

Wooden & Me: Life Lessons from My Two-Decade Friendship with the Legendary Coach and Humanitarian to Help "Make Each Day Your Masterpiece"

By Woody Woodburn

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As a longtime newspaper columnist Woody Woodburn is often asked to speak to civic groups – and the person audiences invariably want to hear more about during the Q&A afterward is Coach John Wooden. Listeners at these talks, as well as readers of Woodburn's national award-winning columns, over the years have encouraged him to write a book about his experiences with Coach. Now he has with the memoir WOODEN & ME: Life Lessons from My Two-Decade Friendship with the Legendary Coach and Humanitarian to Help "Make Each Day Your Masterpiece." It was in 1987 as a young sports writer and near-newlywed that Woody met Coach, who soon became a friend and mentor through the births of Woodburn's two children and their growth into young adulthood; the death of Woody's mother; career decisions; and more. As he writes in this memoir: "One did not have to play for Coach Wooden in order to be one of his students, and of this I am a privileged example. I was not one of his basketball players – except for one glorious week at his youth camp in 1975 – but make no mistake, I was his pupil. No coach or teacher or professor has taught me more, or taught me more important things." Just as Coach John Wooden was beloved and revered by people of all ages and all backgrounds, readers from teens to parents to grandparents, basketball fans and non-fans alike, will find WOODEN & ME enlightening and inspiring. Coach not only passed on priceless life lessons to Woodburn, but also to Woody's daughter Dallas (now 26) and her younger brother Greg (23), who were fortunate to meet Coach and are featured throughout the book from their young childhood to the present day. Dallas' Masters degree in Creative Writing at Purdue University (coincidentally Wooden's alma mater) and recent 2013-14 John Steinbeck Fellowship selection, and Greg's Pac-12 Leadership Award (from the athletic conference Wooden famously coached in) and Rhodes Scholar Finalist honors attest to the continued relevance and impact of Coach's teachings. In closing, here is Woodburn's dedication on the opening page of WOODEN & ME: For Coach – "The journey is better than the inn" you often reminded me, and in my life journey I feel

extremely thankful and blessed to have had you walking ahead of me as a role model; walking beside me as a teacher, mentor and friend; and now walking behind me in spirit as a source of continued inspiration to myself – as well as to my daughter Dallas, son Greg, and wife Lisa – for pursuing true “success.” Too, I am forever grateful for your frequent reminder and constant shining example that “love” is the most important word in the English language. Now, through the pages of WOODEN & ME, you too can join in on an inspiring journey with Coach John Wooden.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Woody Woodburn is a national award-winning journalist whose work has appeared in The Best American Sports Writing anthology, The Sporting News, and more than a dozen Chicken Soup For The Soul editions. Woodburn, 53, was been a sports columnist for more than two decades in Southern California with The Ventura County Star and then The Daily Breeze in Torrance; he is now back with The Ventura County Star as a general interest essayist. National recognition for his newspaper work includes First Place for Column Writing by the Associated Press News Executive Council; Column Writing by the Associated Press Sports Editors; E.W. Scripps Newspapers “Columnist of the Year” and Copley News Service’s “Columnist of the Year,” and the James S. Copley “Ring of Truth” award. In 2003, Woodburn was inducted into the Jim Murray Memorial Foundation’s Journalists Hall of Fame. He also co-authored Raising Your Child To Be A Champion In Athletics, Arts and Academics (Kensington Publishing/Citadel Press, 2004) with nationally renowned speaker and coach Wayne Bryan. Woody resides in Ventura with his wife, Lisa; the couple has two adult children.

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Louise Reyes:

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Lena Garcia:

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Anita Burns:

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