville	51	58	
Webberville	70	47	
Resurrection	44	54	
Stockbridge	49	50	
Resurrection	48	55	
Dansville	31	59	
Williamston	51	48	
Haslett	56	64	
Leslie	50	66	
Fowlerville	37	49	
Webberville	62	68	
Dansville	45	46	
Stockbridge	61	36	
Williamston	59	66	
Haslett	52	54	
Leslie	65	74	



John Shick



John Shick (#12) (Junior Year) & John (#12) in Team Huddle



1959-60 Okemos High School Varsity Basketball Squad

Regular Season

On December 4, Okemos lost to **Fowlerville**, 58-51, with Shick scoring eight points on three field goals and 2-2 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On December 11, Okemos defeated **Webberville**, 70-47, with Shick leading all scorers with 20 points on seven baskets and 6-8 shooting from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 15, non-league opponent **Resurrection** downed Okemos, 54-44. "Okemos' John Shick grabbed individual scoring honors with 17 points, making five of six free throws and six goals" ([Source](#)).

On December 18, **Stockbridge** defeated Okemos in the final seconds, 50-49, with Shick chipping in six points on three field goals and 0-2 from the foul line ([Source](#)).

On December 29, **Resurrection** again defeated Okemos, 55-48, with Shick scoring eight points on three field goals and 2-2 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On January 5, **Dansville** topped Okemos, 59-32, with Shick scoring only two points on 2-4 shooting from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 8, Okemos topped **Williamston**, 51-48, with Shick's 18 points leading all scorers on seven baskets and four free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 16, **Haslett** rumbled past Okemos, 64-56, though Shick led all scorers with 22 points on eight field goals and 6-10 from the foul line ([Source](#)).

On January 19, Okemos fell to **Leslie**, 66-50, with Shick scoring seven points on three field goals and 1-4 shooting from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On January 22, **Fowlerville** beat Okemos, 49-37, with Shick scoring 14 points on six field goals and 2-4 from the foul line ([Source](#)).

On January 29, **Webberville** outgunned Okemos, 68-62, with Shick scoring seven points on two field goals and 3-4 scoring from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 2, **Dansville** nipped Okemos, 46-45, with Shick scoring five points on one field goal and 4-6 from the foul line ([Source](#)).

On February 5, Okemos pressed to a 61-36 victory over **Stockbridge**, with Shick leading all scorers with 20 points on ten baskets and 2-5 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 12, **Williamston** topped Okemos, 66-57, with Shick scoring 16 points on three field goals and 10-12 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 19, against **Haslett**, Okemos was leading “with 15 seconds left after John Shick pitched in a two-pointer from the free throw line” ([Source](#)). But a Vikings basket with two seconds left downed the Chiefs, 54-52. Shick scored a total of 13 points on two field goals and 9-10 from the charity stripe.

On February 26, **Leslie** defeated Okemos, 74-65, with Shick scoring a season-high 36 points on 12 field goals and 12-15 on free throws ([Source](#)).

Districts - In the Class B district basketball tournament match with **Charlotte**, the Okemos Chiefs came out on the wrong end of the tomahawk: “The chieftains plucked a few feathers for their war bonnets from the Orioles, but they failed to get the whole scalp and Charlotte finally won a surprising difficult 61-58 decision” ([Source](#)). Shick led Okemos’ scoring with 15 points on four field goals and 7-11 from the charity stripe.

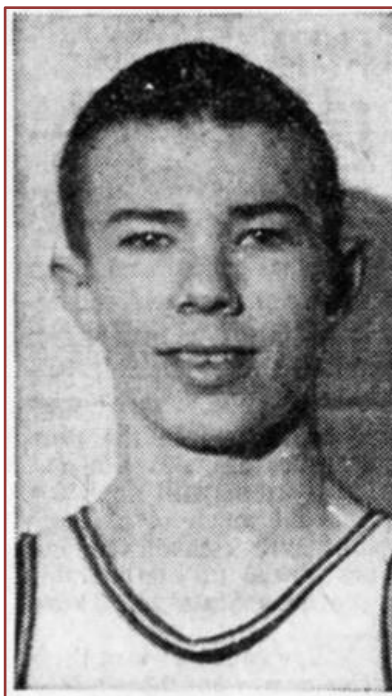
Laurels

On March 12, Shick received honorable mention on the Ingham County All-League Team ([Source](#)).

1960-61

During Shick’s senior year, the varsity squad experienced a complete reversal of fortune from the previous season’s 3-13 record, with the team notching a 14-2 record for the season. Both losses were away games against **Fowlerville** and **Resurrection**. The scoreboard below shows individual game scores.

	Okemos	Opponents
Fowlerville	40	36
Dansville	41	36
Webberville	39	33
Stockbridge	86	39
Resurrection	65	59
Williamston	72	49
Haslett	59	51
Leslie	55	53
Fowlerville	54	62
Resurrection	54	60
Webberville	89	42
Dansville	60	56
Stockbridge	64	44
Williamston	68	56
Haslett	54	50
Leslie	60	52



“Under the fine coaching of Mr. [Robert] Baker and the leadership of co-captains Bill Martin and John Shick [#24], the team became one of the best teams Okemos has ever had. Two members of the team made honor teams: John Shick, unanimous choice all Ingham County league team and honorable mention all-state, and Bob Breckenfeld, honorable mention all-county league team.” (1961 *Tomahawk*)

Regular Season

Shick entered the season at 5’11” and 140 pounds. With one year of varsity experience, Shick was the team’s co-captain (with Bill Martin). The 1960-61 season was the first year that Okemos competed in the Ingham County League that also was comprised of Dansville, Fowlerville, Haslett, Leslie, Stockbridge, Webberville, and Williamston

On December 2, Okemos defeated **Fowlerville**, 40-36, in Okemos’ new 1600-seat gymnasium, with Shick scoring 15 points on six field goals and 3-6 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 6, Okemos at home defeated **Dansville**, 41-36, with Shick topping the Chiefs with 13 points on four field goals and five for seven from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 9, host **Webberville** fell to Okemos, 39-33, with Shick scoring “almost half of the Chiefs’ points. He had 19” on seven field goals and 5-10 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On December 16, Okemos at home roared past **Stockbridge**, 86-39, with Shick scoring 23 points on 11 field goals and 1 for 2 from the charity strip ([Source](#)).

Going into the December 27 game against **Resurrection**, Shick had scored 70 points in the Chieftains' first four games. Hosted at Okemos, the Chieftains defeated **Resurrection**, 63-53, with Shick scoring 16 points on six field goals and 4-8 shooting from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 6, Okemos defeated host **Williamston**, 72-47, with 12 Chieftains playing and Shick scoring seven points on two field goals and 3-9 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On January 13, Okemos at home downed **Haslett**, 59-51, with Shick leading the Chieftains in scoring with 19 points on six field goals and 7-9 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).



NO PLACE TO GO—Haslett's Mike Devlin (with ball) finds himself in a corner last night with Chiefs blocking every exit. Forming the cage corral are Okemos' John Shick (No. 24), Bill Wess (No. 50), and

Bob Breckenfeld (No. 44). Larry Hamilton (No. 23) tries to give Devlin a way out as he blocks Wess. Okemos won the key Ingham County league contest, 59 to 51. (State Journal Photo)

On January 17, Okemos defeated host **Leslie**, 55-33, with Shick leading all scorers with 27 points on eight field goals and 11-16 on free throws, notching his last “two free throws at the end of the game for the victory margin” ([Source](#)).

On January 20, previously undefeated Okemos fell to host **Fowlerville**, 62-54. While Shick “was held to one field goal in the first half on nine attempts...[he]... ended up with 22 points to lead all scorers” on six baskets and 10-12 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On January 24, host **Resurrection** handed Okemos its second loss of the season, downing the Chieftains, 60-53. Shick led all scorers with 24 points on ten field goals and 4-10 from the free throw line ([Source](#)).

On January 27, Okemos at home defeated **Webberville**, 89-42, with Shick scoring 16 points on six field goals and 5-10 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On January 31, Okemos edged host **Dansville**, 60-56, with Shick scoring 11 points on four field goals and 3-5 on free throws ([Source](#)).

On February 3, Okemos beat host **Stockbridge**, 64-44, with Shick scoring 14 points on three field goals and 8-10 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

On February 10, Okemos hosted **Williamston**.

John Shick’s wild scoring spree in the third quarter...highlighted a 68-56 victory over Williamston which kept the Chiefs a jump ahead of Fowlerville atop the Ingham County league basketball standings.

Shick, scoring on short jump shots and lay-ups, whistled 19 points past the rim in those eight minutes after halftime. ... Shick’s total of 29 [on 11 field goals and 7-9 from the free throw line] led both teams ([Source](#)).

On February 17, Okemos defeated host **Haslett**, 54-50, to stay a half-game ahead of Fowlerville for the Ingham County league title. “Shick paced the Okemos victory with 13 of 16 at the line plus five field goals for 23 points” ([Source](#)).

On February 24, Okemos topped host **Leslie**, 60-52, to win a share of the Ingham County league basketball title. Shick scored 16 points on five baskets and 6-8 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

Perhaps the move of OHS from the old school building to the new school campus with a brand new gymnasium also contributed a bit to the turnaround; at least, by season’s end, the team had yet to be beaten on its new home court.

Districts

In the District Tournament at Mason High School, the Chieftains lost to **Mason** by only two points, 59-57. Shick led all scorers with 26 points and was noted as “the finest all-around player in the tournament” (*Ingham County News*, March 16, 1961). (**Mason** went on to win the regional title but lost in the State Quarterfinals to **Holland-Christian**.) John reflected on the loss:

Of the many disappointments of my athletic career, this was likely the one that hurt the most. Many, including me, felt we got a “home” job. When Bill Weiss fouled-out, his relief was ruled not to have properly reported [to the scorer’s table] and [Okemos was] assessed a technical. So a “1 and 1” eventually turned into a five-point swing. It is still painful (John Shick, personal communication).

Laurels

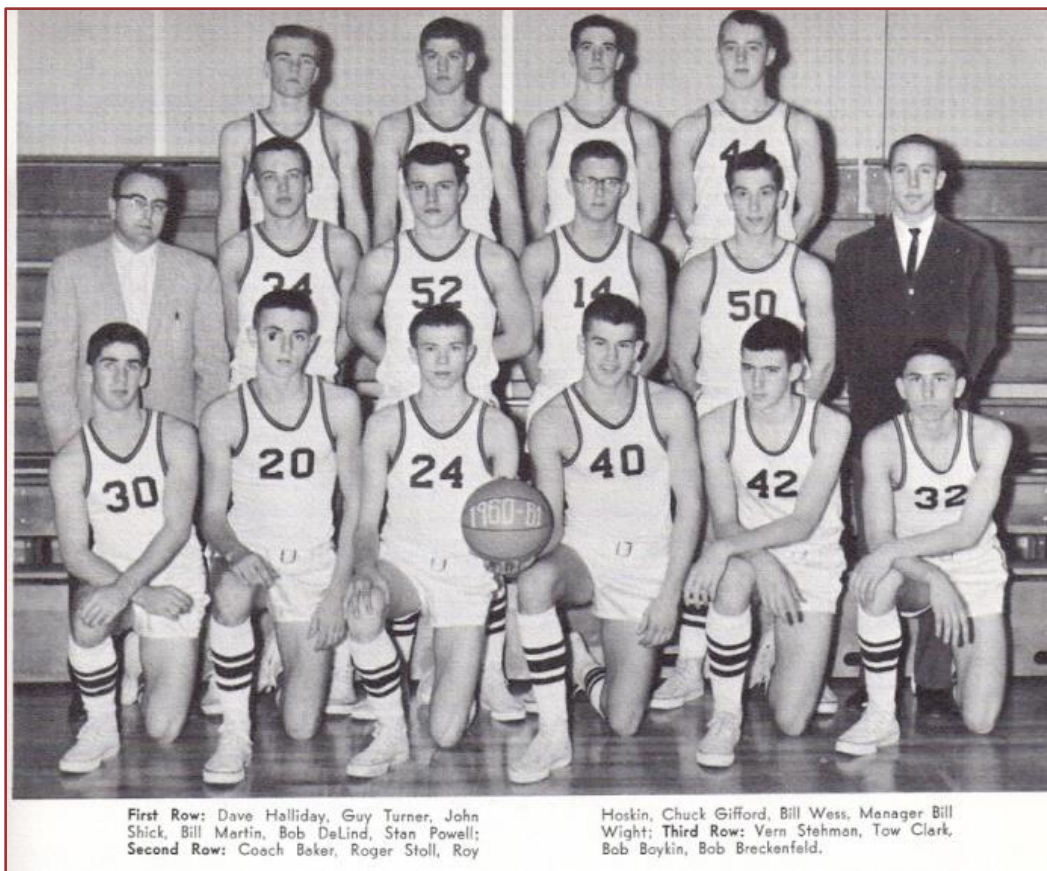
On the season, Shick’s averaged 18.44 points per game (ppg) in league games and, overall (league, non-league, and tournament), 19.06 ppg.

On April 3, the Okemos Dad’s Association held its awards banquet at which Shick was awarded a trophy as the team’s most valuable player (*Meridian News*, April 12, 1961). Shick also was a unanimous choice for the 1961 Ingham County League all-star team (*Meridian News*, March 22, 1961), and received an all-state honorable mention ([Source](#)).

During his senior year, the “Point” recognized John as “Player of the Week” three times. This recognition of an Okemos athlete was placed in the *Meridian News* weekly by the “Point” - a gas station on Hamilton Road whose owner was very interested in Okemos sports. The dates and commentary were (approximately the week of): Feb 3, 1960 [“Even though 5'9" John's average is 12.5 points per game in his first year on the varsity.”]; Dec. 3, 1960 [“No stranger to area basketball fans is John Schick, Senior and Captain.....”]; and Apr 26, 1961 [The “Point” Salutes John Shick 1961 'Chieftain' graduate....”].



John Shick (#24) (Senior Year)



1960-61 Okemos High School Varsity Basketball Squad: John Shick (#24)

Michigan State University

1961-62

During the fall of 1961, after enrolling at MSU, Shick decided to see if he could make the Spartans freshmen team. He attended the try-outs and succeeded in making the cut. John recalls:

The purpose of try-outs, of course, was to fill a roster in order to provide scholarship players a group to scrimmage against. At this time, freshmen were not eligible to play on the Varsity Team. There were six scholarship players: Mark VanderJagt, Gary Lytle, Ron Welsh, Marcus Sanders, Tommy Douglas, and Dan Floberg. Three other local ball-players also made the Freshman Team: Jim Goulding (Lansing Resurrection), Ken Curtis, and John Dammon (Fowlerville). Lance Olson, who had played alongside Johnny Green and later became a premiere eye surgeon, coached the freshman team. Coach Olson was primarily responsible for grooming scholarship players, but he also encouraged the "support staff" to improve our skills so we could to push the scholarship players. He applauded and rewarded effort (John Shick, personal communication).

Early in the season, however, Shick's career as a Spartan hit a bump in the road when, on Thanksgiving Day, he suffered what he thought would be a "basketball" career-ending injury. John recalls: *"I broke my ankle playing touch football. Coach Olson, however, held my spot on the team. I returned in January"* (John Shick, personal communication). As a result of the injury, Shick spent part of the Thanksgiving holiday in MSU's Olin Health Center where he was treated by team physician Dr. James Feurig. Mistakenly, a local paper printed that "John was reportedly injured during freshman basketball practice at MSU" (John Shick, personal communication).

1962-63

During his sophomore year, Shick (#11) made the varsity team, playing as a 6'0" guard. John recalls:

I worked hard, especially on defense, and eventually was integrated into the starting rotation ahead of two scholarship players. Still, I was more than a bit naive as to how things worked at the collegiate level. Given that there were six freshmen on full-time scholarships and the Varsity typically carried only 16-17, there really was no foreseeable spot for a walk-on. I was oblivious (John Shick, personal communication).

On one occasion, in an inter-team, game-condition scrimmage with refs, I was flattened with an elbow ... an obvious, if not blatant, foul...but no whistle. As I lay sprawled on the court, not immediately following the action to the other end, play was halted for another infraction. Coach Olson immediately pulled me and sat me down next to him. He was quiet for some time, and then leaned into me and said "John, if you want to play at MSU, you are going have to toughen up and learn to take that type of punishment."

It was a revelation; an epiphany. I was no longer playing in a rural high school league where I might expect such rough stuff to be called. I was now in the "big leagues." (John Shick, personal communication).

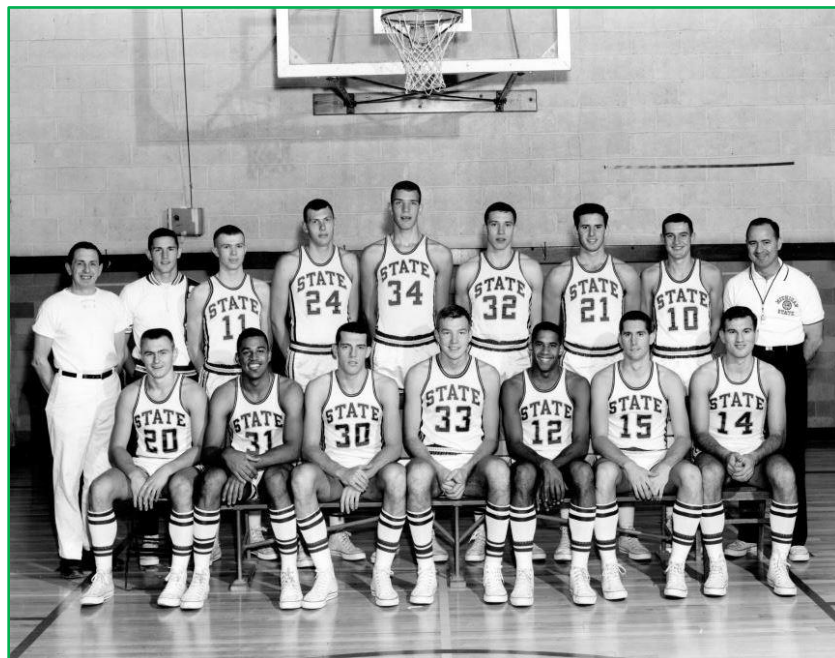


1962-63 Spartans Basketball Squad (*Michigan State News*, January 31, 1963)

While John “didn’t see any action...as a sophomore...he made most of the [road] trips” ([Source](#)).



Coach Forddy Anderson’s latest innovation for timeouts was canvas, camping stools for his team members to use (John Shick – standing third from left)



1961-1962 Michigan State Men's Basketball Squad

Front row: Douglas, Sanders, Gent, Williams, Berry, Lamars, Schwarz

Back row: Robinson (trainer), Manager, Shick (#11), VanderJagt, Thomann, Welsch, Floberg, Goulding, Coach Anderson

Key players during the regular season were center Edward Williams (18.0 PPG), forward Pete Gent (16.4 PPG), forward/guard Marcus Sanders (14.7 PPG), and forward William “Bill” Berry (9.6 PPG).

1963-64

The first action that John saw during his junior year (and second season on the varsity team) was in the intra-squad match between the White team and the Green team. The White team won 88-31, with Shick contributing two points to the Green team.



SPARTAN CAGERS START—Coach Forddy Anderson's tenth Michigan State basketball team started practice today. The Spartans opening game is Nov. 30 against North Michigan. Forddy invited 18 players to the first day's drills including four from the central Michigan area. They are, left to right, John Shick of Okemos, Wayne Brown of Charlotte, Ken Curtis of Fowlerville and Bill Noack of Lansing Eastern. (State Journal Photo)

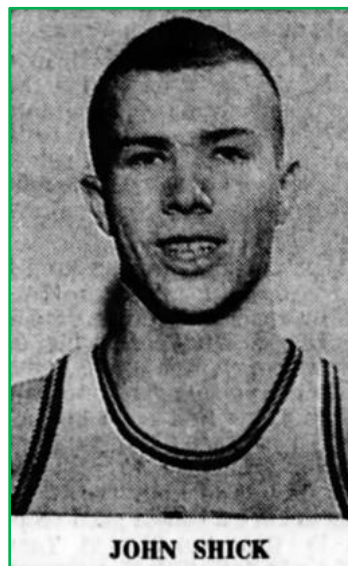
While John didn't log playing time during State's three early season basketball victories, the *Lansing State Journal* noted that he would be leaving the 'boneyard' to be one of the dozen players making the travel squad for the upcoming away game against **Pennsylvania**.

He earned a place on the traveling squad by winning the “Boney of the Week” award, presented by Anderson each week to the player on the scouting team which has helped the most during the practice sessions.

“We call our scouting team the boneyard squad,” Fordy explained.... The bonies play the part of our next opposition during practices and we really run them ragged. It’s not a glory job but certainly a job that is necessary.

“The kids on the boneyard squad seldom get into a game and the new trophy is one way to show our appreciation for their efforts.”

Besides the place on the traveling squad, the weekly winner will receive a trophy – a plastic skeleton representing the boneyard, It is appropriately engraved ([Source](#)),



Perhaps the season’s highlight was the Spartans’ March 8th 81-80 upset victory in Columbus over **Ohio State**, during which Shick saw his “first game action since the opening game of the year” ([Source](#)). Coach Fordy Anderson said:

“We gambled....and it paid off. We had foul trouble early in the second half and had to give the regulars some rest. John Shick (of Okemos) filled in capably at times for [starting guard] Stan Washington. We needed his foot speed and he played well” ([Source](#)).

While Shick scored only a free throw for one point, his highlight memory of the game was the following:

Not mentioned in [print reports on the game] was the charging foul I drew on [Ohio State’s] Greg Bradds at mid-court as he turned to shoot, giving us possession with just a few seconds to play. It’s a play that I will always remember but obviously no one else will (John Shick, personal communication).

The closing moments of the game were reported by the *Detroit News* as follows:

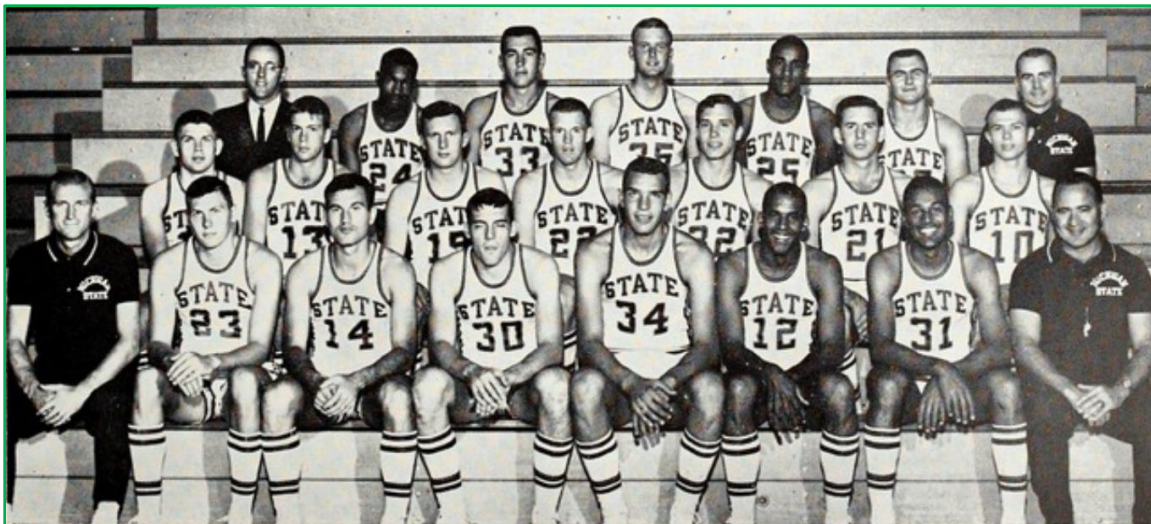
...with 30 seconds left Ohio guard Dick Ricketts laid one up for an 80-79 lead. Here Michigan State slowed it down, waited for what it thought was the last shot and with nine seconds left [Pete] Gent sank his 10th field goal on a long one-hander from the corner.

Ricketts was charged with an offensive foul on the throw-in. Michigan State got control of the ball and although Ohio did get it back, it was all over.

But newspapers are not always correct and at times don't capture what actually happened. As John recalls:

The Detroit News [got] it almost right (if memory serves). The throw-in came to Bradds (not Ricketts) somewhere near mid-court. With just a few seconds remaining I anticipated that he would turn quickly to advance the ball before taking a final shot. With this in mind, I positioned myself in a defensive stance immediately behind him. In his rush to get a better last shot he ran right over me. We got the ball out of bounds. [Spartan Coach] Forddy's instruction was that whoever received the in-bounds pass was to immediately throw the ball straight up as high as possible. Smart coaching (John Shick, personal communication).

For the season the Spartans had a 14-10 overall record, finishing tied for 4th place in the Big Ten with an 8-6 record. For the season the Spartans were 4-16 overall, finishing in 9th place in the Big Ten (3-11). The team "scored more than 100 points in 10 of the 14 games it won, averaging 92 points a game for the season" ([Source](#)). John Shick (#10) averaged 0.3 PPG.



Row One: B. Fossum; M. VanderJagt; B. Schwarz; P. Gent; F. Thomann; B. Berry; M. Sanders; F. Anderson, head coach. Row 2: J. Kupper; W. Brown; K. Curtis; M. Miller; R. Welch; D. Floberg; J. Shick. Row 3: J. Keir; S. Washington; D. Holmes; B. Noack; B. Curtis; T. Douglas; D. Peterson.

Team Photo with Shick #10)

Interestingly, in the photo above, Bruce Fossum (first row on the left), was a Spartan assistant basketball coach from 1959-65 and then for the next 25 years the Spartan golf coach. Notably, Bruce is the father of **Bob Fossum** (see next vignette) who, like John Shick, would play for Okemos and later become a Spartan basketball player.



1963-64 Spartan Men's Basketball Squad (Shick wearing #11)

Photo Courtesy of MSU Archives

Key teammates were forward Pete Gent (#30 - 21.0 PPG), center Fred Thomann (#34 - 15.5 PPG), forward Marcus Sanders (#31 - 14.4 PPG), guard William Schwarz (#14 - 9.9 PPG), and forward William "Bill" Berry (#12 - 8.7 PPG).

Laurels

At the end of the season, for his hustle and reliable "go to" role as a potential "sixth man", Shick was honored with the "bony" award.

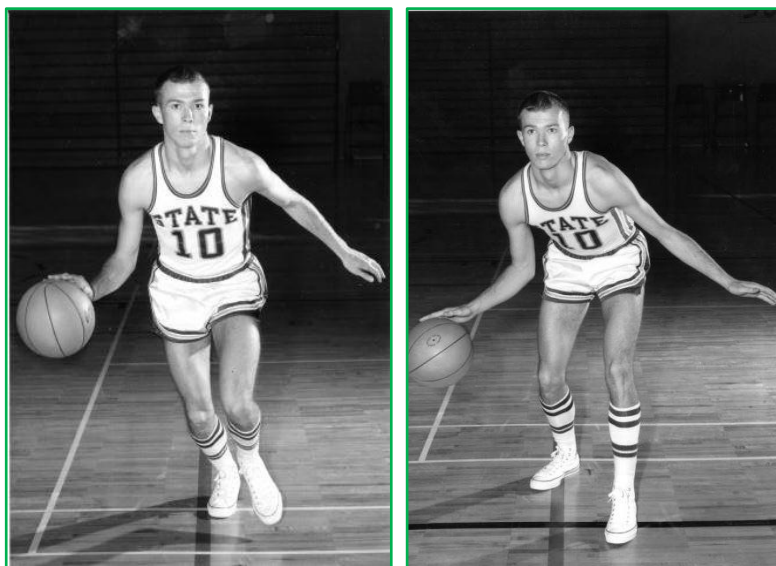
The "bony" award went to John Shick for being the most aggressive and reliable of the "second string" players.

Coach Forddy Anderson praised Shick for his play in State's final game at Columbus, Ohio ([Source](#)).

Reflecting in 2017 on having won this award, John wrote: *"I don't remember receiving this award, but it was nice to know even 53 years later"* (John Shick, personal communication).

1964-65

By his senior year, Shick (#10) and Stan Washington were the team's starting guards.



Spartans Promotional Photo

Non-Conference

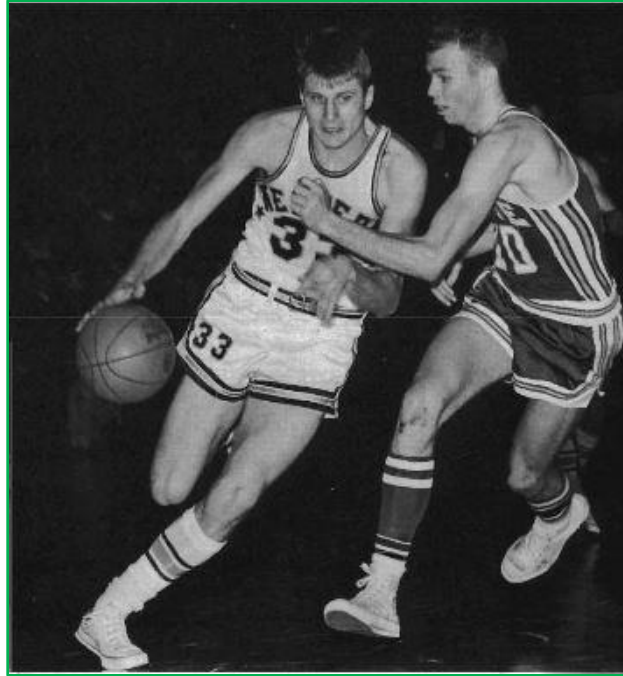
The season kicked off with the varsity squad beating the freshman squad 88-74, with John scoring 10 points for the varsity ([Source](#)). On the eve of the season's opener against **Northern Michigan**, coach Fordy Anderson made the following assessment of Shick (6-1 senior guard who had never lettered):

"He has excellent hands on defense...and, although he's just over six feet tall, is one of the better jumpers on the team. If our opposition isn't too tall, he will probably start at one of the guard spots." ([Source](#))

At the same time, the *Lansing State Journal* noted Shick's emerging role on the team:

Shick played in only three games last year and scored only one point, but it was an important one. His lone scoring effort came in the last game of the season against Ohio State. State upset the Buckeyes by a point, 81-80, to allow Michigan to tie for the championship ([Source](#)).

The season opener against **Northern Michigan** marked the first time Shick started a regular season game as a Spartan, with MSU winning 82-76. Shick scored 10 points and was "a standout on defense. 'He was the best defensive player we had on the court,' Fordy said after the game" ([Source](#)). In their next game the Spartans beat **Western Michigan**, 89-80, with Shick (see photo below) scoring seven points on three baskets and a free throw ([Source](#)).



**John Shick (right) guards Dave Anderson in
Spartans 89-80 win over Western Michigan (1965)**

(Source: Western Michigan University 1965 *Brown and Gold* Yearbook)

However, in their next game against **Notre Dame**, the Irish won, 100-93. While John scored only six points on two field goals and two free throws ([Source](#)), the *Lansing State Journal* noted his larger contribution:

Shick's job was to hold down Larry Sheffield, Notre Dame's leading scorer for the season last year, with a 24-point average. The former Okemos player kept the Irish speedster from scoring a field goal until just before the intermission and held him to four for the night. Shick had his hands full of defense and took only four shots himself. He made two of them.

With the Big Ten Conference season looming, the Spartans loss to the Irish was followed by a December 12th loss to **Drake**, 75-91, with Shick scoring four points on a field goal and two free throws ([Source](#)), and a December 19th loss **Butler**, 89-90, with Shick scoring only three points and fouling out late in the game ([Source](#)).

On December 22, the Spartans defeated **Loyola**, 94-70, with Shick scoring five points on two field goals and a free throw ([Source](#)). Next up were three games on the west coast in the LA Classic:

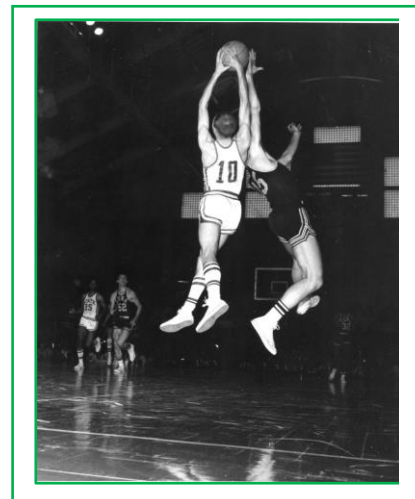
In three games on the west coast, State's foes scored 98, 100 and 92 points. The Spartans had two more hosts than **Utah** in the opener which State lost, 98-96, but trailed in shot-production in the other two games. **Southern Cal** had 84 shots to State's 70 while beating the Spartans, 100-69, and **Washington** had 102 to State's 64 in the finale which the Spartans won, 93-92.

Washington didn't shoot well—38 of 102—but still made seven more goals than the Spartans. Only thing that held up State was tremendous accuracy at the free throw line, hitting 31 of 33 and 20 straight in one stretch. Before the tourney, the Spartans had the second best free throw average in the nation and could be the leader now. ([Source](#))

Against **Utah**, Shick scored four points on a basket and a free throw ([Source](#)); in the **Southern California** game, he scored 11 points on three baskets and 5-6 from the free throw line ([Source](#)); and in the **Washington** game where the Spartans hit 31 of 33 free throws, John scored seven points on two baskets and 3-3 from the charity stripe ([Source](#)).

Big Ten Conference

The Spartans opened their Big Ten season with a back-to-back series against **Iowa**, losing at home on January 9, 85-78, with Shick scoring three points on a basket and a free throw ([Source](#)), and then losing on January 16 at **Iowa**, 111-68, with Shick grabbing two rebounds but going scoreless ([Source](#)). In the photo below from the first game at Jenison Fieldhouse, John recalled: "I believe this was a play/pass in transition. It was either thrown to me and was contested by an Iowa player or it was passed to him and I intervened" (John Shick, personal communication).



Faced with an upcoming game against a taller **Northwestern** team, Coach Anderson announced at a January 18 press conference that he was:

...replacing 6-1 guard John Shick with 6-5 Bob Miller in an effort to regain some of the height woefully absent in the Spartans lineup. ...

Shick has started every game so far and, after being shut out in Saturday's 111-68 humiliation to Iowa, has seen his average shrink to 5.6 points a game. ...

Anderson is one of the first to back Shick but admittedly knows that something has to be done to shake the Spartans, who have lost seven of their last nine games.

“No boy has tried harder than Shick,” he said. “This is no demotion and I still feel that he’ll be a great service to us.”

Anderson said he hopes the shift will relieve some of the pressure thrust upon Shick’s inexperienced shoulders.

“I wish everybody had his attitude and desire but he was pressing himself and something had to be done.”

Shick, a senior from Okemos, now figures in Anderson’s plans as the number-one substitute. (*State News*, 1/19/65, p. 4)

However, on January 23, the Spartans lost to **Northwestern**, 76-75, with Shick again going scoreless ([Source](#)). On January 26, the Spartans went up against No. 2 rated **Michigan** and the team’s star Cazzie Russell. With the clock winding down, Michigan led 88-86. “With 14 seconds left, John Shick of Okemos slipped through the defense for a two-pointer to send the game into overtime” ([Source](#)). But the Spartans were outscored in overtime and lost, 103-98, with Shick scoring only one additional point (a free throw) during the game for a total of three points.

On January 30, the Spartans lost at **Northwestern**, 77-75; while Shick played, he went scoreless ([Source](#)).

On February 6, the Spartans lost at Jenison Fieldhouse to **Minnesota**, 88-79, with John again going scoreless on two field goal attempts at ([Source](#)).



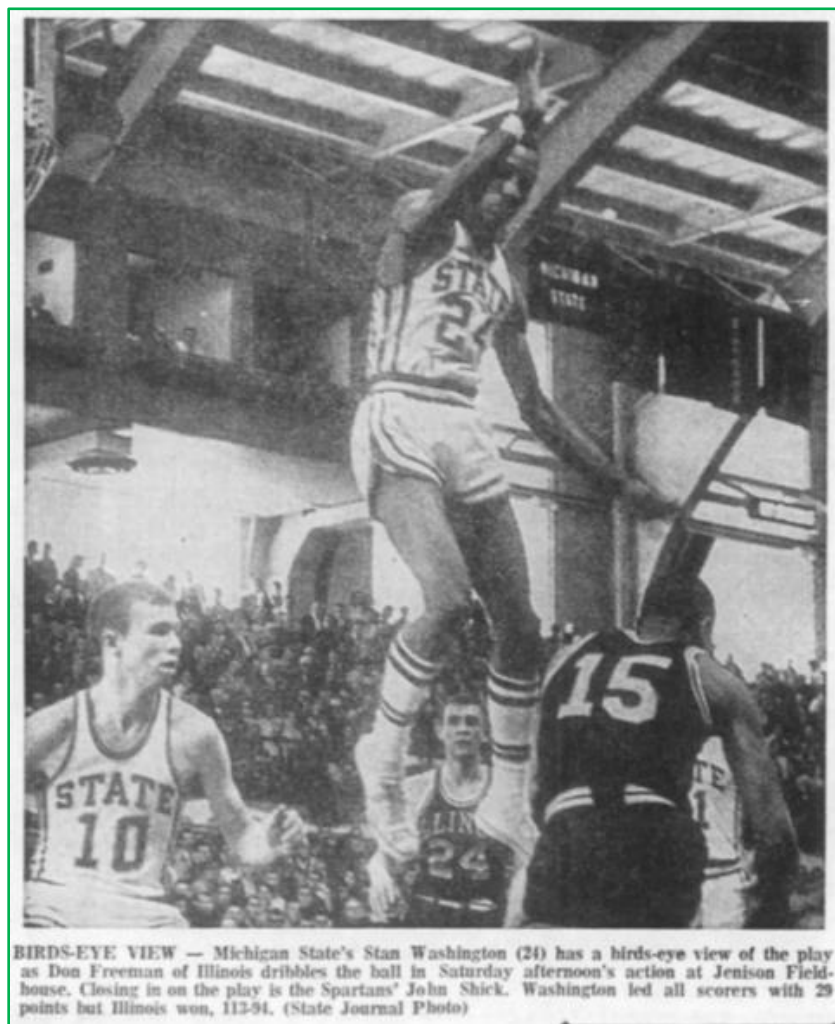
MSU vs. Minnesota at Jenison Fieldhouse: Shick Defending

(Photos Courtesy of MSU Archives)

Despite further lineup shuffling, including restoring Shick to the starting lineup, on February 8 the Spartans lost their next game at **Indiana**, 112-94, with Shick going scoreless ([Source](#)).

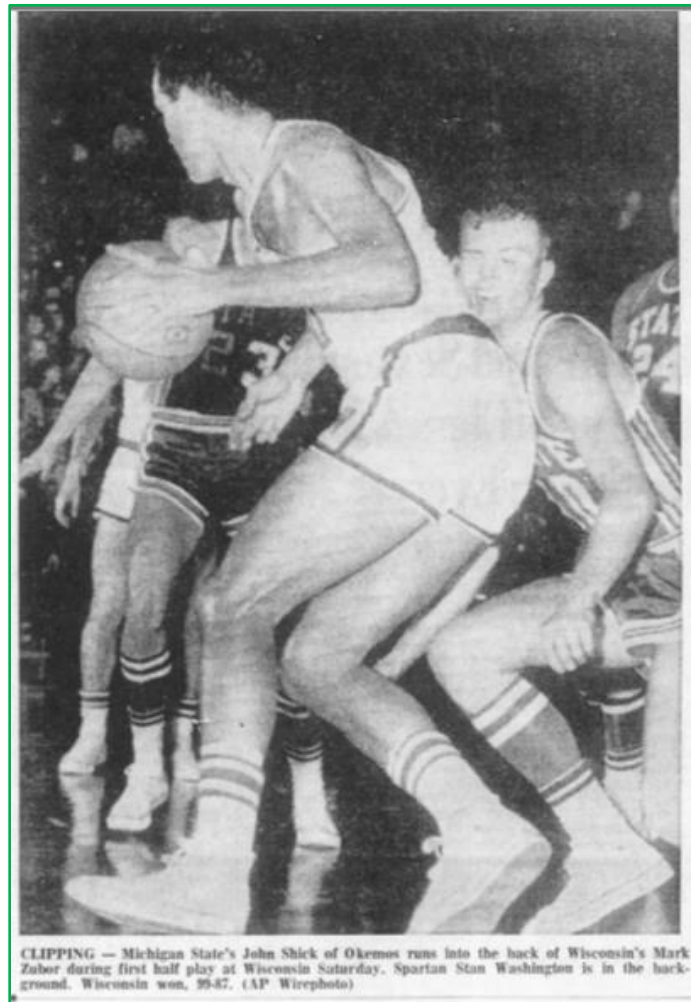
On February 13, at Ann Arbor, the Spartans lost, 98-83, to No. 1 rated **Michigan** who handed the Spartans their eighth Big Ten loss in a row, with Shick going scoreless and leaving the Spartans with a 4-13 season record ([Source](#)).

The Spartans Big Ten Conference record tanked even further to 0-9 with a February 20th loss to **Illinois**, 113-94, with 113 the most points scored by a college team at Jenison Fieldhouse. Yet Shick (see photo below) scored four points and grabbed four rebounds ([Source](#)).



On February 22, the Spartans lost their 10th straight Big Ten game at **Ohio State**, 101-90, leaving the Spartans with “the dubious distinction of having the longest losing Streak of any Spartan basketball team” ([Source](#)). Shick scored three points on a field goal and a free throw

On February 27, the Spartans lost at **Wisconsin**, 99-87, thereby notching their 11th consecutive loss in the Big Ten. Shick, starting at guard, scored five points on a field goal and three free throws ([Source](#)).



CLIPPING — Michigan State's John Shick of Okemos runs into the back of Wisconsin's Mark Zubot during first half play at Wisconsin Saturday. Spartan Stan Washington is in the background. Wisconsin won, 99-87. (AP Wirephoto)

On March 1, at Jenson Fieldhouse, the Spartans defeated **Purdue**, 110-92, the game delivering “the greatest scoring performance by a Spartan team against a Big Ten rival and the best ever for State in Jenison Fieldhouse” ([Source](#)). Shick scored two field goals and two free throws for a total of six points, plus had six rebounds.

Going into the **Ohio State** game on March 6, the *Lansing State Journal* noted that:

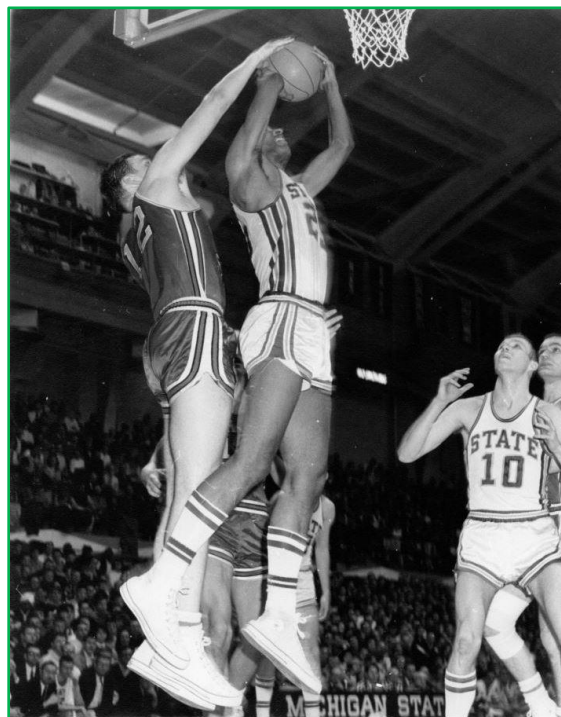
Shick...broke into the starting lineup this season. Shick, who prepped at Okemos, started the season at a guard, lost his starting berth for a couple of games, but has been a regular in recent games.

Not a high scorer – he’s averaging four points a game – Shick has been given key defensive assignments all year. He had his best game Monday night when the Spartans broke an 11-game losing streak against Purdue. He did not letter as a sophomore or junior ([Source](#)).

The day before the Spartans' March 6 home game against **Ohio State**, the team's last home game of the season at Jenison fieldhouse, the *State News* reported:

John Shick, a 6-1 guard from nearby Okemos, has been in and out of the starting lineup this year after appearing in just three games his first two years with the varsity. Shick is unique in that he is not on a scholarship but just went out for the team because he loves the game. "I can't say enough about John's desire," said [Coach Forrest] Anderson. He's got a real athlete's heart." (Source: [State News](#), p. 5)

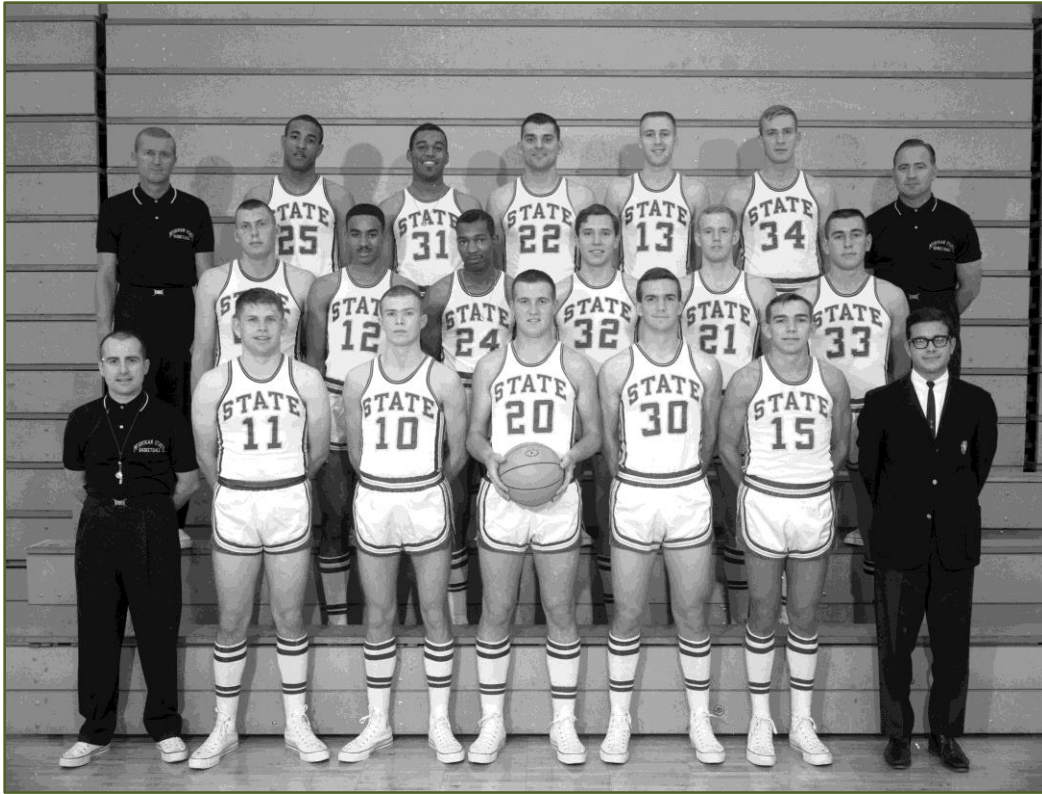
In that last home game against the Buckeyes, John scored six points on three baskets and grabbed one rebound but the Spartans lost to the Buckeyes, 97-65, placing the Spartans in the Big Ten cellar with a 1-12 conference record ([Source](#)). Regarding the photo below, John recalled that he was "screening out All-Big 10 player Dick Ricketts as Bill Curtis (I believe) attempts a shot" (John Shick, personal communication).



Shick (#10) Screens Out Ohio State's Dave Ricketts

In John's last game as a Spartan, Michigan State ended its worst Big Ten basketball season with a 121-89 loss at **Illinois**, leaving the Spartans with a 5-18 record overall and a 1-13 record in the Big Ten, its worst mark since the school entered the league in 1950. Shick was not among the starters and didn't score during the game ([Source](#)).

Stats for the season's prior 21 games showed Shick (#10 in below photo) as the sixth leading scorer (29 field goals with an average of 3.9 points per game average), with a field goal percentage of .345 and a .556 free throw percentage.



1964-65 Michigan State Men's Squad

Photo Courtesy of MSU Archives

For the 1964-65 season, the Spartans were 5-18 overall and 1-13 in the Big Ten, finishing in 10th place. Key teammates during this season were Stan Washington (21.3 PPG), William "Bill" Curtis (19.4 PPG), and Marcus Sanders (18.5 PPG)

While Shick was the first Chieftain to play on the Spartans men's varsity basketball team, he was the only Chieftain to be coached by Forddy Anderson who, following eleven seasons as head coach of the men's team, was fired in the spring of 1965 after 1964-65's disappointing season when the Spartans 1-13 record placed them in the cellar of the Big Ten Conference.

Laurels

Having worked hard to become a starter on the Spartans basketball squad, Shick finally received a Varsity letter. The Spartans also honored him as the 1965 Stephen G. Scofes Inspirational Player (or Sportsmanship Award). Looking back on receiving that award, that at the time was called the "Boney Award" or the "Boneyard Award," John recalled: "Never cared for the terminology. I still have the radio, but the trophy probably was kept as an annual award that likely was discarded soon after Forddy's departure. Who knows?" (John Shick, personal communication).



John Shick and Fordy Anderson at 1964-65 Spartans Awards Ceremony

Career Statistics as a Spartan

The tables below summarize Shick's statistics, per game and totals, over his the three seasons (1962-1965) he played on the Spartan varsity squad.

Per Game

Season	School	Conf	G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS	SOS
1962-63	Michigan State	Big Ten																	7.66
1963-64	Michigan State	Big Ten	3			0.0	0.7	.000	0.3	1.0	.333	0.3					1.0	0.3	5.31
1964-65	Michigan State	Big Ten	23			1.4	4.1	.340	1.1	2.0	.556	2.7					2.3	3.9	7.72
Career	Michigan State		26			1.2	3.7	.333	1.0	1.8	.542	2.5					2.1	3.5	6.90

Totals

Season	School	Conf	G	GS	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS	
1962-63	Michigan State	Big Ten																	
1963-64	Michigan State	Big Ten	3			0	2	.000	1	3	.333	1					3	1	
1964-65	Michigan State	Big Ten	23			32	94	.340	25	45	.556	63					52	89	
Career	Michigan State		26			32	96	.333	26	48	.542	64					55	90	

After Michigan State

Industrial Basketball

While yet enrolled at Michigan State to finish up his classwork before graduating, and pursuing a Master's Degree in business, Shick began playing "industrial basketball" in the Lansing City Basketball League. Below are highlights from a few games; as John recalled, the league had "some really good players" (John Shick, personal communication).

On December 6, 1965, Shick scored 18 points (on seven baskets and four free throws) for the Celentino Brothers Food Shop team who defeated Greg's Janitorial, 67-56.

"Shick and Lance Olson paced the Celentino's attack with 18 and 19 points respectively ([Source](#)). Commenting on this game, John recalled:

This is the Lance Olson who played [for Michigan State] with Johnny Green and on the team that lost in the semi-finals to the University of North Carolina in triple overtime. UNC then beat Kansas and Wilt Chamberlain two nights later in triple OT to win the NCAA Tournament (John Shick, personal communication).

On February 16, 1966, Celentino's clinched the league's championship, beating its closest challenger, Greg's Janitorial, 91-77. "[Bob] Nordmann led the champions with 29 points but had plenty of support" including Shick contributing ten points ([Source](#)). John recalls: "Nordmann was a real load, 6'11" and near 300 lbs. He was the MSU freshman coach at some time while I was still at MSU" (John Shick, personal communication).

On January 5, 1967, a *Lansing State Journal* sports headline read "Ex-Spartan Scores 21 in City League" as Shick scored 21 points (on ten baskets and one free throw) in a Class A city league game to lead the league-leading Central Stores to a 73-49 win over Greg's Janitorial ([Source](#)).

Military Service

After Shick graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering ("took me five years" he recalled), he began to pursue a Master's Degree in Business. John recalled:

Shortly after I began the winter term, I received a notice from Uncle Sam. I had been selected by the draft board to become a member of the US Army. Fortunately, acting on good advice from a fraternity brother (Theta Chi), I had applied for Navy Officer Candidate School. Because I had already submitted my application, the Army agreed to await the Navy's decision. About 6 weeks later I received an acceptance letter and was directed to report in May 1967 to Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island.

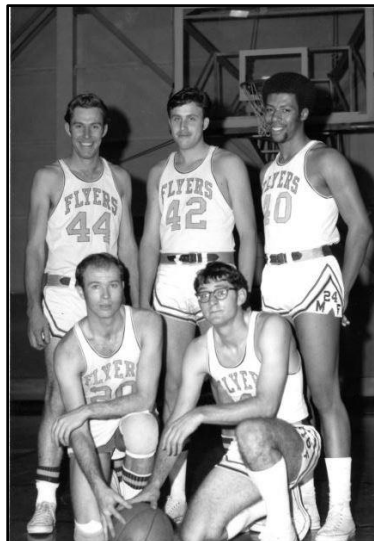
While there I experienced another epiphany. My company officers didn't care a wit that I had played basketball for Michigan State....except on Sports Nights where winning basketball

games against other cadet companies did have a certain appeal to them. Because I was particularly fit and wanted to stay active, prior to graduation I selected one of the Navy's diving programs – Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) – to occupy myself for what I envisioned would be for my three years of obligated service. Thirty years later, I was compelled by statute to retire from the Navy. It was an exciting, rewarding, and incredibly fulfilling career, one that I would have elongated if I had had the choice (John Shick, personal communication).

During 1972-74, while assigned to the Naval Air Station at Moffett Field, California, Shick (#20) was able to continue playing basketball as reflected in the team photos below.



Shick (#20 in below photo) recalled: "Coach Joe Moore (at left) was one of the finest individuals I have ever met...and a great coach. We played a small college schedule with several major college ballplayers on our roster and two others that went on to play in college. At one point we were 23-0."



During John's career with the Navy, he served five times in command positions. Career highlights include being the Officer in Charge of Suez Canal mine/ordnance clearance operations after the 1973 Israeli-Egyptian War; serving as a member of a Diving Capability Assessment Team requested by the Shah of Iran; and leading as a Task Unit Commander of operations for clearance of five Kuwaiti Ports during Desert Storm (1991). He retired as a Navy Captain (O-6).



From John's retirement program in 1997: "Captain Shick's decoration and awards include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (2), Navy Commendation Medal, Nave Unit Commendation, Meritorious Unit Commendation (4), National Defense Medal, Southwest Asian Campaign Medal, Kuwaiti Liberation Medal (Saudi), Kuwaiti Liberation Medal (Kuwait), and Pistol Marksman Ribbon."

"The Legends Game"

On Saturday, February 20, 1999, Michigan State's Breslin Center was the site for the MSU Basketball "Legend's Game" to celebrate "100 years of magical memories" in Spartans men's basketball. In attendance were former MSU coaches Pete Newell, Forddy Anderson, Gus Ganakas, and Jud Heathcote – plus former Spartan greats like Julius McCoy, Stan Washington, Brad Van Pelt, Mike Robinson, Ron Charles, and Terry Donnelly, Mike Peplowski, and, among others, former Okemo Chieftains John Shick and Bob Fossum (see later vignette)!

With John playing on the Green team, the Green beat the White, 80-71. Carlton Valentine (1985-88), the father of future Spartan great and All-American Denzel Valentine, led the Green with 13 points on 6-of-6 shooting ([Source](#)).

Celebrate 100 years of magical memories!

MSU
Men's Basketball
"The Legends Game"
presented by the
Lansing State Journal

Saturday, February 20, 1999
Jack Breslin Student Events Center

12:00 p.m. Autographs, Interactive Games and Locker Room Tours

2:00 p.m. Legends Game and Activities

**Tickets: \$5.00/ lower bowl
 \$2.50/upper bowl**

Come at noon for autographs and more with former players and coaches. Then, stay for the game and activities featuring former Spartan greats like Julius McCoy, Stan Washington, Brad Van Pelt, Mike Robinson, Ron Charles, Terry Donnelly and Mike Peplowski. Also in attendance will be former coaches Pete Newell, Forddy Anderson, Gus Ganakas and Jud Heathcote. About 150 former players and staffers will be there!

 **News You Can Use**



Green 80, White 71

WHITE (71)

Bill Cawood 2-8 0-1 4, Gary Ganakas 0-4 0-3 0, Julius McCoy 3-6 0-0 6, Mike Robinson 3-7 1-4 7, Brad VanPelt 3-4 0-1 6, Terry Donnelly 3-5 0-0 6, Gerry Geistler 1-4 0-3 2, Bill Cohrs 0-2 0-0 0, Todd Wolfe 1-5 0-2 2, Bob Fossum 1-3 0-1 2, Lloyd Ward 0-3 0-3 0, Vernon Johnson 0-2 0-1 0, William Kilgore 0-1 0-0 0, Rick Kaye 2-3 0-1 4, Barry Fordham 1-2 0-0 2, Mike Respert 1-6 1-4 3, Jon Zulauf 4-7 1-3 9, Bill Glover 2-4 1-1 5, Erik Qualman 1-3 0-0 2, Bill Rapchak 0-0 0-0 0, Pat Pepler 0-1 0-0 0, "Others" 0-0 11-11 11. Totals 28-80 15-39 71.

GREEN (80)

Jack Cawood 1-1 0-0 2, Bob Chapman 3-6 2-5 8, Mike Peplowski 2-5 0-1 4, Kevin Smith 1-5 0-2 2, Stan Washington 3-8 2-3 8, Ron Charles 3-5 1-1 7, Bob Armstrong 0-2 0-1 0, David Hart 1-1 0-0 2, Tim Bograkovs 1-3 0-0 2, Carlton Valentine 6-6 1-1 13, Chris Weshinsky 2-4 1-2 5, Richie Jordan 0-4 0-4 0, Pat Miller 2-6 1-4 5, Monte Evans 2-8 0-3 4, Jim Coutre 1-4 0-0 2, Benny White 1-3 0-2 2, John Shick 2-3 0-0 4, Jim Sarkine 1-3 0-1 2, Joe Krakora 0-1 0-0 0, Gerald Gilkie 1-3 0-0 0, "Others" 0-0 6-6 6. Totals 33-81 14-36 80.

White

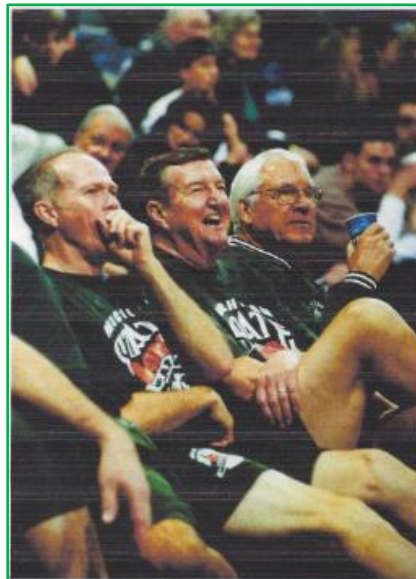
39 32-71

Green

51 29-80

Rebounds—White (31): B. Cawood 7, Ganakas 2, McCoy 4, Geistler 2, Cohrs, Wolfe 3, Fossum, Ward, Kilgore 3, Kaye 2, Fordman 3, Zulauf, Qualman. **Green (30):** Champan 3, Peplowski 5, Smith 3, Washington 2, Charles 5, Hart 3, Valentine 7, Evans 2.

While the game's program failed to include John in listing the former Spartans attending the event and participating in the game, the game's box score (see above) shows that John scored four points on 2-3 shooting – plus the below photo shows John (left) on the bench with a couple of unidentified old-timers. (John Shick, personal communication).



John Shick (left) on the Green Bench at MSU "Legends Game"

Personal

John met his future wife, Monika Sparr of Cuxhaven, West Germany, in Mt. View, California. Monika, who immigrated to San Francisco as an *au pair*, was in the US on a “green card” when she met John, and became a citizen while John was stationed in Colts Neck, New Jersey. They have two children, a son who attended the University of Michigan and a daughter who graduated from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

Today John and Monika live in Virginia Beach, Virginia, an area where Shick had several tours of duty earlier in his career. On retiring, John and Monika discussed priorities going forward. John recalls:

She established a single parameter: because I had spent so much time away from home during my Navy career, I had to give her 6-9 months of dedicated attention. At the end of nine months, we concluded that since we had saved and invested well for 30 years there was no compelling reason why I should commit to another career of 9-5 work days. So, from that day forward, my wife has had to put up with my presence, my post-retirement sport (golf), and my continued desire to travel (unaccompanied; she is not keen on traveling). I have managed to visit all seven continents and nearly 80 countries since I retired 20 years ago (John Shick, personal communication).



John Shick, Virginia Beach, Virginia (2017)

Looking Back

Looking back on his sophomore year (1958-59) at Okemos High, when Shick was on the Reserve Team, John recalled the impact that the Chieftains Varsity squad had on his development as a basketball player:

My sister Victoria was in the 1959 class, two years ahead of me, and was good friends with a number of the seniors on the basketball team. It was this group of seniors, especially Tom Aaron, Joe Luttrell, Bill Johnson, and Fred Hoffecker who were my original almost peer-level tutors. (I, along with Johnson and Hoffecker, also played Trombones in the high school band. Johnson was first chair and I was second.) If I had a high school basketball role model, it would have been Joe Luttrell. A left-hander, he was a silky-smooth jump shooter and an excellent penetrator. Further, if there was team (other than the OHS team my senior year) that could legitimately be rated as the best team Okemos had fielded up until I stopped paying close attention (up until I graduated from MSU), it would have been this team.

My senior year team was athletic, determined, conditioned, and scrappy...and possessed a fair amount of talent. We were, however, undersized and we paid a penalty for it in several games (even some we won). The starting team in the photo, to the contrary, was well-endowed with height. Clausen (6'1"), Aaron (6'4" and muscular), Johnson (6'5" and well proportioned), Luttrell (6'1" - built like me). There also were several players coming off the bench who were 6'3" or better. I always will be indebted to this group for motivating me to continue in the sport despite my relatively diminutive size/weight at the time. To my knowledge, however, none of these players went on to play college ball (John Shick, personal communication).

Asked about the broader impact that Okemos High and Michigan State had on his life, John shared the following:

Okemos High School prepared me in many ways for the challenges of collegiate life and for my eventual career. Academically, the curricula and my teachers (supported by my parents) were demanding, but not rigid or unreasonable. The mathematics and science courses and instructors prepared me for the technical major that I chose at MSU. I acknowledge, however, that I could have been a more diligent student during my Junior and Senior years at MSU. Oh, well....water over the dam.

I also enjoyed and appreciated the coaches at OHS: Doug Richey, the Junior Varsity coach and Bob Baker, the Varsity coach. They were respected as individuals and as coaches and teachers (mathematics and history). OHS was, nevertheless, a small school. It didn't possess a weight room or strength trainers, resources that would have benefited me greatly. On the other hand, even though MSU had such resources, basketball players were not encouraged, much less required, to use them. Because OHS is so close to MSU, a large percentage of the students had parents that were (are) professionals. Consequently, academic and athletic competition among OHS students compelled a lot of effort and generated much comradery. My OHS graduating class of 107 students remains extremely close.

Despite the fact that I graduated in Electrical Engineering from MSU and subsequently, while in the Navy, earned a Master's Degree in Geodesy from Ohio State, what I learned was only tangentially useful in my diving, ordnance, and command assignments. What was particularly useful, however, were the academic and athletic demands of long hours of significant effort, both physical and mental. The importance of teamwork and leadership learned at OHS and MSU and taught by the coaches were requisites of small tactical Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) units (John Shick, personal communication).



Kerry Byrnes and John Shick (November 27, 2019)