



Our Most Loyal Fan

By Rob Fournier, esq,
Director of Athletics

Some called him our “most loyal fan.” Lord knows he was our oldest. My friend, Paul Andrews, passed away recently at the age of 95. I met him years ago when he was a youthful 76. He was already a wealth of history and memories of Wayne State athletics.

His introduction to Wayne State football came in 1941 when the school’s official name was simply Wayne. And it wasn’t like his life-long passion was the result of a celebratory introduction to football – the team scored all of four touchdowns in a 2 -6 season. But the “ride” was on . . . and he was hooked. He went from Keyworth Stadium to Tartar Field (1954) and eventually, to Adams Field. Through bright crisp fall afternoons to rainy, chilly contests where fans were few, Paul Andrews kept watch as if a sentinel on duty.

Paul Andrews missed a few seasons in the early 40’s as his time was spent in the Pacific Theatre as part of the Greatest Generation’s commitment to save freedom . . . and the world. The highs and lows of athletics would be measured in comparison to that sacrifice and that of others. It made the antics of football seem normal and serene. He had witnessed death and the worst of man. Paul Andrews had perspective.

Paul Andrews was not boastful about all he had accomplished. Most people who get things done are like that. As the first-ever Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations at Wayne State, he met a lot of people over the years. The school could not have had a better ambassador. Right until his passing, he was the consummate green and gold advocate. Never a harsh word, never a criticism. There would always be another game, another opportunity, a chance to better the outcome. Athletics mirrored his vision of life. There might be a lesson there for all of us.

His compassion was more than a Saturday afternoon athletic event. The story is told that when his beloved wife Shirley of 63 years (who predeceased him) had once come home with some paint to refresh the kitchen, he expressed his immediate disdain for the color scheme. Paul was not a handyman, but when Shirley showed him her selected color choice (a variation of pink), he insisted the paint be returned. In Paul’s mind, there were only two acceptable colors – green or gold (or both). To this day the kitchen remains a sunshine yellow. And coincidentally, Shirley painted it too.

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Paul Andrews speaking at the Athletics 2014 Hall of Fame celebration.



President M. Roy Wilson and Paul Andrews at a Warrior Football game.

I remember the first time I met Paul. It was in a large conference room on the fourth floor of the student center. He was part of a sixteen-member search committee to select a new athletic director. As the invariable questions followed: Can you get us on radio, what about a television package, can you raise “significant” dollars, what do you think of the new nickname “Warriors”, he sat affably and intently. I am sure his perspective of WSU Athletics was quite different than those asking the questions. You might say, he was a little more realistic – he had seen the “product” first-hand.

He served on our Hall of Fame selection committee, and the combination of Paul and Fred Mulhauser was always entertaining. Two contemporaries back in their familiar positions. He was our M.C. at the Hall of Fame luncheon, and when others suggested to me it might be time to replace him in that role, I told them that Paul would let us know when that time was right. A sentential knows when to leave his post. He travelled with us to the football national championship game in 2011. Admittedly, he didn’t see that coming in 1941. When he relinquished his driving privileges at 93, he always found a neighbor or family member to get him to the game. And he wrote checks to support his athletic passion.

He drove from high school to high school when Wayne State did not have a home gym and used to jokingly recall the story of former basketball

Paul Andrews saw the best in Wayne State even when it wasn’t always on display.

Head Coach Joel Mason who often lamented, “I have to drive 16 miles for a home game.”

Paul Andrews saw the best in Wayne State even when it wasn’t always on display. Once his son-in-law asked him if he would like to attend the Michigan – Michigan State game for which he had four tickets which seemed particularly significant as a family outing since one son had gone to MSU and the other to Michigan. What the son-in-law thought would be immediate approval, was instead met with a demure. How could he attend? You see, Wayne State had a home football game that same afternoon. Now somewhat incredulous, he asked again. No, Paul Andrews was not going to miss a Wayne State football game. Hmmm . . . now what is that you said about being the most loyal fan?

Paul Andrews was a “throw-back” to a generation that said thank you and wrote notes. He would often call or pen a letter regarding a speech or article I had done that he enjoyed or had “nudged” a memory. I will miss that. . . and I will miss Paul Andrews. All of Wayne State should miss Paul Andrews too. After all, he was our most loyal fan.