A scribe's scribe

Vince Moore
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Foster puts wraps on 50 years of writing sports

When Dan Foster '49 retired from The Greenville News late last year after more than 50 years of writing about sports, he was honored in just about every way imaginable. He was honored by the Greenville Touchdown Club, a special section in the News was devoted to his career, and he received the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest civilian award.

It seemed that nobody had a bad word to say about him, which made him wonder if he had made the right decision after all. "If I had known I was that good," the 72-year-old Foster jokes, "I would never have quit."

Of course, Foster really was that good. Whether he was producing columns about the Furman-Citadel football game or the Super Bowl, he provided his readers with the kind of insightful and accomplished writing that is usually reserved for the sports sections in America's bigger cities. In fact, there may have never been another sportswriter who spent an entire career so far removed from the national media spotlight and yet earned so much respect among his peers at the highest levels of the profession.

Foster was elected president of the prestigious National Football Writers Association in 1986 and, in 1998, was enshrined in the United States Basketball Writers Association Hall of Fame. His regular running mates at the World Series included Jim Murray of The Los Angeles Times, Blackie Sherrod of The Dallas Morning News and Edwin Pope of The Miami Herald. Foster was such a close friend of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Murray that he served as a pallbearer at Murray's funeral a few years ago.

Foster's sportswriting career actually began at the age of 10, when he started chronicling the backyard games played in the Monaghan Mill area of his Greenville neighborhood. Even then, he says, he adhered to the reporter's code of objectivity and didn't play up his own efforts on the field, no matter how special they might have been.

After graduating from Parker High School, Foster went on to Furman and became sports editor of The Hornet, the school paper. He also began his unofficial career at the Greenville newspaper, working about 20 hours a week in the sports department. He can remember meeting a 9:50 a.m. deadline at the Greenville Piedmont, the now-defunct afternoon newspaper, and then hustling through downtown Greenville to make a 10:10 biology class on campus.

After graduating from Furman, he went to work for the Piedmont as a city reporter — the paper had no need for two full-time sports people — and then entered the Air Force during the Korean War. He spent three years as the officer in charge of an Armed Forces radio station in Seoul, and it was his crew that covered the signing of the truce that ended the war.

After returning from Korea and before his sportswriting career at the News began in earnest, Foster also served as Furman's sports information director. Although his SID work was a mere footnote in his award-winning career, he did his job well enough that basketball players Frank Selvy and Darrell Floyd were named first-team All-Americans for three years running.

After that, it was a life of attending the World Series, the Super Bowl, the Masters, the U.S. Open, the Final Four and a host of other major sporting events that the great majority of people don't get paid to attend. And if you don't see that as terrible difficult work, Foster isn't going to argue with you.

"I never thought that getting free tickets, parking in reserved parking, and sitting in a climate-controlled press box to watch sports was all that noble," he says.

But he's got the accolades — and a couple of generations of loyal readers — to prove it.

-Vince Moore

vice president of Snider Tire Inc., which recently opened a store in Duncan, S.C. The company, the 15th largest commercial truck tire dealer in the United States, now has 12 locations in the two Carolinas, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio and Texas. Ken Shigley has his own law firm in Atlanta, Ga., and also does work with the Georgia State Bar. C. Carolyn Thiedke, an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina, is co-author of Women's Health: A Quick Reference Guide for Family Physicians. Written for family practitioners, the book covers the full range of women's health issues, including menopause, depression, weight management, sexual functioning, female cancers and osteoporosis.

■ ADOPTION: R. Graham and Margaret Hoskins, a daughter, Margaret Mei, adopted December 20 in China. The family lives in Radford, Va.

76 This year is reunion!

Lt. Col. Mike Garrett retired from the U.S. Army February 1, after more than 24 years of service. He lives in Alexandria, Va.

78 Next reunion in 2003

In October Tom Henry was installed as senior pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, N.C. He and his wife, Toni Thompson '79 Henry, live in Charlotte, N.C., where she is a computer consultant and trainer. Douglas Roberts moved to California in January as executive vice president of worldwide field operations for Versata, a provider of software and services that automate the development, deployment and change management of transaction-based e-business.

79 Next reunion in 2004

Mary Brown Ries of Greenville has earned her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of South Carolina.

80 Next reunion in 2005

After working on a doctoral degree for a year, John Kearns and his wife, Kathy, have started