



**Pactoracles
Class Agent's Letter
For The Wabash College Class of 1971**

February 4, 2026



**Old Men For Old Wabash:
Our 55th Reunion, June 5-7, 2026**

Old Wabash is a name we cheer and a song we sing. At our 55th reunion this June 5-7, our class of old men will cheerfully celebrate our class, our school, and ourselves. We will, as it is our tradition, robustly sing "Old Wabash" in the Chapel Sing competition.

Old Men For Old Wabash will be fun. Every member of the class is welcome to the celebration, whether or not he graduated, whether he started before 1967 and graduated in 1971, or whether he started in 1967 and he graduated after 1971. Wives and partners are welcome. We always have a good turn-out of wives.



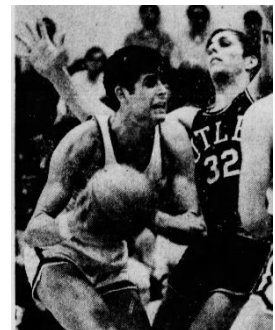
Registration for Big Bash just opened last Friday. We register at <https://www.wabash.edu/events/bigbash2026/>.

As of this writing, three classmates have already registered out of 14 registrants for all classes. Register soon and join the groundswell of the Class of 1971.

Tom Martella '71 Elected To Athletics Hall Of Fame

Classmate Tom Martella, a second-team academic All-American as a senior and a rebounding and scoring great, was elected to the Wabash Athletics Hall of Fame by the National Association of Wabash Men about two weeks ago. Induction for him and other honorees will be this September. The Hall of Fame started in 1982.

Tom averaged 9.5 rebounds per game for his career, second all-time behind the incomparable Pete Metzelaars '82 at 11.4. Tom averaged 16.4 points per game, 15th all-time. He averaged a double-double of 17.2 points and 10 rebounds per game his senior season. From my research, only four Wabash players have averaged a double-double for a season. He came close to averaging a double-double for his career, which only Metzelaars has accomplished.



*Tom Martella '71
competes against
Butler University.*

Here is a list of Tom's statistics from his playing days:

- ✓ 2nd all-time in rebounds per game at 9.5
- ✓ 6th for field goal percentage in a season (.690 in 1970-71)
- ✓ 9th in rebounding for a season (10.0 in 1970-71)
- ✓ 15th in scoring average for a career
- ✓ Double-double average in points and rebounds per game in 1970-1971
- ✓ Three-year letterman
- ✓ Team MVP two times

What Wabash Means to Me

Steve Wildman '71

Serendipity brought me to Wabash, and for that I will always be grateful. I knew I was going to go to college but had no idea where that might or should be. I recognized that I enjoyed the deeper intellectual side of academic learning.

I attended college night at my high school, Warsaw (In) High School. I earnestly listened to the pitches by representatives for the colleges and universities. Only Wabash emphasized intellectual rigor and scholarly inquiry in describing itself. I applied nowhere else, not realizing at the time that I was going to need scholarship help for my family and me to cover the cost of a Wabash education. Thankfully, I got the scholarship.



Steve and Susan Wildman on a bike trip.

I pledged Delts and moved into the Delt House, which was the very old structure on north Wabash Avenue, not the newer one across the street which opened in 1970. I began classes with the Class of 1971 in September 1967.

I got what I was looking for. I have since heard a Wabash professor, Dr. Eric Dunaway, describe our college as an intellectual boot camp. I now describe it as the source of a world class education. It was rigorous. It was challenging.

With the exceptions of three years in the army (low draft number—72), a few years with a consulting firm, and a year on academic leave to serve as the Chief Economist for the Federal Communications Commission, my post-Wabash career has been in academia.

I completed a PhD in economics at Stanford University where my classmates included graduates from Harvard, Yale, MIT, and Swarthmore, none of whom came in better

Steve Wildman grew up in Warsaw, Indiana. He lives with his wife Susan in Boulder, Colorado.

He majored in economics at Wabash, spent two years on the wrestling team, served as vice president of the Delt house his junior year, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from Stanford University. He taught at UCLA and Northwestern University before he joined Michigan State University in 1999. At MSU, he held an endowed chair as the James H. Quello Professor of Telecommunication Studies. He was the founding Director of the Quello Center for Telecommunication Management and Law.

He did a year's service as the U.S. Federal Communications Commission Chief Economist while on leave from Michigan State in 2013-2014.

Upon retirement in 2015, Susan and he moved to Boulder. He has held the position of Visiting Scholar at the University of Colorado, where for two years he also co-taught an interdisciplinary PhD course.

He has authored several books and numerous articles and book chapters on economics and policy for the communication and information industries.

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prepared for a very challenging graduate program than I was. I have taught at four major research universities, including an elite private university. At none of these places did the rigor of the education offered undergraduates match what I experienced at Wabash.

But I also benefitted in two other ways from Wabash which I did not anticipate in September 1967: deep and enduring friendships and the Wabash "boost."

I was one of 24 young men who pledged Delt that fall. Maybe it was the rigors of pledge training, maybe the blend of personalities in our pledge class, perhaps a combination of both or something else entirely, but bonds were formed that remain strong to this day. We stay in touch through texts, emails, and the occasional old-fashioned phone call. Many of us attend the five-year class reunions at Big Bash, and we have organized two gatherings of our pledge class and their significant others, the first in Boulder, CO in 2019, followed by a second in Sarasota, FL. in 2024. Friendships this deep and enduring are a blessing. They form the core of a larger set of Wabash friendships, including people I have met since graduation.

The second unanticipated benefit, the Wabash "boost," is harder to articulate, but no less real. If one compared the career paths of Wabash grads to those of graduates from other colleges or universities who look similar in terms of performance on various admissions criteria, on average Wabash graduates, I believe, would be seen as having more successful careers. This is not true for everyone, of course. The vagaries of life alone guarantee that. But if the data were available for a rigorous comparison, my necessarily casual but interested observations of the career paths of Wabash men and the many others I know and have encountered who attended other colleges and universities suggests that a Wabash boost would emerge as a statistical regularity.

If we were comparing boxers, an outsider might say that Wabash men generally punch above their weight. This is a misleading analogy. Beyond the benefits of a first class education and the college's emphasis on critical thinking, the boost is explained by an environment where an individual's true weight, which cannot be fully captured by admissions criteria, is allowed, and indeed encouraged, to emerge and become manifest. I know I was able to flourish in a way unique to me, that I have benefitted from that flourishing ever since, and that there are few other places where this could have happened to the same degree. I can see a similar impact on the lives of other Wabash men I know.

The lives of the Wabash men I know and meet also show that there is an intensely personal component to the boost that can only be revealed when engaging with someone face-to-



These are 12 of the 24 men of the 1971 Delt pledge class who gathered in 2019. Susan and Steve Wildman are in the front row, second and third from the left.

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face. A certain self-assuredness when dealing with the rest of the world. A willingness to entertain alternative points of view and explore new perspectives. An open mindedness and an embracing of life's possibilities and an acceptance of its unavoidable limitations. There is a concern for others and for one's impact on the larger society in which we live. As a general rule I find other Wabash grads to be interesting people to talk to – something I can't say about everyone I meet.

What I described above are benefits I received from attending Wabash. My guess is that most of my classmates reading this essay benefitted similarly from their time there. I have had the privilege of presenting my research to Wabash students and faculty on two occasions and was blown away by the insight the students revealed in the questions they asked. My wife joined me for the second of these visits, and we were both impressed by the self-assuredness of the students we met. I firmly believe that Wabash's current generation of students is benefitting from their time there in the same way I did, and benefitting further from the additional resources the college now provides to support the process. Sentimental attachment is one reason to continue to support Wabash, and it undoubtedly plays a role in the contributions my wife and I make on a regular basis. More important is a forward-looking belief that gifts to Wabash are high impact contributions that help the college make a notable and positive impact on young lives.



Steve Wildman '71 gives a lecture on his recent research at a 2021 Wabash seminar attended by economics and computer science majors and faculty in Baxter 101, the same room where legendary econ professor Ben Rogge taught the men of 1971 and many other Wabash men. Students were probably sitting apart because Covid was still a concern then. Steve provided this and the other photos for this

If you are receiving this class agent letter electronically, please print it and share it with your family and friends, or forward it to them by e-mail.

Class Loses Steve Ong, Mark Pennington

Stephen Ong '71, of Greeley, Colorado passed away from cancer two years ago on November 28, 2023. He was 74. I recently learned of his passing.

Steve hailed from Elkhart, Indiana. He graduated from Concord High School where he was a debater and marching band member.



Steve Ong's photo came from his obituary.

At Wabash, he was a member of Beta Theta Pi and the service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega. He was active in debate along with classmates Dave Messerschmidt, John Ryder, and Carl Royal. Steve and his younger brother B. Nelson Ong '73 were a debating team at times. Steve served as president of Young Americans For Freedom. As a senior, he was a student representative on the faculty's Chapel Committee.

He earned an MBA from the University of Chicago while working for NIBCO in Elkhart. While on an assignment at the NIBCO plant in Colorado, he decided to make a career change to pastoral ministry. While earning his M. Div. at Denver Baptist Theological Seminary, he met Teresa Swinney, who became his wife of 45 years.

He devoted his life to Christian education. He pastored for four years at Gilcrest (Colorado) Baptist Church and then moved to Greeley to found Reformation Baptist Church (originally Victory Baptist Church). He also founded Colorado Heritage Education School System for home school families in 1991 and Chambers College in 1998. He loved traveling to England with student groups and enjoyed reading and teaching history.

Steve is survived by his widow Teresa Ong, several children, and three siblings, one of whom is Nelson. An older brother David Ong '65 predeceased Steve.

Mark Wesley Thomas Pennington '71 passed away from a heart attack in Bloomington, Indiana on November 28, 2025. He was 76.

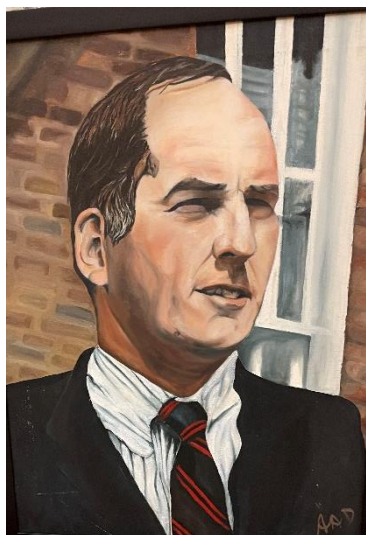
The content for this obituary comes totally from a published one, as I could not find other information about his student life at Wabash. He attended Southport High School in Indianapolis, Wabash, Sorbonne University, and later Indiana University. He lived in Europe for 25 years, part of that time in Aix -en -Provence, where he met Simone. After her death, he returned to the United States, resided in Bloomington, IN and taught in Indiana University's linguistics department. Fluent in French and in German, he earned his doctorate in linguistics from Indiana University in 2005. "In his youth," the obituary said, "he was an idealist, a member of Students for a Democratic Society, and a critic of Capitalism." His sister and a son survive him.

Wabash Basketball

The Little Giant basketball team stands at 13-6 and in second place in the North Coast Athletic Conference. The team defeated DePauw, 74-70, at Greencastle on January 28. In our senior year, Wabash beat DePauw twice by the score of 74-70.

The Little Giants are fun to watch in person or via the computer. The current students who broadcast Wabash games over the computer are no Skip Adams, Joe Cassell, or Skip Long, our classmates who were the voice of Wabash basketball more than a half century ago.

Check out Wabash basketball on the computer. Go to the schedule of games at <https://sports.wabash.edu/sports/mens-basketball/schedule>, and hit the button to watch the game. Games are usually played on Wednesday evenings or Saturday afternoons. You might even see Tom Runge, Carol Runge, Andrea Pactor and me in the stands. We sit in the Class of 1971 Section. That section is located wherever we happen to be sitting.



Classmate Andy Dziubinskyj painted president Thad Seymour during his senior year. He donated the portrait to Wabash College in 2021. The College has recently gotten it restored and framed. This photo of its beautiful restoration was taken by me on January 29, 2026, the day that the college's archives received it. Hopefully, our class will see it at our reunion this June.

News from the College

Enrollment and Recruitment. There were 908 students on campus when school started last August. This may be the fullest the campus has ever been because, generally speaking, every student must live on campus.

Maintaining or increasing enrollment is a constant concern. And that is not just because the Class of 1971 is not fathering many more future students. Factors on enrollment include declining birthrates, a demographically shrinking pool of eligible students, competition among colleges to get those students, difficulties for international students, and the cost of college.

We alumni are an advantage to the college and to future Wabash men. Contact me if you think that I can you help your recruit a future Wabash student. His learning about Wabash from you might be his life-changing serendipitous moment that Steve Wildman described on page 2 of this letter.

Campus Center. The Campus Center has been demolished. A big hole now exists in anticipation of a new community center.

The Bachelor's Food Critic. Shad Wilson '27 is a star on the Wabash Volleyball team. He also it the *Bachelor's* food critic.

In that paper's January 30 issue, Shad reviewed the "Blue Cactus." It is what the name implies. It is a Mexican restaurant. He concluded: "In my very unprofessional opinion, Blue Cactus gets a 9.3/10 burbers (knowers will know)." Well, I don't know the word "burbers," but I know Shad. Based on his opinion, I am going to give the Blue Cactus a try.

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Chapel: Then And Now

In our day, attendance at "Chapel" was compulsory. We had to hear talks, or at least be present for them, twice a week. The faculty revoked the compulsory aspect by vote on February 17, 1971.

Not long thereafter, still in the 1970s, Wabash students started voluntary chapel. Eventually, it took the name of "Chapel." Now, the Sphinx Club organizes and conducts Chapel Talks weekly on Thursdays. Most of the speakers come from the Wabash community—students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

I have watched about 10-12 Chapel Talks in the last two weeks. The talks ordinarily run from 20-25 minutes. The quality of the talks ranges from good to superlative. In this letter, I recommend three which I deem to be superlative and worth the listening time of the Class of 1971. These talks fit into the category of "life skills," as did most of the other talks I took in. Each of these three speakers had a different message from the other two, and no speaker spoke down to the students. These talks were delivered in 2019, 2023, and 2025. We can be proud of the student-leadership for the tradition of Chapel Talks.



Ton Runge delivers his Chapel Talk on April 3, 2025.

Classmate **Tom Runge '71** titled his April 3, 2025 talk: "Bumper Stickers, NASCAR, and Professional Wrestling: Simple Lessons for Life." He was genuine, funny, self-deprecating, and serious. The Class of 1971 can relate to his reference to certain personalities and to his Bio 1 final. He solidly connected with the audience of students, faculty, and staff. At the end, I wanted to stand up and applaud at my computer.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npxsAvYzs-k>

law firm and trying the corporate world. After making the change, he made a lifechanging decision while brushing his teeth. He was genuine and self-deprecating. He connected with the audience with his riveting personal challenge.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7127Mj1LnVk>

I recommend the 12-minute talk by my friend **Paul Jefferson '92** of November 2019. He titled his talk: "The Gentleman's Rule and Living a Values-Driven Life." He told about leaving a successful career in a big

Michael Dockendorf '72. I do not know him, but some of you do, especially the Lambda Chis. Michael has had remarkable success in the financial world. He titled his talk of April 6, 2023: "Play As Long as You Can Get Away With it." He



Michael Dockendorf '72 delivers his Chapel Talk on April 6, 2023.

told some anecdotes about his life-changing draft lottery number and gave some jaw-dropping anecdotes about people like Peterson, Iacocca, and Trump. He had humorous gibes about a fraternity or two and mentioned some professors all of us knew or knew of. He connected totally with his audience, and he connected with me. I am sure he will with you, too.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOCdvE8Cocs>

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Donate To The Wabash College Annual Fund

Thanks to classmates, spouses, and widows who have donated to the annual fund during the current fiscal year. The fiscal year will end on June 30, 2026. Our class did well with a 41% giving-rate in the last fiscal year.

Our dollars are especially important to keep Wabash strong and to make it stronger. We cannot just presume it. Liberal arts schools are facing challenges, financially and otherwise.



When we donate, we say "thanks" for our own good education, for our great Wabash professors, and for wonderful Wabash friendships. Wabash should always fight, and Wabash should always thrive. Thirty-nine (39) of us have already donated through January 25, 2026. Thank you. If you are not on the list below, please donate. This can be done by mailing a check to Wabash College, Advancement Office, 301 W. Wabash Ave., Crawfordsville, IN 47933, by contributing online at wabash.edu/give, or by calling the college at 877-743-4545.

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Orlo Shoop
John and Deanna Street
Jim and Barbara Unger
Pete and Amy Toft



Thanks for reading *Pactoracles*. It is my honor and responsibility to serve the Class of 1971. Contact me with news, comments, or questions.

Your Brother In Wabash And
An Old Man For Old Wabash

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim R. Pactor".

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Update your listing on the alumni directory if you change your mailing address, email address, or your employment. You can do it yourself online or provide me the changes.