***Summary – Reaching for Glory***

**One of those was the University of St. Thomas, a member of the NAIA's Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC), which upset heavily-favored Marquette 69-63 at Shaughnessy Hall in St. Paul, Minnesota, in January 1957.  Bobby Gallivan, a 5-11 senior guard, scored a game-high 28 points in that stunner as the Tommies, a monumental underdog, defeated Marquette for only the third time in history and for the first time since 1922.  It was a crushing loss for the then-named Warriors.  Fresh from an NIT appearance the previous March, Marquette had taken 4th-ranked Louisville and No. 11 Oklahoma City down to the wire earlier that season.**

**Jim Carney, a seldom used 6-4 reserve center from Birmingham, buried a one-handed push shot with two seconds remaining as host Spring Hill College, an NAIA member, upset the SEC's Georgia Bulldogs 69-67 in the opening round of the Senior Bowl tournament in Mobile, Alabama, on New Year's Day 1958.  Spring Hill's Art Irato netted a game-high 22 points and Ed Tibbetts chipped in 19 for the victorious Badgers who improved to 5-1 on the season.**

**It was the second time in four years that Spring Hill, a small Jesuit school with an enrollment of a mere 750 souls, had defeated Georgia.  The two schools had met on the hardwood for the first time ever four years earlier in the opening round of Jacksonville's Gator Bowl tournament during the 1954 Christmas holidays.**

**Led by Happy Mahfouz, an enigmatic 6-3 senior forward from Alexandria, Louisiana, who scored a team-high 23 points, and 6-1 Whitey Barnes who set a new tournament record by grabbing 20 rebounds against the bigger Bulldogs, Spring Hill prevailed 78-69.  An unorthodox shooter with a twisting, off-angle jump shot, Mahfouz was the fifth leading scorer in the nation's small college ranks at the time.  He popped in 25 points the following night as Spring Hill, using a quick switching man-to-man defense, defeated the previously unbeaten Florida Gators 66-60 to capture the Gator Bowl championship.**

**The College of Steubenville, now known as Franciscan University, which was named the No. 1 team in the College Division by the UPI Coaches Poll in 1958 after winning 24 of 25 games that season while defeating defending NAIA champion Tennessee State in overtime during a holiday tournament and shredding NIT-bound St. Francis (Pa.) by twenty points in Loretto, Pennsylvania --- routing the Red Flash 65-45 late in the season --- didn’t appear in any postseason tournament that year.  It was a real travesty.  The Hank Kuzma-coached Barons had been led to believe that they would receive an NIT bid and, as such, had turned down a chance to play in the NAIA district playoffs.  The tall, thin and energetic 30-year-old Kuzma --- one of the youngest coaches in the country --- was subsequently named "Small College Coach of the Year" for guiding his tournament-less Barons to a near-perfect season among the nation's more than 700 small colleges and universities.**

**Lean and boyish-looking Ed Kazakavich, a lanky lefthander with a soft touch, scored a game-high 34 points as the University of Scranton, hoping for an at-large berth to the second annual small college NCAA Tournament that same season, notched its eleventh straight victory  and kept its flickering postseason hopes alive by stunning Villanova 79-73.  The Royals, who also defeated Hofstra, Georgetown and Muhlenberg that season --- all of whom were playing major college schedules --- finished the 1957-58 campaign with a 17-8 mark, but like Steubenville were left out in the cold during the postseason.**

**The sensational Kelly Coleman erupted for 40 points as Kentucky Wesleyan upset Louisville 83-69 in Owensboro late in the 1957-58 season, defeating the Cardinals for the first time in eleven years and for only the second time in 23 meetings.  The 6-4, 215-pound freshman led the country's frosh in both the University and College divisions in scoring with a 26.6 average that season.  Despite a relatively mediocre 12-11 regular season record, the KWU Panthers appeared in the College Division NCAA Tournament the previous March where they were soundly defeated by Wheaton College (Ill.), a perennial small college power, in the championship game.**

**An alert Western New Mexico quintet took advantage of a cold-shooting University of New Mexico squad to upset the heavily-favored Lobos 85-75 in Albuquerque at the outset of the 1958-59 season.  The Lobos, who won only three games that season, misfired on 68 attempts, making a woeful 26 of 94 shots from the floor.  As a team, New Mexico made only 31.2 percent of its field goal attempts that year.**

**Jimmy Grant, the first African-American player to score more than 1,000 career points for New York's Adelphi University and the school's all-time leading rebounder, tallied 30 points --- 20 in the first half alone --- as the small college Panthers surprised NIT-bound Fordham in Garden City in early 1959.**

**In his maiden season in 1959-60, legendary coach Joe B. Hall of UK fame led little Regis University in Denver to a 74-69 upset victory over the University of Arizona.  The Royals, who briefly transitioned to the University Division two years later, were led by 6-1 guard Dennis Boone's game-high 23 points.  Boone, who didn't always see eye to eye with Hall, was one of only three Regis players ever selected in the NBA Draft.  Regis, which captured the inaugural National Catholic Invitational Tournament title in 1949, defeated several other major colleges, including Henry Iba's 4th-ranked Oklahoma State Cowboys, during Coach Hall's relatively short tenure at the school.**

**The tough but tiny Tigers of Wittenberg University upset Toledo in a pair of heart-stopping thrillers in back-to-back seasons in the late fifties, defeating the Rockets 66-63 in double overtime in the first contest and by a slender 40-39 margin in a slow-motion and deliberate defensive struggle the following season.  Wittenberg's stunning one-point victory in 1959 was the only loss Toledo suffered in its first ten games that season.  Both games were played in the Glass City.**

**A private liberal arts college located in Springfield, Ohio, Wittenberg was a college division program at the time.  Once known as the "Fighting Lutherans," Wittenberg has had some phenomenal teams in the past --- the Tigers captured the small college national championship in 1961 --- but currently compete in the NCAA Div. III Ohio Athletic Conference.**

**Six years before famously toppling Adolph Rupp's Kentucky Wildcats to win the national championship, the University of Texas-El Paso, formerly known as Texas Western, lost a pair of games to small colleges during the 1959-60 season, narrowly losing road contests at Central Oklahoma and Eastern New Mexico.  A year earlier, the Miners had dropped a hard-fought overtime contest to Sul Ross State University of the NAIA's Lone Star Conference.**

**Such upsets were almost commonplace in the late fifties.**

**The same thing was true during the following decade as small colleges across the country continued to spring surprises against their major college foes.**

**Gifted playmaker Charlie Bowerman, the fourth-leading scorer in school history, tallied 22 points in the second half to help erase a 12-point halftime deficit and lead the Little Giants of Wabash College to a stunning 78-77 victory over Creighton in Omaha in early January 1961.  Dribbling effortlessly past defenders while dishing off a number of nifty assists, the slick 6-1 basketball magician was the game's leading scorer with 29 points.  Bowerman, who later played with the Phillips 66ers AAU team, led the Little Giants (15-7) into the second round of the College Division NCAA Tournament later that season.**

**All-American backcourt sensation Tommy Pearsall poured in 23 points as the little Lions of Albright College stunned NCAA-bound St. Joseph’s (Pa.) 66-56 at the Albright Fieldhouse in Reading, Pennsylvania, in January 1962. The diminutive Pearsall, who led Albright to back-to-back College Division NCAA Tournaments in 1961 and 1962, was the school’s all-time leading scorer with 2,164 points in four seasons.**

**It was Albright’s first win against the highly-regarded Hawks since the 1957-58 season when, rallying from a late nine-point deficit, the red-and-white clad Lions narrowly edged the heavily-favored Hawks in a 77-76 thriller.**

**Wil Renken's teams always put up a spirited fight against St. Joe's.  The 1962 upset took place only ten months after Albright came within a whisker of ending St. Joseph’s eleven-game winning streak the previous season, a year Jack Ramsay’s Hawks finished third in the 1961 NCAA Tournament after being devoured by No. 1 Ohio State, led by the spectacular Jerry Lucas and John Havlicek, in the semifinals and outscoring Utah 127-120 in four overtimes in the Final Four’s thrilling and record-setting consolation game, arguably one of the greatest NCAA Tournament games in history.**

**Powerful St. Joseph’s, however, wasn’t Albright’s only major college victim in the early to mid-sixties. The small-college Lions also chalked up wins against Boston University, Columbia, Hofstra, Lafayette, Seton Hall, Bucknell, Lehigh, Delaware and Rutgers during this period.**

**One of the most amazing David vs. Goliath examples involving a smaller western Pennsylvania college during that period, however, was that of little Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, a small Amish-oriented college town about an hour’s drive north of Pittsburgh.**

**Guided by the modest and unassuming Buzz Ridl, arguably one of college basketball’s shrewdest strategists who later led the Billy Knight-led resurgent Pitt Panthers to national prominence in the seventies, little Westminster first burst onto the national scene in the early 1940s when Ridl, the team captain, led the Titans to their one and only appearance in the National Invitation Tournament in New York's Madison Square Garden.  Westminster proved to be a thorn in the side to Western Pennsylvania's major colleges --- Duquesne, Pittsburgh and St. Francis --- well into the 1970s.**

**Led by Wallace Sallade's 15 points, five players scored in double figures as the Titans knocked off ninth-ranked Duquesne 63-61 at the Pitt Field House in February 1962.  It was considered one of the most startling upsets of the 1961-62 college basketball season.**

**Missing only four shots from the floor in the first half, Westminster led 32-22 at the intermission before the Dukes, led by the sensational Willie Somerset's game-high 21 point performance fought back and made a game of it.**

**The Titans, who were ranked sixth in the Associated Press small college poll, improved to 15-2 with the stunning upset while the Dukes dropped to 16-4.**

**Making its sixth of eleven all-time appearances in the NAIA national tournament the following month, Ridl's Titans finished with a program best 26-3 mark that season after losing to Prairie View A&M in the NAIA championship game.  Westminster's only regular season losses that season came at the hands of major college opponents St. Francis (Pa.) and Pitt.  Duquesne ended its season with a 22-6 record after falling to St. John's in the NIT semifinals.**

**Westminster, which currently competes at the NCAA Division III level, defeated Pitt in four consecutive seasons in the mid-sixties, pounding the Panthers by 24 or more points in three of those games.**

**In the only game ever played between the two schools, Cal Poly of Pomona, a college division team, raised some early season eyebrows in 1962 by defeating the University of the Pacific by double digits to capture the Camellia Bowl tourney title in Sacramento in early December. The Cal Poly Broncos, who advanced to the NCAA College Division Elite Eight the following year, had upset highly-regarded host Sacramento State the previous night to advance to the championship game against the taller Tigers, a longtime member of the West Coast Athletic Conference (WCAC).**

**One of the biggest upsets in the 1960s occurred when undersized yet ambitious Assumption University, a college division team that now competes at the NCAA Div. II level, stunned defending NIT champion Providence at the outset of the 1963-64 season, shocking the heavily-favored and much taller Friars, 88-80.**

**Providence's 6-10, 269-pound center John Thompson, who later guided the Patrick Ewing-led Georgetown Hoyas to the national championship in 1984, had a good six inches on Assumption's tallest player that night, but the badly-outrebounded Greyhounds found a way to win as dual-sport athlete Jim Monahan, a 5-11 junior guard from Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and playmaker Chris Kiernan, whose last-second shot rolled out in a one-point loss to the Friars the previous season, combined for 47 points.  Completely dominating the glass, the towering Thompson led all scorers with 31 points in the losing effort.**

**Located in the heart of New England, the Worcester-based Catholic university led by as many as 16 points in the second half before thwarting a furious comeback bid by the 12th-ranked Friars in the game's closing minutes.  It was an impressive feat given that Providence (20-6) had won sixteen straight games and was one of only 25 major colleges that went dancing later that year.**

**The gallant Greyhounds, who pulled off a similar upset against Providence 21 years later, went 18-1 during the regular season in 1963-64 --- their only loss was a 75-67 setback at the hands of crosstown rival Holy Cross --- and were ranked No. 2 nationally in the small college polls before being upset by Northeastern University in the Northeast Regional of the 32-team College Division NCAA Tournament in March.**

**Denny Lewis, a 5-11 transfer from UC-Berkeley, scored a game-high 28 points and 6-foot junior guard Everett Adams and 6-4, 185-pound forward Joe Galbo added 23 and 22 points, respectively, as San Francisco State stunned the St. Mary's Gaels 94-84 in Moraga, California, in the season-opener for both teams in December 1963.  St. Mary's, which led only once in the contest, was one of five university division schools the Gators faced that season.  Adams, who once set a school and Far Western Conference scoring record with 58 points in a 114-107 loss to rival Sacramento State, was the team's leading scorer that season.**

**Playing in the shadow of Bill Russell, K.C. Jones and the the two-time national champion University of San Francisco Dons in the mid-fifties, San Francisco State had been relegated to the NCAA's college division at the start of the 1956-57 season.**

**The Gators, who had been USF's 29th and 58th victim when the Dons won an incredible sixty straight games between 1954 and 1956 --- the longest winning streak in NCAA history at the time --- have defeated numerous Division I teams, some of them multiple times, since being categorized as a small college program.**

**One of San Francisco State's biggest wins against a major college opponent in the post-1957 period occured shortly before Christmas in 1971 when the Gators stunned Arkansas 84-81 in overtime in Little Rock.  Forward Garry Bradford, who scored a team-high 18 points, made a crucial basket and free throw in the final minute of overtime to lift the visitors over the surprised Razorbacks.**

**The Gators, who appeared in the 1960, 1963, 1965, 1969 and 1971 College Division NCAA Tournament --- advancing to the Elite Eight in 1969 after defeating UC-Irvine and upsetting fourth-ranked UNLV, which was playing in its final season in the college division --- and subsequently appeared five more times in the Div. II NCAA Tournament, most recently in 2017, have also defeated Santa Clara, San Jose State, Pacific, Western Michigan, Nevada, San Diego State, Fresno State, Cornell, Columbia, Sacramento State, Seattle, Jacksonville State, UC-Santa Barbara, North Texas State and Portland, among others, and in 1966 came close to upsetting highly-regarded Duquesne, a traditional eastern powerhouse in those days, before falling to Red Manning's Dukes, led by 6-4 sophomore forward Moe Barr, by seven points at the Pitt Fieldhouse in Pittsburgh.**

**Incredibly, San Francisco State also defeated St. Mary’s (Ca.) seven times during a ten-year stretch beginning with the 1964-65 season and --- letting the air out of the ball in a game that went down to the wire --- nearly upset the Gaels in Moraga as recently as 1992 before losing 43-39.**

**Little St. Mary’s of Texas, an extremely well-coached NAIA squad that had a richly-deserved reputation for occasionally upsetting some of their major college opponents, knocked off once-beaten Houston 76-66, handing the seventh-ranked Guy Lewis-coached Cougars only their second loss of the 1969-70 season in a late January stunner in San Antonio.**

**Entering the game with a 12-2 record, St. Mary’s was ranked fifteenth in the nation among small colleges at the time. Houston had only suffered one setback, an 85-63 loss to Santa Clara in the opening round of the Las Vegas Holiday Classic in late December.**

**Finishing with a mark of 20-5 that season after dropping a pair of heartbreakers to Stephen F. Austin in a best-of-three series in the NAIA district playoffs --- losing narrowly to the top-ranked and undefeated Lumberjacks 84-83 and 71-68 --- the Rattlers’ only three regular season losses that winter came at the hands of major college opponents, including an 81-77 setback at Loyola of Chicago and an eight-point loss to Tulsa.**

**Forward Mel Cartwright, the school’s all-time leading rebounder, and 6-7 Mike Neer scored a team-high twenty points apiece as Washington & Lee, a founding member of the fabled Southern Conference --- winning the regular season title three times and the conference tourney twice, but sadly never appearing in the NCAA or NIT postseason tournaments --- upset the U.S. Naval Academy 70-69 in Annapolis in January 1969.  It was the first meeting between the two schools since 1936.**

**Washington & Lee, which left the Southern Conference in 1958, had been playing at the college division level for nearly a decade when it upset the Midshipmen that winter.  Later competing at the NCAA Division III level, the Generals subsequently defeated Navy in three of their next four meetings, the last occurring during the 1974-75 season when the Generals, playing a tight man-to-man defense, held Navy’s leading scorer, Mickey Hampton, scoreless and went on to defeat the visiting Midshipmen 54-47 in Lexington, Virginia.**

**The turbulent sixties featured hundreds of similar upsets, as was the case when little-known Union University, a small private Baptist college in Jackson, Tennessee, upset Memphis State in back-to-back seasons in 1968 and 1969.**

**The key to the Bulldogs' second victory over their only major college opponent in 1969-70 was the dominating performance of 6-8, 240-pound senior center Ed Braly, who scored 24 points, including the winning layup with 59 seconds remaining, and pulled down a dozen rebounds.  Braly had been a member of Memphis State's freshman team in 1966 before transferring to Union University.**

**In narrowly defeating the Tigers a second time in as many years --- a 63-62 barnburner at the Mid-South Coliseum in Memphis --- Union coach Billy Henry wondered if it was really an upset.  "I told the kids coming down here that the first win last year was an upset," he said, adding that a second victory over the same team "you don't call an upset...but I guess you have to."**

**A short jumper by forward Alex Wilson with eight seconds remaining lifted the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (18-8) past Harvard, 86-84, in early January 1966. Wilson scored a game-high 34 points to pace the upset-minded Engineers, who led 40-32 at halftime.**

**An ECAC Division III member at the time, it was MIT’s first win against an Ivy League opponent since the 1947-48 season when it defeated Brown University twice. It was also MIT’s first and only victory against Harvard in the dozen games played between the two schools.**

**MIT, which finished with an impressive 19-4 mark in 1966-67, nearly repeated the same feat the following season when it dropped a 70-68 double-overtime heartbreaker to Dartmouth.**

**Playing the fourth of five straight road games, unheralded Bellarmine University, a college division team at the time, surprised Creighton in the winter of 1966, stunning the Blue Jays 81-78 at the City Auditorium Arena in Omaha before a relatively sparse crowd of 2,864.**

**Coming off a pair of 30-point losses to St. Joseph’s (Pa.) and crosstown rival Louisville and a razor-thin 68-66 loss to the University of South Dakota in Vermillion the previous night, Bellarmine limped into Omaha on a three-game skid while Creighton, which had defeated 10th-ranked Kansas State in its season opener, was riding a three-game winning streak. The high-scoring and heavily-favored Blue Jays had stormed past Syracuse 103-87 in their most recent outing a few nights earlier.**

**Led by Jim Schurfranz, a 6-5, 200-pound forward who scored a team high 21 points, and 6-6 sophomore center Mike Clark’s 19 points, the Knights, coached by Alex Groza, jumped out to a 44-33 halftime lead and withstood a late Creighton rally to even their record at 3-3.**

**Bellarmine, which finished the 1965-66 campaign with a 13-8 mark, nearly knocked off a pretty good DePaul (17-8) team the following season, falling to the Blue Demons 64-63 in Chicago on a highly-controversial technical foul called with 54 seconds remaining in the game. Unbelievably, the Knights were charged with the technical for failing to aggressively try to get the ball when DePaul was stalling for the last shot.**

**Jay Cody and Jack Russell scored 17 points apiece as St. Michael's (Vt.), a massive underdog playing a possession-type game, stunned Yankee Conference favorite Rhode Island 59-54 in Providence at the outset of the 1968-69 season.**

**The 1970s were no different as the nation's small colleges continued to give the major powers fits on the hardwood.**

**The University of Missouri at St. Louis (UMSL), which was seriously considering making the leap from the college division to the major-college university division, picked up its first win in program history against a major college opponent when it stunned visiting Arkansas 85-79 at the outset of the 1971-72 season.**

**Playing in their new 6,500-seat fieldhouse for the first time --- a facility constructed with an eye on becoming a university division program --- the Rivermen, coming off a season-opening loss to Saint Louis and a heartbreaking setback to Southeast Missouri State, led throughout the contest and completely dominated the glass while building a 47-29 halftime lead.**

**Senior Marc Bernsen, a 6-1 guard from McBride High School in St. Louis, scored a team-high twenty points --- 16 in the first half --- as all five starters for UMSL scored in double figures.  The Razorbacks, who exploded for fifty second-half points, couldn’t get any closer than the final margin.**

**The Rivermen (now known as the Tritons), who also defeated Division I newcomer Stetson that season, had a really good team that year and later advanced to the quarterfinals of the small college NCAA Tournament before losing to Roanoke, the eventual national champion. Never making the jump to Div. I, the Tritons finished with a 21-6 mark that season.**

**Pat Magley poured in thirty points as West Georgia, a member of the NAIA, stunned highly-touted Western Kentucky 89-88 before a crowd of 9,600 at the Fiddle Arena in Bowling Green, Kentucky, in December 1972. A 6-7 sophomore who wasn’t expected to start against the mighty Hilltoppers --- a highly-regarded squad only two years removed from an NCAA Final Four appearance --- Magley connected on 14 of 24 shots from the floor, mostly long-range jumpers, and grabbed a team-high eleven boards in propelling the upset-minded Wolves to their first win ever against a major college opponent.**

**Just as the NCAA was further segregating its member institutions into three separate athletic divisions, college basketball teams in the city of New Orleans began an exciting, but short-lived “city series” involving all of the Big Easy’s four-year schools, regardless of division or level of competition. It was college basketball, N’awlins style, and it was a spectacular hit among college hoops fans in the Crescent City.**

**Initially organized in 1972-73, it included Tulane University, a Division I program, the University of New Orleans, a Division II school preparing to transition to the major college ranks at the start of the 1975-76 season --- pulling off what it described as a "super ccoup," UNO lured Butch van Breda Kolff from the NBA to lead the Privateers into the big time --- and NAIA members Dillard and Xavier universities. The city series also eventually included Southern University-New Orleans, another NAIA school.**

**Sadly, however, it didn’t include Loyola of New Orleans, arguably the city's most storied college basketball program.  Administration officials at Loyola --- a Div. I school at the time --- which had captured the NAIA national championship in 1945 by defeating Pepperdine in the championship game --- and later made three appearances in the Big Dance during the fifties, had announced the previous January that the Jesuit institution, founded in 1904, was dropping its athletic programs altogether for “educational and financial” reasons.**

**In a five-game series spanning four consecutive seasons as part of the short-lived "city series" from 1973 to 1976 , Dillard University, a private, historically black college in New Orleans, stunned Division I Tulane twice in back-to-back seasons, defeating the Green Wave 96-85 in 1974 and by a closer 96-94 margin the following year.**

**Tulane won the first meeting ever between the two local schools, defeating the Bleu Devils in a 127-111 shootout in January 1973.  Dillard's Johnny Kelly and Bert Dupont combined for 66 points in that high-scoring loss.   The 111 points scored by the Bleu Devils were the most points by a Tulane foe since the 1969-70 season when LSU's Pistol Pete Maravich lit up the scoreboard with 49 points in a 127-114 rout of the Green Wave and Austin Carr poured in 53 points as 14th-ranked Notre Dame trounced Tulane 115-80.**

**Power forward Bruce Seals, a 6-8 All-American who later played in the NBA, scored a game-high thirty points as perennial NAIA power Xavier (La.) also toppled Tulane twice in the same New Orleans city series.  The Gold Rush turned the tide on the Green Wave by a narrow 79-77 margin in February 1973 and again the following season with a 61-53 victory before a record crowd.**

**Little Upsala College playmaker Ron Bucci, a Bergen Community College transfer who specialized in winning games in dramatic fashion that season, sank a pair of free throws with four seconds remaining as the visiting Vikings surprised a struggling Army squad 54-52 at West Point in the second game of the season for both teams at the start of the 1974-75 college basketball campaign.  The stunning victory over the Cadets was now-defunct Upsala’s first victory against a major college opponent since 1959.**

**A deadly long-range shooter, the 5-10, 160-pound Bucci, who dreamed of playing in the NFL as a defensive back for the New York Jets, dished off an impressive 248 assists for Upsala that season.**

**Shaggy-haired Jim Hickey, a 6-8, 240-pound center, scored 15 points and grabbed 15 rebounds as Upsala upset Maryland-Eastern Shore 92-82 a month later to pick up its second win against a Division I team that season. UMES, which won 27 of 29 games and appeared in the NIT the previous March, had recently transitioned to Division I.**

**The little college from East Orange, New Jersey, which posted a respectable 18-10 mark that season, was one of a slew of small colleges that knocked off Division I teams that year.**

**Most college basketball junkies probably remember when Christopher Johnson, a 6-foot sophomore guard, buried a half-dozen shots from beyond the arc, including the game winner with 8.3 seconds remaining, as little Le Moyne College stunned Jim Boeheim’s 25th-ranked Syracuse Orangemen 82-79 in an exhibition game at the Carrier Dome at the outset of the 2009-10 season.  What most sportswriters neglected to mention at the time was that the small Jesuit school on a hill --- a longtime Division II member --- had a long history of knocking off its major college opponents.**

**That was never more true than during the 1976-77 season.  Led by steady 6-7 senior center John Lauer and smooth and graceful 6-4 sophomore forward Jene Grey who averaged 15 points and 9 rebounds per game, little LeMoyne College defeated all four of its Division I opponents that year, beginning with a double-digit win over Boston College.  The unheralded Dolphins also registered a 74-66 victory over St. Francis of Brooklyn and narrowly defeated John McCarthy’s struggling Canisius squad --- a team that had lost seventeen straight games --- and, with their sights set on a Division II NCAA Tournament bid that ultimately eluded them, outscored the University at Buffalo 97-87 in overtime.**

**Shortly before Christmas of 1977, little Texas Lutheran, a Div. III school, stunned Texas Christian University, 77-76, in double-overtime when Mike Jones hit a 15-foot jumper with two seconds left in the second overtime.**

**Transitioning from a two-year junior college to a four-year school and competing against four-year colleges for the first time in school history during the 1976-77 season, Hawaii-Hilo  became an overnight NAIA power, captivating not only the citizens of Hilo, but the entire state of Hawaii that season.  The Vulcans also put themselves on the college basketball map nationally by defeating a couple of decent Division I teams while streaking to a head-turning 9-0 start that year.**

**Opening the season by belting BYU-Hawaii by lopsided margins of 127-66 and 115-76, the high-flying Vulcans, led by prolific assist maker Mark Lovelace and co-captains Gilbert Hicks and Jay “The Bird” Bartholomew, a lightning-quick 6-4 leaping sensation who buried some shots from deep in the corner and flew like a bird over three Nebraska defenders with a theatrical flying dunk shot that brought the crowd of 2,700 or so to its feet as Hilo stunned the Cornhuskers 71-66.  Bartholomew and Hicks tallied 21 points apiece to pace Coach Jimmy Yagi's victorious Vulcans.**

**Hawaii-Hilo followed that amazing performance with a second win against a decent Division I team a few days later, defeating the Lobos of New Mexico 81-78.  Hilo's only two regular season losses that season came at the hands of UNC-Charlotte, a Final Four team in March.**

**Appearing in the NAIA Tournament in Kansas City later that year, the Vulcans finished with an impressive 23-3 mark that season after losing to Illinois Wesleyan in the tournament's second round.**

**As gallant a group of Knights that ever rode out to slay a dragon, Gannon University won the first of five hard-fought games against Duquesne in the mid-to-late 1970s, stunning the Dukes 79-75 during the 1974-75 season, and nearly upsetting the heavily-favored Dukes a second time before losing a 92-90 heartbreaker in overtime in 1977.  Gerald Walker,  a 6-6 senior from Aliquippa, scored a game-high 28 points for the Knights in Gannon's 1975 upset victory over the Dukes.  All five of those games were played at Pittsburgh’s Civic Arena.**

**A longtime Division II power, the Knights own a 2-0 all-time record against Georgetown, last defeating the John Thompson-coached Hoyas 57-56 in the 1975 championship game of the Porreco Cup, Gannon's annual Christmas tournament featuring some of the top Division II teams in the country, as well as an occasional Div. I team.**

**A pair of jaw-dropping Kareem Abdul Jabbar-type towering hook shots by skin-and-bones center Dick Steineman propelled tiny Ashland University --- an NCAA school transitioning from Division II to non-scholarship Division III --- past the heavily-favored Xavier Musketeers, 63-62, on a snowy night in Cincinnati during the 1976-77 season.**

**Sophomore Paul Cuttig scored a game-high 23 points as tiny Elizabethtown College (Pa.), a non-scholarship Division III school, pulled ahead with six minutes remaining and stunned Lehigh University 78-67 in December of 1973. It was the fourth of eight all-time meetings between the two schools --- all between 1970 and 1978 --- and the first of three occasions in which the Blue Jays defeated the Division I Engineers in a span of four years.**

**Once known as the Galloping Grey Ghosts, Elizabethtown was never really regarded as a traditional small college power, but nevertheless has had a couple of really outstanding teams, including its 1963-64 squad, which was arguably the most talented team in program history.**

**Led by record-setting 6-7 junior center Dan Reitmeyer who snared 1,219 career rebounds --- a program record that still stands today --- the  Blue Jays won 17 of their 21 regular season games that season while winning the Mid-Atlantic Conference’s small college Northern Division regular season and conference tourney titles and its automatic bid to the College Division NCAA Tournament for the first and only time in school history.  Elizabethtown has  subsequently appeared in the Div. III NCAA Tournament on five occasions.**

**Every now and then a small college team has even managed to defeat a one-time national champion, as was the case when tiny St. Norbert’s stunned Loyola of Chicago in 1975, a year the Jesuit school, under new head coach Jerry Lyne, was trying to reverse the program’s deep decline after suffering through seven consecutive losing seasons, including a disastrous 4-20 season only seven years after the freewheeling “Iron Men” --- the rarely rested starters Jerry Harkness, Les Hunter, Ron Miller, Vic Rouse and Johnny Egan --- captured the 1963 national championship by defeating top-ranked and two-time defending national champion Cincinnati 60-58 on a last-second tip-in by Vic Rouse in overtime.**

**Gary Stanton, a 6-7 senior frontliner, scored 23 points and Don Lovett, a 6-5 sophomore forward from St. Petersburg, Florida, added 17 as Div. II  Edinboro University (Pa.) defeated a struggling Georgia State squad 73-70 in the consolation game of the 1977 Porreco Cup, Gannon University’s annual holiday tournament in Erie, Pa.**

**Beginning with a pair of upsets over Montana State and UNC-Charlotte to capture the KOA (Kampgrounds of America) Classic championship in 1977, Eastern Montana, now known as Montana State-Billings, defeated no fewer than four Division I schools over a five-year period.**

**In 1980, the unheralded Yellowjackets shocked 11th-ranked Texas A&M in overtime, upsetting the heavily-favored Aggies, 39-38, in a low-scoring affair in the consolation game of the KOA Classic when Eastern’s Calvin Weinberg stole the ball from Aggie guard Tyrone Larson with five seconds left in the scoreless overtime period and was fouled while driving to the basket.**

**The victory over nationally-ranked Texas A&M was arguably the greatest win in program history.  The Yellowjackets repeated that amazing feat the following year by stunning Iowa State, 66-55.   
Mike Harper, a 6-10 sophomore from Chicago’s Quigley South High School, scored 29 points to lead all scorers as visiting North Park University, the defending NCAA Division III national champion, stunned NCAA-bound Jacksonville University 78-68 before a stunned crowd of 2,834 at the Jacksonville Coliseum in December 1978. Harper, who later played briefly in the NBA, also grabbed a game-high fourteen rebounds.**

**Harper and teammates Modzel “Bud” Greer and sophomore guard Mike Thomas --- returning starters from the previous year’s 29-2 national championship team --- combined for 57 of the Vikings’ 78 points.**

**Pressing tenaciously while reeling off 18 unanswered points during a six-minute stretch in the second half, Florida Southern College, a Div. II squad, broke open a tight game and breezed past the Florida Gators 98-75 before a crowd of 2,800 at the Lakeland Civic Center Arena early in the 1979-80 season --- a devastating loss for the Gators that led to the firing of Florida coach John Lotz.**

**It was Florida Southern’s first victory against the Gators in 28 years and the third of eight --- count 'em, eight --- Division I teams the Moccasins defeated that season.**

**As he quickly brought the basketball up court with seven seconds remaining in overtime, little Howard Avery motioned with his left hand for his teammates to clear the right side of the court then wheeled and made a hurried sweep down the right side and popped a high-arching 20-foot jumper over the outstretched arms of Memphis State’s Otis Jackson to lift tiny UW-Parkside, an NAIA school, to a dramatic 71-69 overtime victory over the traditional Division I powerhouse in January of 1980. Avery’s improbable game-winning shot were the only points scored by either team in overtime.**

**Given its heaven-bound trajectory, few, if any, of the 7,343 fans assembled at the Mid-South Coliseum in Memphis that late January night thought Avery’s shot had a prayer. Neither did the Memphis players. “I couldn’t believe the shot went in,” lamented Memphis's 6-8 junior forward Dennis Isbell. “I thought it was going to be completely over the basket.”**

**It was the Tigers second setback to a small college foe that season.  Seven weeks earlier freshman guard Kelly Jobe, the coach's son, poured in 32 points as little Oklahoma Christian, a member of the NAIA's Sooner Athletic Conference, stunned Memphis 90-76, leaving 8,151 fans at the Mid-South Coliseum in shock.**

**It was UW-Parkside’s first win over a Division I opponent since a stunning 55-46 overtime victory at Fresno State, the defending Pacific Coast Athletic Association (PCAA) co-champion, the previous season. It was also its eighth all-time victory against a major college opponent dating back to a shocking ki73-59 upset of UW-Milwaukee, a Division I newcomer that year, during the 1973-74 season. It was also only the fifth season in which UW-Parkside had fielded a basketball team, which made the stunning victory in Memphis all the more remarkable.**

**The eighties also saw a slew of upsets by small college teams, but none were as shocking as Chaminade's 77-72 victory over top-ranked Virginia in 1982 and  the University of Alaska-Anchorage's stunning 70-66 victory over second-ranked Michigan in the opening round of the Utah Basketball Classic at the Jon M. Huntsman Center in Salt Lake City six years later.**

**The Glen Rice-led Wolverines, whose starting lineup featured five future NBA players, were more than a prohibitive favorite against the intrepid  Seawolves, runner-up in the Division II NCAA Tournament the previous March.**

**The eventual national champions, after all, were averaging over 100 points per game and had devoured their first eleven opponents that season by an average of 33.2 points, but to the delight of a hometown crowd that was still filtering in to watch their beloved Utes play Holy Cross in the nightcap, UAA executed its ball control strategy to perfection, taking 30-35 seconds off the clock on every possession while shooting a sizzling 63 percent from the field to pull off one of the biggest upsets in college basketball history.**

**There was a plethora of small college upsets that decade.**

**Freshman Kent Eaton, a 6-6 string bean of a player who barely weighed 185 pounds yet was a dominating figure inside, hit a short jumper in the lane with nine seconds remaining to lift the NAIA’s Westmont College past Texas Christian, 53-52, in the Horned Frogs’ season opener at the Daniel-Meyer Coliseum in Fort Worth at the outset of the 1980-81 season. It was TCU’s seventh loss to a lower division opponent since January 1973.**

**Durrell Lewis and Jim Rowe combined for 33 points as Mount St. Mary’s shocked George Washington 79-60 in late January of 1981. The top-ranked Division II team in the country at the time, the Mountaineers improved to 16-1 with the victory while shorthanded GWU, playing with a limited roster due to the flu and a couple of injuries, fell to 4-12. It was Mt. St. Mary’s first win over a Division I school since defeating St. Peter’s in 1977.**

**Terry Conrad’s two free throws with eight seconds left lifted the surging Bloomsburg University Huskies, a member of the Div. II Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference, to a stunning 73-72 upset of Division I Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, in late January 1981.**

**Bloomsburg nearly pulled off an even bigger upset against a Division I opponent the following season when it dropped a 49-48 heartbreaker to the heavily-favored Nittany Lions at Penn State’s ancient Rec Hall when Mike Casey’s failed tip-in attempt off a missed jumper bounced off the right side of the rim in the waning seconds.**

**In 1981, Wisconson-Stevens Points, an NAIA school, picked up its first win ever against a major college opponent with a stunning 57-51 victory over Creighton in Omaha, spoiling not only the Blue Jays’ season opener, but also former New York Knicks star Willis Reed’s collegiate coaching debut.**

**Ron Lesiak, a 6-7 sophomore from Chicago, nailed an 18-foot jumper with a minute and twenty seconds remaining and Kirk Vucso, a 6-1 junior guard, drained a pair of free throws with three seconds left to lift little Lewis University over the Missouri Valley Conference’s Drake Bulldogs, 41-40, before a sleepy, but stunned crowd of 5,139 at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Des Moines, Iowa, at the outset of the 1981-82 season.**

**The shocking victory by the Division II visitors from the Land of Lincoln spoiled the head coaching debut of Drake’s Gary Garner, a former assistant at Missouri.**

**Reaching for glory, Dave Barnett and teammate Jim Murphy shared game scoring laurels with twenty points apiece as little-known Messiah University, a longtime member of the NCCAA (National Christian College Athletic Association), stunned the Bucknell Bison 72-70 in double overtime in mid-February of 1982.**

**Redshirt senior Jim Logan scored a game-high eighteen points as SIU-Edwardsville edged Saint Louis University 67-64 in the opening round of the Budweiser Holiday Classic in St. Louis in late December 1982. The 6-5, 200-pound Logan made 7 of 11 shots from the field and made all four of his attempts from the foul line to propel the Division II Cougars past the Billikens for the first time in the seven games in the all-time series between the two neighboring schools.**

**Senior forward Dave Hart scored a game-high 26 points, including the go-ahead bucket with 3:53 remaining, and 6-7 center John Groover added 23 to propel Buffalo State, a member of the Div. III New York State Athletic Conference (SUNYAC), over Niagara University 86-79 at Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo before a crowd of more than 6,000 at the outset of the 1982-83 season.**

**Sparked by forward Bill Szabo’s game-high 24-point performance, diminutive Defiance College an NAIA school at the time stunned Central Michigan 74-64 in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, early in the 1983-84 season. It was one of the biggest upsets of the year.**

**Two years later, Defiance struck again. Led by Kevin Bostelman’s game-high 28 points, including all four of his teams points in the extra stanza, and 18 points from Kevin Seeman, Defiance defeated Bowling Green 66-64 in overtime. Bostelman, a 6-6 sophomore center, and Seeman had been teammates at Patrick Henry High School in Hamlet, Ohio.**

**Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, a small public university originally founded by abolitionists as Lincoln College in 1865, has an extraordinarily rich basketball tradition and a long history of knocking off major college opponents and that was certainly true at the outset of the 1984-85 season when the unheralded Ichabods stunned Oklahoma State, 67-66, in Stillwater, Oklahoma.  Washburn's Gary Carrier, a three-time NAIA All-American who became the school's all-time leading scorer and rebounder, scored 20 points and 6-6 sophomore forward Tom Meier, who led the Ichabods to the 1987 NAIA national championship two years later during his senior year, added 18 in that monumental upset.**

**Joe Ruggles and Mark deBarros combined for 38 points as visiting St. Anselm stunned the Ivy League’s Dartmouth Big Green 82-67 in Hanover, N.H., early that same season. Leading by only four points with 1:21 remaining in the game, St. Anselm made nine out of ten free throws down the stretch to pull away.  It was St. Anselm’s first victory over a Division I school since February of 1970 when the Hawks, led by David Sturma, shocked Rhode Island 80-64, effectively extinguishing the Rams’ flickering hopes for a possible NIT bid that year.**

**One of the more startling upsets involving a small college defying all odds while challenging a Division I team that season took place in the Hoosier State when Chicago's St. Xavier University, an NAIA school, shocked Valparaiso 51-47 at Valpo's ARC Arena in early December. It was St. Xavier’s first win against a Division I team in program history.**

**Tyrone Hicks, a 6-6 senior forward who led Clark University to four straight Div. III NCAA Tournaments, connected on four of five field goal attempts and sank eight of nine at the charity stripe as the undefeated Cougars (6-0) upset Yale 78-70 in 1985. Clark, which was ranked sixth in the nation in Division III when it upset the Elis in New Haven, had been crushed 110-64 by Yale the previous season.**

**The Ivy League elitists were two-time losers to America's small colleges that season as Trinity’s Ken Abere scored a team-high fourteen points, including six clutch free throws in the second half as the Div. III visitors from Hartford surprised Yale 53-52 in New Haven in early January of the same season.**

**Trinity (6-1) held the high-scoring Elis scoreless for eight minutes early in the second half to take a 29-18 lead with 11:37 remaining in the game.**

**Yale, which entered the Trinity contest averaging 83.9 points per game, had scored 108 points in a 21-point loss to host Stanford in the opening round of the Apple Invitational only four days earlier. The combined 237 points scored by both teams in that fast-paced shootout set a Maples Pavilion record.**

**During the 1985-86 season, Hawaii Pacific University, an NAIA member that played no fewer than ten Division I opponents that season, defeated Cal State-Fullerton, Hawaii, Pacific and Fordham while nearly knocking off the ACC’s Maryland Terrapins and putting up a valiant struggle against heavily-favored LSU in a game the heroic Honolulu squad led midway through the second half before falling to Dale Brown’s ninth-ranked Fighting Tigers ---a Final Four team a few months later --- by a more than respectable 101-89 margin.**

**Possessing a deep bench while starting a pair of seven-footers and a couple of gifted players such as George Buckner, a 6-7 Ole Miss transfer, and 6-6 senior James Rhodes, Hawaii Pacific had the size, talent and depth to compete with almost any Division I team in the country.**

**Confounding Oregon with a stifling 3-2 zone defense, the University of Tampa survived a six-minute scoring drought in the second half to defeat the cold-shooting Ducks 72-61 in the Far West Classic in Portland that same season.  John Jones, a four-time all-Sunshine State Conference selection, scored 23 points and Todd Linder, a 6-7 forward from St. Petersburg, added 19 to pace Tampa.**

**The Spartans, who had hung tough against Iowa in the opening round --- losing to the heavily-favored Hawkeyes, 54-45, in a defensive struggle --- also nearly upended Kansas State in the tournament’s fourth-place game, losing to the Big 8 Wildcats 69-68.  Jones led all scorers with 29 points in that gut-wrenching loss.  Tampa, which had resumed its basketball program a couple of years earlier, was the first Division II team to ever appear in the thirty-year-old Far West Classic.**

**The University of Tampa made a much bigger splash on the college basketball scene the following season when the 6-4 Jones tallied a game-high 30 points, including a crucial bucket and a pair of free throws in the final 33 seconds as the Div. II Spartans shocked 11th-ranked North Carolina State 67-62 in late December 1986.**

**Before rallying from a 10-point second half deficit and upsetting Jim Valvano's once-beaten Wolfpack, ten days earlier Tampa led defending national champion Louisville 52-51 with 6:43 remaining in the game before falling to the Cardinals 68-60.**

**Rallying from a 56-46 second half deficit, the scrappy Crusaders of Capital University, an NCAA non-scholarship school,in Columbus, Ohio, stunned Kent State 71-68 at the outset of the 1987-88 season. The unexpected setback was the first in a season opener for Kent State coach Jim McDonald in his six-year tenure. It was also the school’s first season opening defeat in nine years.  It was Capital’s first victory against Kent State since 1934.**

**The University of Findlay, an NAIA program at the time, stunned Bowling Green of the Division I Mid-American Conference (MAC) twice in the span of four years during this period.**

**In 1987, the visiting Oilers upset their major college opponent before a stunned crowd of 4,310.  Coached by Ron Niekamp, who was in his second year at the helm, Findlay entered the February contest with an impressive 19-2 record and was ranked fifteenth in the nation in the most recent NAIA poll.  The Oilers were also riding a 15-game winning streak.**

**Paced by 6-5 senior forward Randy Kortokrax's 25 points, dozen rebounds and seven assists, Findlay led by as many as 20 points in defeating Bowling Green 86-73.  At one point extending from late in the first half to early in the second stanza the Oilers outscored their MAC hosts by an astounding 35-7 margin.**

**It was Findlay’s first win against the Falcons in the post-World War II era.**

**“We’ve got a lot of guys that people said ‘No’ to when it came scholarship time,” said Niekamp, who had guided Findlay to an impressive 25-6 record and a trip to the 32-team NAIA national tournament at the spacious 19,500-seat Kemper Arena in Kansas City during his inaugural season the previous year.  “I think in a game like this our guys wanted to prove that they could play with the big guys. They’ve been looking forward to this game all year long.”**

**Nearly upsetting the Falcons again a couple of years later --- losing a hard-fought 76-72 contest at Bowling Green in 1989 --- Findlay turned the trick a second time at the outset of the 1991-92 season when it shocked the Falcons 79-68 in the season opener for both teams.**

**Trailing 51-40 with 8:42 remaining in the game, the navy blue and yellow-clad Cobras of tiny Coker University, a small private college located in Hartsville, South Carolina, scored the final fourteen points of the game to stun The Citadel 54-51 in Charleston in January of 1988. Russell Manley, the school’s all-time leading rebounder, and Dennis Woolfolk, the most prolific scorer in program history, each scored fourteen points for Coker.**

**Sharp-shooting senior guard Ralph Baker scored a career-high 33 points and sophomore forwards Pat Mulquin and Orson Williams added 21 and 20 points, respectively, as Div. III Hampden-Sydney --- one of the youngest teams in the country --- stunned William & Mary 92-91 in overtime in the Tribe’s season opener in Williamsburg, Virginia, at the outset of the 1988-89 season.**

**Setting a new NCAA record by draining a sizzling 21 of 36 shots from beyond the arc, UC Riverside, a Division II powerhouse at the time, stunned fourth-ranked Iowa 110-92 in the championship game of the sixth annual Chaminade Christmas Classic in 1988.**

**Senior Pat Viera, who drained 5 of 7 long-range shots, and Maurice Pullum, a 6-2 senior guard from Midlothian, Illinois, who tallied a game-high 33 points, each connected on five of UC-Riverside’s 21 three-pointers. In all, six Highlanders buried shots from beyond the arc in the high-scoring contest, tying an NCAA Division II record at the time.**

**A last-minute entry in the eight-team tournament, Riverside defeated host Chaminade in an 84-81 overtime thriller in the opening round and edged Eastern Washington 80-74 to advance to the championship game.**

**Upsets abounded that holiday season.  Devon Kelly sank a pair of free throws with four seconds remaining as Div. II Florida Tech stunned Boston College, 77-75, in the championship game of the 1988 Florida Today Classic in Melbourne, Florida.  Featuring three starters from Quebec, the host Panthers advanced to the title game of the four-team tourney by mauling the UMass Minutemen 106-87 in the opening round.**

**Senior guard Gene Edwards, who was named the Small College Player of the Year by** *S****ports* Illustrated magazine that winter, tallied a team-high 26 points as Div. II Metro State (Metropolitan State University) rallied from a 12-point second half-deficit to stun Ole Miss 86-81 in the eleventh annual Illini Classic at Assembly Hall in Champaign at the outset of the 1989-90 season.**

**It was only Metro State’s second all-time win against a Division I team.  The Denver-based Roadrunners had defeated Southern Utah State, a Div. I newcomer, by six points the previous February.**

**Marvin Macklin scored 20 points and John Goodwin made two crucial free throws with two seconds remaining to lift North Carolina Wesleyan, a Division III team, past East Carolina 70-69 in Greenville, N.C., in late November of 1989.**

**As was the case in the 1980s, there was also no shortage of non-Division I teams defeating their major college opponents in the nineties.  It happened repeatedly during that decade, but perhaps none of those upsets were as shocking as what transpired in Puerto Rico during the Christmas holiday of 1997.**

**Trailing by as many as sixteen points in the first half, American University of Puerto Rico, a Div. II school, stunned 12th-ranked Arkansas, defeating the highly-touted Razorbacks, 64-59, in the opening round of the Puerto Rico Holiday Classic in what was regarded as the biggest upset of the 1997-98 college basketball season.**

**The tournament, which was played at the Eugene Guerra Sports Complex in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, featured seven really good Division I teams.  In addition to Arkansas, which was relegated to the consolation round after its unexpected first-round loss to the pesky Pirates, Iowa State, Michigan, Murray State, Saint Louis, Syracuse and TCU also competed in that year’s three-day Christmas tourney.**

**Scoring fourteen of his fifteen points and grabbing 10 of his 12 rebounds in the second half, Angel Paniagua, a 6-9 power forward, helped the host Pirates overcome a 40-30 halftime deficit in upsetting the heavily-favored Southwest Conference and national power. It was Arkansas’ first loss of the season.**

**Paniagua scored his final eight points after the Razorbacks had tied the game at 53-53 with 7:10 remaining, including making a layup and calmly sinking a pair of free throws shortly after Arkansas’ Kareem Reid threw the ball away after driving to the basket with 31 seconds left. Wilfredo Pagan, a 6-1 point guard, tallied a game-high 22 points for the victorious Pirates.**

**A branch of American University in Washington, D.C., the recently-defunct school (it closed its doors following the 2023 summer session), had upset Alabama 88-79 in the second round of the Puerto Rico Shootout a month earlier during the Thanksgiving holiday. AU-PR's Eddin Santiago tallied 34 points in that upset victory.**

**Plenty of other lower division teams took a bite out of the big boys that decade.**

**Sparked by the scorching hot long-range accuracy of Jeff Cooper, a shooting guard who canned six of nine 3-pointers in the upset victory, little Eastern New Mexico stunned the University of New Mexico in early December 1991, downing the heavily-favored Lobos a team that had gone to the Big Dance nine months earlier in front of a mortified crowd of more than 15,000 in “The Pit” in Albuquerque, long considered one of the toughest arenas in the nation for visiting teams to play.**

**Donning YMCA-replica uniforms tight shorts and shirt-length sleeves that rested just above the elbow the rag-tag looking club from Portales was playing its fifth game in as many nights, but the upset-minded and confident Greyhounds showed no signs of weariness as the increasingly panicked Lobos, desperately trying to avoid one of the biggest upsets in program history, pressed them mercilessly from one end of the court to the other in the game’s closing minutes, but to no avail. ENMU prevailed 81-76.**

**It was the Division II school’s only victory against New Mexico in seventeen games in an all-time series dating back to World War II. It was also the program’s biggest win since capturing the NAIA national championship in 1969.**

**Bernard Muller scored a game-high 25 points as the Fighting Saints of tiny St. Francis (Ill.) stunned the University of San Francisco 81-80 at the War Memorial Gymnasium in San Francisco in late December 1994. St. Francis (4-5) buried 10 of 20 shots from beyond the arc in pulling off one of the biggest upsets in college basketball that season.**

**The heavily-favored Dons, who had defeated New Mexico at “The Pit” in Albuquerque earlier that season, committed sixteen turnovers and missed several crucial free throws down the stretch in falling to the NAIA visitors from Joliet, Illinois.**

**The Fighting Saints weren’t the only NAIA school to grab headlines by stunning a Division I opponent that season.**

**Whitworth University, a member of the NAIA’s Northwest Conference, traveled to Cheney, Washington, twelve days earlier and whipped the Big Sky’s Eastern Washington University by a dozen points, defeating the Eagles by a score of 89-77.**

**Rhent Mitchell scored 23 points and Brandon Bieber chipped in 18 as the University of Alaska Fairbanks, a Div. II program, upset Washington State 88-75 in the opening round of the Top of the World Classic in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1998.**

**Hosting the short-lived Top of the World Classic, Alaska Fairbanks made history in 2002 when it became the only Division II team to ever win an eight-team tournament featuring seven Division I schools.  Led by 6-3 point guard and tournament MVP Brad Oleson from North Pole, Alaska --- America's most festive year-round Christmas holiday town --- a couple of seniors and a trio of freshmen forwards, the overachieving, undersized Nanooks, a team that finished with an abysmal 4-23 record the previous season, whipped UW-Green Bay 78-55 in the opening round, nipped Nebraska 64-61 in the semifinals and defeated the Big Sky's Weber State 77-65 in the final.  It was an impressive feat, to put it mildly.   Weber State, after all, won 26 games that season and appeared in the Big Dance in March.**

**Oleson, who later played professionally in Spain, scored 17 points, grabbed 9 boards and dished out a game-high five assists in the championship game.**

**Alaska Fairbanks posted a respectable 20-8 mark that year and made the school's first appearance in the Div. II NCAA West Regional.**

**Leading throughout most of the game, relatively obscure Southwest Baptist University drained sixteen shots from beyond the arc connecting on half of its 32 long-range attempts while stunning heavily-favored Utah 80-79 at the Jon M. Huntsman Center in Salt Lake City at the outset of the 2008-09 season. It was the regular season opener for both teams. It was believed to be Southwest Baptist’s first win ever against a Division I team.**

**Unheralded Southeastern Oklahoma State University trekked 164 miles north to take on the Tulsa Golden Hurricanes before a crowd of 4,333 at the Donald W. Reynolds Center in December of 2014 and came away with a shocking 69-66 upset victory, giving the Division II school its first win over a Division I opponent since joining the NCAA in 1996.**

**Senior Chris Metzger, a 6-7 forward, tossed in 26 points on stellar 13-15 shooting from the field as Div. II Flagler College of historic St. Augustine, Florida, routed Central Michigan 92-73 in a regular season game at the Ocean Bank Convocation Center in Miami in early December 2020. It was the first time in program history that the Saints had prevailed against a Division I opponent and the third time that a Division II school had defeated a Div. I team in a regular season contest that young season.  Flagler picked up a second victory against a Division I opponent a few weeks later when it defeated the University of North Florida 73-66.**

**Vernon Johnson calmly sank three foul shots with seven seconds remaining as the University of North Texas at Dallas stunned Rice 69-68 at the Tudor Fieldhouse in Houston in November 2024. A member of the NAIA, UNT-Dallas rallied from a 15-point deficit early in the second half to pull off the unlikely victory.**

**Like the upset-minded Chaminade Silverswords on that unforgettable December night in 1982, Darcy Richardson’s well-researched and compelling narrative, featuring hundreds of similar upsets by the nation's smaller schools, is a long overdue reminder for older generations of college basketball fans and a new revelation for younger ones that there was a time in which virtually every small college in the land had an opportunity to play the role of "giant-slayer" while reaching for glory.**

**This is their story.**