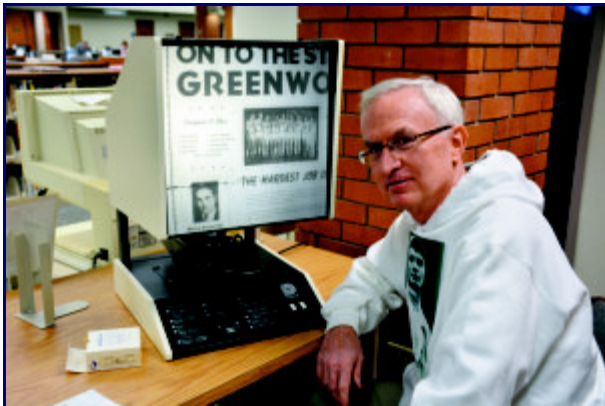


Mr. Research

Dan O'Brien spends his time preserving stories of great people who were almost lost in history.

Posted March 26, 2015 [Cover Story](#), By Nicole Davis



Dan O'Brien shows a screen of the microfilm with information on John Bass at the Greenwood Public Library.

Why do certain people survive the test of time when others, who were just as great or better, drop off? Dan O'Brien says his passion for research is what led him to ponder that question. It's part of what motivates him to spend countless hours researching aspects of history that might otherwise get lost in old newspapers or public records.

"I want to educate people to some of those great stories," O'Brien said. "We need to do a better job of remembering and preserving our history."

O'Brien, who was born in Beech Grove and went to St. Jude Catholic School before moving to Milwaukee, is a long-time Southside resident, living in Greenwood. He graduated from University of Missouri's School of Broadcast Journalism, is a former television anchor, reporter and producer.

He now works as a freelance journalist. He has written biographies of *Rube Waddell* and *Osee Schrecongost* for *Deadball Stars of the American League*, published by SABR. He has also done presentations with the Greenwood Public Library on Indiana authors and on the research he did after working on the press kit for the movie, *Monuments Men*, informing his audience of the historical facts and dramatic licenses the movie took.

O'Brien's biggest and most ongoing project is his research and writings on George (Rube) Waddell.

He has written a screenplay titled *Rube*, which he hopes to one day be taken on by a producer. For more information, visit rubewaddell.net.

“There are people I talk to today, baseball fans that say never heard of Rube Waddell,” O’Brien said. “He was in the Hall of Fame and the biggest drawing card in baseball in the first decade of the 20th century. I’ve read stories that said he personally saved the American League from bankruptcy, which maybe was a bit of an exaggeration. You talk about one of the most accomplished Hoosiers that is forgotten today...”

O’Brien continues, “He was such a colorful character. He was mentally challenged. He sometimes wouldn’t show up to pitch because he was outside playing marbles with kids on the street... Yet, he had this incredible ability. He still holds the American League single-season strikeout record for a left-handed pitcher.”

While his biggest passion is learning more about the personality of Waddell and marketing the screenplay, there are often sidelines that take him away from that research.



John Bass' photo at Tom's Barbershop in Greenwood.

Greenwood's late John Bass is inducted to Indiana Hall of Fame

Greenwood's own 'Mr. Basketball,' John Bass, was recently inducted into the Indiana Hall of Fame's 54th Annual Men's Award Banquet at Primo Banquet and Conference Center, Southside Indianapolis, on March 25 –74 years after he graduated from the high school.

O'Brien would go into Tom's Barbershop in Greenwood where photographs of local athletes hang as decor. One of those photos is of Bass. O'Brien said he knew Bass was titled Mr. Basketball, but assumed wrongly, like many others did, that he was already in the Hall of Fame.

After reading an article in a local newspaper about how Bass had been overlooked for the honor, O'Brien went to the Hall of Fame website to learn what it would take to get Bass inducted. He learned that numbers and statistics were needed, so he started by going to the Greenwood, Franklin and State libraries to get information.

“I didn't know much about John Bass; I'll be honest,” O'Brien said. “He was Mr. Basketball from

Greenwood. He had to have some good numbers to be Mr. Basketball. The fact that he led Greenwood to such unprecedented team glory was surprising... I was gratified to learn that. It made it much more compelling that he should be in the Hall of Fame.”

O’Brien wasn’t the only one to want to nominate Bass, just the first to do the research. O’Brien said Franklin resident Jim Higdon submitted a nomination, along with Dave Jones.



Dan O’Brien sees the photo of John Bass at Tom’s Barbershop every time he goes to get his hair cut.

“In addition to Mr. Bass’s individual achievements (Mr. Basketball, three Johnson County scoring titles) he also led Greenwood to unprecedented and, I believe, unmatched team accomplishments,” wrote O’Brien in his nomination. “During Bass’s three years as a starter, Greenwood won three county two sectional championships. In 1940, Greenwood snapped Franklin’s 22-year reign as sectional champion.”

After high school, Bass enlisted into the Army during WWII. He later went on to work at a manufacturing plant and then owned the Standard service station that was located at Fry Road and U.S. 31. O’Brien theorizes the reason Bass may have been overlooked for the Hall of Fame nomination was the fact that he didn’t play college ball.

“It’s about time. Better late than never,” said Jeff Davis, owner of Tom’s Barbershop. Davis attended the Hall of Fame reception on March 25. “I just want to go and honor him and be a part of it for Greenwood. I played basketball in Greenwood, too... Once a Woodmen, always a Woodmen.”