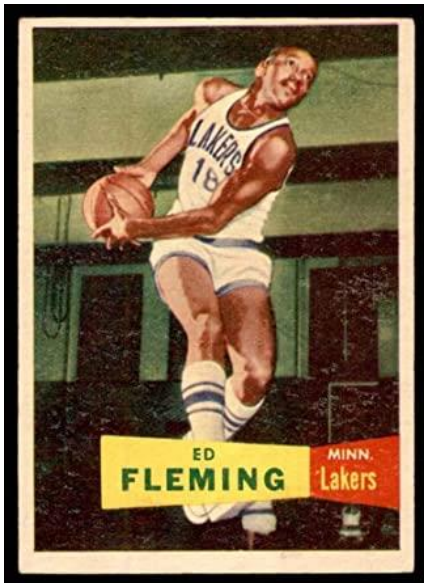


## Shooting Hoops

As a kid I loved “shooting hoops” During grade school years it was on the basket attached to a neighbor’s garage with whoever was there. We would usually play “HORSE,” a game where you tried to match your opponent’s shot and if you missed, got a “letter.” When you had spelled out HORSE, you were out. Sometimes it was a “one on one” half-court game – because there was only one basket and to “go the other way, “you had to get to the back of the court and come back.

When I was in high school, I was never big enough or good enough to play for the school team, but informal basketball was still a favorite pastime. My friend Lee and I liked to use McRae Park, near 46<sup>th</sup> Street and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis, which had a couple of outdoor courts. One day, a couple of young men appeared and started shooting with us. They were really good.

One of them asked if we wanted to play a little “two on two,” one of them and one of us on each team. When the black gentleman made a “fade-away jump shot,” Lee whispered to me, “That’s Ed Fleming.” It was his signature move as a member of the Minneapolis Lakers. The other player, who was white, had to be Corky Devlin, Ed’s teammate. Devlin and Fleming were with the team from 1957 – 58. I thought it was only one player and that he dunked. Lee remembered the two and the scrimmage. We finally agreed that we had played “two on two” with Lakers. And one of us won!



What were two professional basketball players doing at a Minneapolis park’s outdoor court? It was some time later we found out that the St. Joseph’s Home for Children Gymnasium, adjacent to the park, was the practice court for the team. The Lakers were the premier professional basketball team from the late 40s through the 1950s. Yet they played their games in the Minneapolis Armory and Auditorium and practiced at a Catholic orphanage.

In 1960 the Lakers moved to Los Angeles, for a greener financial future and kept their now famous name, despite the lack of lakes. Minneapolis, instead, concentrated on getting major league baseball and football.