

The joy of delivering good news in tough times

For career writers like us, choosing our favorite story is like choosing our favorite child. But I'll always have a special place in my heart for a story I wrote for the Jan. 9, 2015 issue of Sports Illustrated. It was a lengthy profile of former Washington State, Iowa and USC coach George Raveling that centered around his remarkable role in witnessing history. Raveling was an assistant coach at Villanova, his alma mater, when he stood a few feet away as Martin Luther King delivered his famous "I Have A Dream"

address on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963. When the speech was over, Raveling asked Dr. King to hand him the papers that sat on the podium. Raveling still has those three sheets of paper, framed and stored in a bank vault in California. They're worth millions of dollars, but Raveling refuses to sell them.

My story was actually a twin profile of Raveling and King, the coach and the preacher, both of whom spent their lives trying to make things better for others. So it was a great honor for me to join Philly sports writing legend Dick Weiss and call Raveling in January to inform him that he had been selected to receive the USBWA's 2021 Dean Smith Award. Raveling was quite pleased, as you might imagine, to be associated with Coach Smith, who used his platform at North Carolina to help break down racial barriers in his quiet, dignified way.

The Dean Smith Award is a great example of how the USBWA can also be a force for good, both in our profession and society at large. I'd like to think this organization tries to honor the legacies of people like King, Raveling and Smith by using our own voices in a

Seth Davis CBS Sports / The Athletic President



productive manner. Lord knows, there are enough forces – economic, political and cultural – that are working hard to drown us out.

Making that call to Raveling with Weiss was one of the great highlights of my tenure as USBWA president. I felt the same gratification as I joined Malcolm Moran to inform the five members of our 2021 Hall of Fame class of their induction. Bill Benner, Pat Forde, Brian Morrison, Dana O'Neil and Loren Tate were all surprised and thrilled to hear the news. They expressed their thanks over and over again, but Malcolm and I reminded them that they had done the hard part. We were just the lucky messengers. Ditto for Doug Vance, who is receiving this year's Katha Quinn Award. In his role as executive director of CoSIDA, Doug has provided extraordinary leadership as we have tried to iron out all the complications of covering college basketball during a once-in-a-century global pandemic.

Now the USBWA is setting its sights on the next generation of journalists as we launch our national mentorship program. We put out the bat signal to our membership asking for volunteers to be mentors, and

then blasted out our application inviting college students across the country to apply. On both ends, the response was overwhelming. We were all young once (though that is getting harder to believe for some of us), and so it is my hope that this program will serve as a renewal for our members as well as a stepladder for the students. There are a lot of young, eager, talented men and women out there who are ready to get to work. It is gratifying to know that the USBWA will do our part in showing them the way.

Along with all this usual business, the USBWA leadership has been hard at work preparing for the very unusual process of preparing to cover the 2021 NCAA tournament in Indiana. Putting on this event is extremely challenging as you can imagine, but all the communication channels that were set up last fall have been plenty active as March Madness draws nigh. I am confident that our colleagues at all the schools as well as the NCAA understand and appreciate the essential role of independent media in covering the tournament and enhancing the experience for fans and readers. That's not to say everything will work out smoothly and to everyone's liking, but there is a real respect and cooperative spirit at work here. That is something that will serve us well long after this pandemic is over.

So congratulations, again, to our 2021 award winners, and thanks to all of you for your continued good work. The best two months of the year are finally upon us. Let's get out there and do our thing!

Warmly,
Seth

Decorated quintet enters USBWA's Hall of Fame

A longtime sports editor, three past presidents and a Katha Quinn Award winner comprise the 2021 USBWA's Hall of Fame class. (For further coverage, see pages 4 and 5.)

Bill Benner served as the USBWA president from 1998-99, while he was in the midst of a 33-year career at the Indianapolis Star, the last 10 as a columnist. Benner covered 20 Final Fours for the Star, two Pan-Am Games (in Havana and Indianapolis) and three Olympic Games (in Seoul, Barcelona and Atlanta). He was recognized twice as the Indiana Sportswriter of the Year by the National Association of Sportswriters and Sportscasters. His work on the Indiana-Purdue rivalry during the Bob Knight and Gene Keady eras was must reading.

Pat Forde, who was a USBWA president from 2015-16, works for Sports Illustrated after eight years with Yahoo Sports, seven at ESPN.com and 17 with the Louisville Courier-Journal. He has covered college

basketball throughout those 30-plus years as a sportswriter. He played an essential role in Yahoo's coverage of the scandal that led to the creation of the NCAA's Commission on College Basketball. His work has been recognized 18 times by the Associated Press Sports Editors and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1990.

Dana O'Neil, the USBWA president from 2014-15, has primarily covered college basketball for more than 25 years at The Trentonian, Bucks County Courier Times, Philadelphia Daily News, ESPN.com and currently for The Athletic. She wrote the book "Long Shots" about Villanova's national championship in 2017 and is writing a book about Big East basketball that will be published later this year. "I discovered a real passion for basketball, actually, once I got my first job at the Trentonian," O'Neil said. "I was fortunate enough to cover the area colleges and not only loved the college game, but liked that fact that with fewer athletes on a team, you really got to know the players better."

Brian Morrison, the ACC's former director of media, won the USBWA's Katha Quinn Award in 2014, recognizing his excellence in servicing the media. Morrison made the ACC the most media-friendly power conference, fighting to provide the media with courtside seating at each ACC tournament and inviting longtime members of the media to attend after they had retired. Morrison is "the epitome of a media-relations person who saw his first duty to the media," said News & Observer columnist and USBWA Second Vice President Luke DeCock.

Loren Tate, 89, a longtime sports of the Champaign News Gazette, continues to write for the newspaper more than two years after announcing his retirement. Tate has covered generations of Illinois teams, including the Final Four teams of 1989 and 2005. His first job as a sports writer in Hammond, Ind., began in 1955, and he became sports editor in Champaign in 1966 with an emphasis on writing.

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Indianapolis as a host city has come a long way, baby

We were standing near the corner of S. Capitol Avenue and W. Maryland Street in downtown Indianapolis on a sunny afternoon in the early 1980s. A year before, a Final Four had been held not far away, at Market Square Arena, with no hint of the impact the event would one day have on the city and the city would have on the event.

I had been offered a tour of downtown, a rolling description of the plans that were unfolding. These were big plans, a strategy to lift the profile of Indianapolis through the visibility of the sports industry. As the tour came to a close in front of the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis and I thanked my tour guide for the time, he pointed south, beyond the Indiana Convention Center.

“We are going to build a domed stadium,” he said. “And we are going to bring a National Football League team to Indianapolis.”

I nodded, smiled, and didn’t say a word. My host had been much too kind for me to say what I was thinking: Good luck with that. Everything that was to follow was framed by that bold declaration and my speechless response: the Hoosier Dome, the Colts, the Pan American Games, the Final Fours, the Women’s Final Fours, the NFL Scouting Combine, the arrival of the NCAA, Lucas Oil Stadium, a Super Bowl weekend in Indianapolis ...

And now this, an entire NCAA tournament in central Indiana.

This experience will be far different from the Final Four weekends we have come to celebrate, and not just because of the safety protocols that will be in place. For the first time since the Pan Am Games in the summer of 1987, there will be a chance to explore beyond the walks we have taken in those few square blocks of downtown.

Indiana Farmers Coliseum on the State Fairgrounds, where a \$53 million renovation transformed the place where the Indiana Pacers were born, where the Beatles played and John F. Kennedy spoke, will host NCAA tournament games.

Hinkle Fieldhouse, which has preserved its majestic

Malcolm Moran Executive Director



feel through multiple renovations, will host its first NCAA tournament game since 1940. That was when the Eastern Regional was held at Butler Fieldhouse, then considered the largest basketball arena in the United States.

Bankers Life Fieldhouse, which replaced Market Square Arena as home of the Pacers, just completed the first phase of a renovation.

This basketball trip to Indianapolis – and Bloomington and West Lafayette, which will host NCAA games for the first time since the 80s – is best navigated by car. You might cover games in different venues on the same day. You will need headphones for postgame Zoom sessions. You should expect to work at your seat location, not a work room. You might have to finish your story in your hotel room if a building is cleared for cleaning and sanitizing.

The challenge of covering this tournament will be similar to the challenge of covering a season in a pandemic: staying patient, nimble, and most of all, safe.

The reward will be the chance to discover new places beyond those few downtown blocks in Indianapolis, a process that has been going on for a while. During the 2010 Final Four, USBWA Hall of Famer Bob Ryan had a question for Brad Stevens, the coach of the Butler Bulldogs and a graduate of Zionsville Community High School, about 20 miles north of downtown Indianapolis.

“Where do I eat in Zionsville?” Ryan asked.

“The Friendly Tavern,” Stevens replied.

Of course. Where else to eat in a place that prides itself on its Hoosier Hospitality?

When you place your order for curbside pickup, I’d go for the Whitefish.

Auerbach wins national NSMA honors

Nicole Auerbach of The Athletic was named the national sports writer of the year by the National Sports Media Association. Auerbach, 31, is the youngest person ever to win the award.

Bill Rhoden, who spent 34 years at the New York Times, was named to NSMA’s Hall of Fame. He was named to the USBWA’s Hall of Fame in 2019.

Several USBWA members were named state sports writers of the year: Doug Haller of The Athletic (Arizona); Shannon Ryan of the Chicago Tribune (Illinois); Mick McCabe of the Detroit Free Press (Michigan); and Dave Matter of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri).

Dave Reynolds retired after 38 years as a sports writer at the Peoria Journal Star, more than 30 of

them covering the Bradley basketball program.

Dan Lauck, most recently of KHOU-TV in Houston, died from complications from Parkinson’s Disease at 72. Lauck also worked for The Topeka Capital-Journal, Newsday and The Washington Post, producing groundbreaking work on the emerging business and agent industry and the Boston College point-shaving scandal. A virtual celebration of Dan’s life will take place Saturday, Feb. 6 at 1 p.m. EST. Anyone interested in participating should contact malcolm@usbwa.com.

Jack Scheuer, a longtime writer for the Associated Press, passed away at the age of 88. Scheuer attended more Big 5 games than any writer in Philadelphia.

Lodge Notes

Vance showed a lighter way to serve the media

By **Jeff Bollig**

There is nothing in the dynamic between the media and communications officials that says conflict must be present.

Certainly, there can be differences from time to time, but according to Katha Quinn Award honoree Doug Vance, focusing on the big picture minimizes the potential for an adverse relationship.

"I never considered being negative toward the media to be in my job description," Vance said. "If I was going to be successful and my employer was going to be successful, I needed the media to share the message. We talk to our fans, our constituents to a large degree, through the media. My job was to foster positive and professional relationships with members of the media."

Vance, who is the executive director of CoSIDA, was selected for the award given annually in recognition of the recipient's work in serving the media. Quinn was honored at the USBWA meeting at the 1988 Final Four for her work at the 1987 Pan American Games while she underwent treatment for liver cancer. She passed away in March 1989, at the age of 35.

Vance was also instrumental in a successful joint USBWA-CoSIDA project to develop media guidelines during the pandemic with USBWA President Seth Davis and Executive Director Malcolm Moran. He helped pull together and lead a working group of SIDs that eventually created the final guidelines to facilitate logistics and media access.

Without a doubt, Vance's upbringing and diverse background molded his philosophy and style. His father Kyle was a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter for the Associ-



Doug Vance

ated Press and Louisville Courier Journal and three uncles and a cousin were in the newspaper business. Vance's brother David, whom he calls one of his mentors and biggest supporters, was an SID at Eastern Kentucky and public relations director – and later general manager – for the Kentucky Colonels of the ABA.

Vance's stellar career has included stops as a newspaper reporter, school public relations official at Austin Peay, SID at Murray State and Kansas, executive director of the Kansas Parks and Recreation Association and his current role at CoSIDA.

"This award means so much to me because it comes from a group of professionals I admire in the media, and it's named after a professional who was a peer and a member of the group I now have the honor to represent," Vance said. "It's very humbling to be recognized."

Said Kansas City Star reporter Blair Kerkhoff: "Doug was as good at his job as anybody in the athletic department was at theirs, coaches included. He served Kansas well by not only working with coaches and administration but with the media in helping develop stories, providing ideas and simply keeping open lines of communication. When reporters worked with Doug they believed he had their interest at heart."

As good as Vance is with the media, he has been equally effective as an administrator. He has been asked to volunteer in support of NCAA, conference, Olympic, bowl game and government events. He has mentored hundreds of student assistants and interns, many who became SIDs, public relations professionals, radio and television personnel, athletic administrators – even a few

medical personnel and lawyers. His support of coaches and student-athletes has resulted in deep admiration and life-long friendships.

"Doug was immensely important to me," North Carolina head basketball coach Roy Williams said. "(Kansas) was my first head coaching responsibility. Doug planned everything, walked me through everything, was a security blanket for me. Not only that, he was extremely competent as an SID and a true friend. I'm in favor of any award that Doug gets. He guided me through uncharted waters as a first-time head coach at a historic program. I just love him and his family to death and I'm so happy he's getting this award."

It was the mix of talents as a sports information director and an association management professional that earned him the position with CoSIDA, according to Shelly Poe, assistant athletic director at Auburn and CoSIDA president when Vance was hired in October 2013.

"Doug's been a wonderful leader for CoSIDA," Poe said. "He had the perfect background to lead us and has been a great advocate for the profession. He's a true professional. I'm happy for him that he has won this award. It shows how widely he is respected."

On top of his talent and work ethic, Vance's quick wit and sense of humor has won him friends and supporters. While at Austin Peay, the Governors basketball team featured a flashy scoring machine in the early 1970s by the name of James "Fly" Williams. It was Vance who coined the battle cry, "Fly's Open, Go Peay." It is still well known by college fans nationwide.

"The job of a communicator can be stressful because you serve many masters," Vance said. "So, I think it is important to keep an even keel and inject some humor and light-heartedness from time to time. You need to keep perspective."

Raveling's 'retirement' led to greater influence

By **Frank Burlison**

George Raveling coached what proved to be his final college game in the spring of 1994 for USC.

Late that November, not quite two months after suffering nine broken ribs, a fractured pelvis and clavicle and collapsed lung in a car accident near the USC campus, he announced his retirement.

That decision – at age 57 – might have brought a far-too-early end to a 22-year stint as a head coach.

But in nearly 27 years of "retirement," his impact on basketball – and those who play it, coach it, administer or write and talk about it – has been as significant as that as anyone even loosely connected with the sport.

It's during that stretch – mostly while an executive in a variety of roles with Nike, including as director of both the athletic apparel powerhouse's grassroots and global programs – that Raveling has ascended to a level of influence rivaled by few connected with the sport.

That's why he was selected as the sixth winner of the USBWA's Dean Smith Award, given to an individual who embodies the spirit and values represented by Smith.

Raveling, who had head-coaching stints at Washington State and Iowa before coming to USC in 1986, said from his Los Angeles home that, "Coach Smith understood so well that his responsibilities as a coach far exceeded that of just coaching on the court.

"It's an incredible honor to be associated with one of the greatest coaches and men our sport has had."



George Raveling

One of his USC point guards immediately grasped why Raveling was being honored.

"He embodies everything you want in an educator and coach," said Duane Cooper, the head coach at Lakewood High. "I grew up with a single mother, and Coach was the first father figure in my life, as I know he was for a whole lot of other kids."

"I played for him almost 30 years ago, but I still talk to him as much as a couple of times a week. And mostly, it's about things other than basketball. Our conversations always end the same way, with him asking,

'Is there anything you need me to do for you?'"

Raveling, a burly 6-foot-6, is still the No. 12 all-time leading rebounder at Villanova, where he graduated in 1960. He was inducted into the College and Naismith Hall of Fames in 2013 and '15.

He has evolved into a "basketball Yoda."

His phone number is on speed dial for nearly anyone and everyone connected to the sport – and vice versa.

Be it high school, college or the NBA, his sage advice is sought by all concerned. Jay Wright (Villanova), Buzz Williams (Texas A&M), Shaka Smart (Texas) and John Calipari (Kentucky) are among the high-profile college coaches he speaks to often – sometimes daily.

Also on daily basis, he forwards links to newspaper, magazine and website articles to many on his vast network of phone numbers. As often as not, they're about topics and issues well beyond just hoops. He is a

veracious reader who is often immersed in as many as 10 books at a time and scans all the major U.S. newspapers daily from cover to cover.

Along with his head-coaching stops, his stints as assistant coach on the U.S. Olympic teams in 1984 (under Bob Knight) and '88 (under Thompson), established his countless relationships with soon-to-be NBA stars – which expanded exponentially while with Nike.

Some might suggest that Raveling's name is more connected to the Nike brand than anyone other than founder Phil Knight, Michael Jordan and LeBron James.

Over the past three decades, Nike became a global brand while basketball was becoming a global sport.

Raveling was hired by Phil Knight shortly after that fateful auto accident in 1994.

"My wife (Delores) wanted to bet me that I'd be back in coaching within a year," Raveling said. "But then Phil Knight called me ..."

While at Nike, he helped its grassroots program become a showcase and training ground for some of the sport's most gifted young players.

As leader of its global program, Raveling traveled the world, where he brought camps and coaching clinics to thousands of future coaches and players who mostly could only admire "American game" from afar.

"I think that's the biggest change since I quit coaching," Raveling said. "It truly is a global game now that knows no boundaries or borders."

When the NBA season started, 108 players from 38 countries other than the U.S. were on active rosters.

"Who could ever imagine it, not so long ago?" Raveling asked.

O'Neil: From the beer leagues to the big leagues

By Seth Davis

Like most good stories, this one starts with beer. Or at least, beer league softball, which is where grade schooler Dana Pennett first earned her sportswriting chops keeping score and crunching numbers for her dad's team in Stockton, N.J.

"I showed up every game dressed in team colors," Dana says. "I loved it. My dad taught me to compute an ERA. I'd have all the stats updated, and the guys got into it."

Dana later became an all-state field hockey player at South Hunterdon High School, and then she went to Penn State in the fall of 1986 aspiring to be a venture capitalist. That dream lasted all of one economics class. On a lark, she applied for a spot at the student newspaper, The Daily Collegian, and asked to cover sports. She got the gig. When she went home for Thanksgiving break, she announced to her parents that she wanted to become a sportswriter.

That decision launched a stellar career that has now taken Dana O'Neil (she married George O'Neil in 2000) into the U.S. Basketball Writers Hall of Fame as a member of the Class of 2021. Over three decades in this business, O'Neil, who currently works as a national college basketball writer for The Athletic, has developed her skills and paid her dues, and can still crunch numbers with the best of them. But it is her ability to compose richly reported, deftly told longform stories and profiles that truly distinguishes her from her peers.

O'Neil learned how to be a first-rate journalist the old-fashioned way, story by

story, gig by gig. Following her graduation from Penn State in 1990, she covered college sports for The Trentonian. She later wrote for the Florida Times Union, Rider College's alumni magazine and the Bucks County Courier Times before spending nine years with the Daily News in Philadelphia. O'Neil moved to the Vil-

lanova beat in 2001, Jay Wright's first season as coach, and in 2007 she was hired by ESPN.com to be a national college basketball writer. She moved to The Athletic in the fall of 2017.

O'Neil stands out on press row not just for her ability, of course, but also her gender. Being in a distinct minority has

produced a few uncomfortable moments, but for the most part O'Neil's colleagues have accepted her as one of the guys.

"Every place I've been, the men I worked with have had my back," she says. "I always wanted to be a sportswriter who happened to be a woman, not a woman sportswriter. Don't give me a job or the Hall of Fame because I'm a woman, give it to me because I earned it. But don't not give it to me because I'm a woman."

Though she does not consider herself a trailblazer — she defers to women who mentored her like Robyn Norwood, Tara Sullivan and Lesley Visser — O'Neil understands how she is viewed by up-and-coming female sportswriters, and she readily offers advice and assistance wherever she can.

"I really think hard about setting the proper professional tone," she says. "I am hopefully trying to support young women who want to go into this business. I recognize my role because people helped me."

O'Neil first joined the USBWA because her mentor at the Daily News, Dick Jerardi, was serving as president and invited her to participate. She became president herself in 2014-15 (greatest accomplishment: turning the Final Four Monday awards breakfast into an awards lunch). O'Neil says she was "stunned" to learn she had been inducted into the Hall of Fame, but it really should have come as no surprise. Throughout her career, O'Neil has been a consummate professional.

She has moved from the beer leagues to the big leagues, and she has a lot more stories to tell.



Pat Forde receives the USBWA's presidential gavel from Dana O'Neil in 2015.

Forde is a sports-writing quadruple threat

By Rick Bozich

You can start with the dazzling work that Pat Forde has delivered on three national platforms — ESPN.com, Yahoo! Sports and now at Sports Illustrated.

That explains why most of America understands that Forde belongs in the USBWA's Hall of Fame.

If you were a subscriber to the Louisville Courier-Journal, you also saw the consistently insightful work he did there for more than a decade. He wrote about college basketball at Louisville, Kentucky, Indiana and other campuses in the most engaged and diverse college-basketball market in the country.

But I'll go back to the beginning — 1987, the year Forde arrived in Louisville from the University of Missouri.

He didn't start his career writing about Rick Pitino, John Calipari or Bob Knight.

Forde started his career writing about Indiana high school sports, especially Indiana high school basketball.

And he did it like a guy who grew up in Bedford, Anderson, Vincennes or Elkhart, not Colorado Springs.

As an aficionado of Hoosier Hysteria, as well as his teammate at the C-J, I couldn't get enough of his copy, whether he was writing about Damon Bailey of Bedford North-Lawrence, Pat Graham of Floyd Central, Eric

Montross of Lawrence North, the Clarksville Generals or the Scottsburg Warriorettes.

As Dr. James Naismith would tell you, Forde was a triple threat from the day he arrived from Columbia — he could report, he could write and he could analyze.

A couple of years on the Indiana high school beat. One year of general assignment. Two seasons of covering Pitino at Kentucky, ending with the Christian Laettner walk-off NCAA Regional final in Philadelphia, when he had about 10 minutes to write his gamer while getting his computer (and mine) to dial 7 for an outside line at the Spectrum.

In 1992, the C-J promoted Forde to columnist. For the next dozen years, we tag-teamed everything in Kentuckiana and beyond.

Give him a good story and Forde made it great. Give him a great story and he made it unforgettable.

But the truth is, you didn't have to give him anything. He went after every story there was — starting with a recruiting scandal at Kentucky, NCAA issues at Louisville, Knight's self-destruction at Indiana, Pitino's stunning bounce from Kentucky to the Celtics and back to Louisville and on and on and on.

His work has always been grounded in superb reporting. Scoops? He's had more than his share.

He knows who to call. He knows how to get them

to pick up his call. He knows how to get them to answer questions. He knows the right questions to ask. I guess that actually makes him a quadruple threat.

During his time at the C-J, Forde started building his national voice. He worked tirelessly gathering information about college football and basketball for ESPN notebooks before that platform became his full-time job in 2004.

His signature columns — the Forde-Yard Dash for college football and Forde Minutes for college hoops — actually began as a Friday college football notebook that quickly became a Must Read at the Courier-Journal.

Throughout his rise to become the guy that I believe is the No. 1 source for college news in the country, Pat has been a terrific mentor to a string of young writers and an even better friend to a few of us who have been around him from the beginning.

Everybody who has been in the business understands the challenges it creates for family time. Pat has handled that part of his Hall of Fame career wonderfully, too.

He met his wife, Tricia, at the C-J, and they've raised three amazing children. Mitchell (Missouri), Clayton (Georgia) and Brooke (Stanford) all earned college scholarships.

Hall of Famer, indeed.

Hall of Fame Class of 2021

Benner: One hell of a ride

By Mike Lopresti

There he'd be, a little boy sitting outside his farmhouse south of Indianapolis, on a bluff overlooking Indiana 37, as the traffic sped past headed for Indiana University. He wanted to go that direction one day.

Reality smacked him years later. There was not enough money for IU, so he attended IU Extension in downtown Indianapolis – known in its grown-up years as IUPUI. He needed a job, and his father Charlie was a key cog in the Indianapolis Star's printing department. Charlie heard of an opening in the sports department to answer phones, give scores, settle bets, look up records. Bill grabbed it. You know what they say about the rest – it's history.

"A classic example of where obstacle meets opportunity," Benner said. By the following summer, he actually got his first story assignment; the Star needed something on a table tennis champion and most of the staff was away on vacation. He wrote the story, and the next thing he knew, he was columnist.

OK, maybe not the next thing. Ahead was a career striking for its versatility and breadth. He covered high schools, became the beat writer for the Pacers. Funny thing about that. His childhood hero was Bob Leonard, for leading the Hoosiers to the 1953 national championship. Now, suddenly, he was covering Bob Leonard, Pacers coach. He took general assignments, wrote about anything, everything. He worked the desk slot, including laying out pages on Indianapolis 500 race days, when he'd go to the track, watch 50 laps or so, jump on the back of a photographer's motorcycle returning to the office and await the gazillion words of copy to come.

And *then* he became columnist. All that, just as Indianapolis was undergoing a sports renaissance. Its first Fi-

nal Four in 1980, the building of the Hoosier Dome and attraction of the Colts, the Pan-Am Games, more Final Fours, the NCAA moving to Indianapolis ... all on Benner's watch.

"Probably more than anybody at the Star, I was the chronicler of the formation and the success of the Indianapolis sports initiative," he said. "I never pretended to be an absolute non-homer, because I loved what was happening with my hometown. For me to be able to report and write about that ... was a pure, pure joy. I thought I would do it forever."

Except he didn't. After 30-plus journalism years in 2001, he headed for the other side of the fence, with a second career that would be just as successful, and varied. Vice president of communications for Indiana Sports Corp, communications director for the Convention and Visitors Association, associate commissioner for the Horizon League, an executive with many hats for the Pacers, co-chair of the media relations committee for the 2012 Super Bowl.

His skills in one world translated to the other, as Indianapolis kept buzzing. "I was so blessed to be in the middle of all that from both sides," he said.

So the years went by in Indianapolis, and Bill Benner – ably supported by wife Sherry – was almost always there. He even kept his column skills active with the Indianapolis Business Journal. He was always headed somewhere, like that traffic that used to speed by his farmhouse.



Bill Benner

BriMo: Always putting media first

By Luke DeCock

During one of the USBWA's contentious discussions with the NCAA over tournament media seating during the ill-fated Mark Lewis regime ahead of the 2013 Final Four, someone from Lewis' staff asked if there was an example of a team or league that did things in a way the board members found acceptable.

Nearly everyone in the room pointed to the ACC's Brian Morrison, serving one of his two stints as the SID representative to the board of directors, sitting quietly at the end of the table. John Feinstein, the Washington Post columnist and USBWA Hall of Famer, was one of them.

"What we all basically said was, 'You should go to school with this guy. He knows how to do it and you don't,'" Feinstein said.

Morrison remembers being taken aback, because these were writers from all over the country.

"I realized not only had we done it right, but the reasons why we had done it right," he said. "It was so important for print media to be on the floor to hear the game and to be involved in the game, because when you're on the floor you're involved with the game, whether you like it or not."

Morrison, who retired in 2019 after three decades as the ACC's primary media contact, won the USBWA's Katha Quinn Award for service to members in 2014 and this year becomes one of very few non-writers to earn induction into the USBWA's Hall of Fame – where he'll join writers who became friends, like Lenox Rawlings and the late Caulton Tudor.

"He was always honest with you," said Rawlings, the former columnist for the Winston-Salem Journal. "If he couldn't tell you, he'd tell you that. You can live with that."

While the USBWA fought to retain 80 of the 200 media seats on the floor at the Final Four in 2013 and beyond, that was never an issue at the ACC tournament. Morrison and the commissioners made courtside seating for the media – the print media, in particular – a priority. At one point, the tournament credentialed 900 media members and managed to get 272 of them within a row or two of the action.

The same ethos held true during the first round of ACC expansion in the summer of 2003, when Morrison would hold daily briefings for reporters with commissioner John Swofford in the parking lot of the conference's Greensboro offices, then spend hours returning all the calls that had come in that day from writers elsewhere. Morrison lost 35 pounds on his "expansion diet."

"Brian was an advocate for, I won't just say the media, but very specifically the print media," Feinstein said.

Morrison interned for and then succeeded another SID worthy of Hall of Fame induction, Marvin "Skeeter" Francis. They combined for a multi-generational run of ACC media executives who felt it was their duty to make the media's job easier. Their approach was entirely collaborative, not adversarial and it was no coincidence that it coincided with a period of explosive growth for the conference.

"I'm a pro-ACC guy and I always took pride in the league allowing me to do what we did," Morrison said. "Skeeter and (commissioners) Bob James and Gene Corrigan and John Swofford were so much a part of it. This is a reaffirmation of everything we did as a group."



Brian Morrison

Tate: A half-century covering Illinois

By David Woods

Loren Tate, 89 is both a man from another time and a journalist ahead of his time.

He has followed University of Illinois sports since the 1940s and continues to cover the Fighting Illini into the 2020s. Decades before we had multimedia journalists and recruiting reporters, Tate was both.

He was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in 1974. He is going into the USWBA Hall of Fame in 2021. Who ever heard of anyone going into halls of fame 47 years apart? A street, Loren Tate Way, was named after him near The News-Gazette's former downtown offices.

I grew up in Urbana, Ill., delivering newspapers. Before placing rubber bands around them so I could throw them onto porches, I would read his account of the previous day's game or his "Tatelines" column.

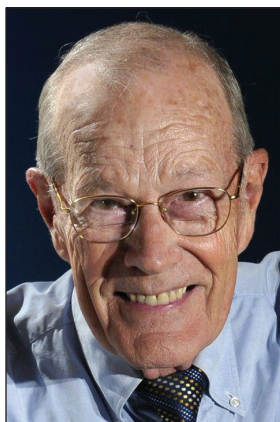
He hired me out of high school and started my own 50-year journalism career. The 17-year-old was in awe of him then, and now. That old newsroom was my classroom.

I learned more about journalism from watching Tate than from anyone else. I wasn't the only one.

"In terms of being a sportswriter, some of the best stuff I gleaned was from Loren," said Tom Rietmann, a long-time colleague in Champaign-Urbana and Indianapolis.

Tate, at 35, became sports editor in 1966 in Champaign-Urbana, which then had competing newspapers. He was sports director of WICD-TV from 1968-79. He semi-retired in 1996. Emphasis on "semi." He has continued covering the Illini on radio and by writing columns. Most of his writing awards have come while in his 80s.

In those early years, he wrote, writing something neg-



Loren Tate

ative about the Illini never occurred to him.

His allegiance was understandable. He was an Illini basketball walk-on who roomed in a fraternity with Don Sunderlage, the 1951 Big Ten player of the year.

Tate tried out for the Illini baseball team but didn't make the cut. His response to that setback was to go on to a long career in amateur baseball. He pitched three no-hitters in the Eastern Illinois League and compiled a 91-14 record from 1958-62.

He reported to Champaign in 1966 for his new job. Months later, he was covering Illinois' slush fund scandal.

"I began to understand what my role in life was to be ... not a jock playing ball, not a cheerleader," Tate wrote. "It meant walking the tightrope and becoming more of a critic, a writer paid for observations and opinions."

Basketball has been central to Tate's career. He selected all-state teams and covered Illini hoops through declines and ascents, scandals and Final Fours, and 10 head coaches – from Harry Combes to Brad Underwood.

When other outlets reported in 1975 that Don DeVoe would become the Illini coach, only Tate had it right. Assistant Tony Yates wouldn't identify the new coach, but he assured him it wasn't DeVoe. Turned out to be Lou Henson.

In 1988, Tate uncovered corruption by athletic director Neale Stoner, a finding that resulted in Stoner's resignation and an APSE award.

"Don't ask me how much I made per hour," Tate said in 2014. "I never once counted the hours I worked."

Nor the years. He has been voice and conscience of the Illini for longer than a half-century.