

PAT GAUEN

Bob Emig was an unlikely friend for Pat Gauen to make, but the relationship lasted many years until Emig's death. Now, the foundation established by Emig's family in his honor is taking flight, helping to provide children worldwide the chance to benefit from sports activities. **D3**

PAT GAUEN

Foundation keeps friend's zeal for youth sports alive

There may have been a more improbable friend for me than Bob Emig, but it's hard to imagine. We had in common that we both worked at the college newspaper, the Alestle, and that we were preparing at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville for journalism careers.

What we did not have in common was most everything else, including his hyper-kinetic personality and the fact that Bob lived and breathed sports. I, by contrast, was a little more laid-back and required an occasional reminder that the oblong one was a football.

I admired Bob because he was so far ahead of the

rest of us in his career. More than a student — Bob already had a real job, writing sports for the old Metro East Journal (until it folded in 1979).

One summer when the Journal's reporters were urged to write about stretching their own horizons, Bob parachuted out of an airplane. If I remember right, he had to jump three times so he could land within camera range for a picture with his story.

Man, did I envy that exotic life. (I always figured I'd skydive one day, too, but never did. Wearing a parachute to fly in a combat trainer for a story didn't count, since I never had to use it.)

Anyhow, in 1969, Bob talked me into going with him to a college press convention in Miami Beach — driving nonstop. Being Bob, that meant he drove till we were both tired, then handed the wheel of his Camaro over to me for a mid-night glide through Georgia and Florida. I was so drowsy, it's a miracle I didn't get us all killed.

By all, I include fellow student Camille Odolich, then business manager of the Alestle, who made the trip with us and

ultimately became Mrs. Bob Emig.

I didn't see much of Bob after college, but whenever I did he remained the same character, with his overpowering enthusiasm always directed toward sports in general and opportunities for young players in particular. Baseball, basketball, soccer, Bob loved and coached them all.

He formally coached at Althoff Catholic High School in Belleville, St. John Neumann Catholic School in Maryville, and then at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic School in Collinsville. Formally or not, Bob was a big booster of the big boosters, whether it was promoting the Prairie State Games, editing the "Redbird Review" about the Cardinals or freelancing stories for radio and other papers after the Journal folded.

In one of our chance meetings, he and I talked about kids, and I volunteered that our then-young son had played organized soccer before becoming more interested in exploring anthills on the field than in advancing the ball. (Round ball for soccer, right?)

Bob politely sighed that sigh he always sighed when I showed my indifference for sports.

It came as a bolt from the blue, and a real loss for youth athletics

in Metro East, when I learned back in 2001 that Bob had died, at age 51. Who knew then that his enthusiasm would not have to die with him?

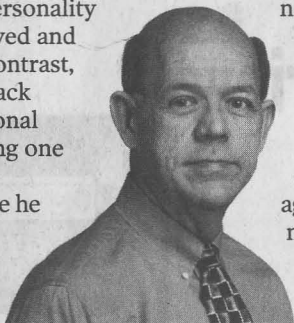
Thanks primarily to efforts by Camille and their son Aaron, Bob's zeal lives on through the Bob Emig Foundation, using the slogan, "Supporting the mentoring of youth through sports."

When Camille and I visited about it a few days ago, I quietly chuckled when she called me "Pat." Oh, she always did. But in the 23 years I knew Bob, I don't believe he ever called me anything but "Gauen." Coaches are big on last names.

The foundation, four years old and still catching stride, has given about \$20,000 to youth sports so far and is now expanding its reach internationally. It's helping the "Kick for Nick" campaign collect soccer balls for impoverished children worldwide, in the name of a Nick Maderas, a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

The local "kickoff" is Saturday at Harry's restaurant, 2144 Market Street in St. Louis. Bob won't be there, of course. But then, in a way he will.

More information about the Bob Emig Foundation is available by e-mailing camille8@charter.net or calling 618-659-2105.



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