



*Promoting Wisconsin Wrestling, Preserving its
History, and Perpetuating the Vision of
George Martin (1911-1970)*

Fellow Sages
WWCA Executive Board

For many of you, much of this might be old news. It is a culmination of my own thoughts of the last 15 yrs and will facilitate the continued responsibility of preserving the history of Wisconsin Wrestling. Tom McGarvie, having both the knowledge and enthusiasm, will continue the effort as chair of the Sages and be your communicator and representative to the WWCA Executive Board.

Allow me to update you on a few things that have transpired over the past two years. Many of you sat through years of meetings that professed to have lots of things for us to do. Things don't always go as planned. After our initial project of documenting the history of the WWCA in 2002, we dreamed of building a facility to display both the George Martin and National Hall of Fame and provide a home for our history. We had more than a few meetings before the reality became apparent. The land was available thanks to the Evans family, but as time passed, significant realities stymied the effort. Financially, such a project would have exceeded the vision. It was a great dream, yet maybe *someday*?

Not all was lost in the effort. While sitting with Wayne Stapleford at the 2013 state tournament, I was explaining the effort and reasons why we couldn't complete what we started. He paused, wrinkled his brow then advised that I should contact Chris Lechnir at the Dome... aka, the Wisconsin Dells Sports Center. Maybe there was a possibility of displaying some (or all) of our history there. I did, and Chris pursued the possibility with owner Damon Zumwalt (wrestler for UCLA in the 60's). Both liked the idea and agreed to encouraged us to proceed with plans for a display of our George Martin HOF and the National Wrestling HOF. Dale Evans, Pres. and CEO of Evco Plastics in DeForest, had stated his enthusiasm and support for our desire to proceed with any part of the original project.

Shortly after, in a discussion with Terry Shockley, NWHOF Chair and Tom Talbot, CEO of Glen Oak Industries and NWHOF board member, expressed their enthusiasm and support for any efforts for such a project. In addition to the financial commitment from Dale, Damon, Terry, and Tom, the WWCA Executive Committee pledged financial support and encouragement to proceed.

For that effort, I wish I could have had all our Sages in walking distance to be a part of the planning. Out of necessity and availability, I recruited the expertise within an easy drive to the proximity of my kitchen table and Wisconsin Dells. We burned a few hours drafting plans at our kitchen table. The project proceeded and was installed in the Wisconsin Dells Sport Center on December 3rd, 2014.

Concurrently, after several years of collecting wrestling memorabilia and publications from Sages/Olympians/Coaches and other friends, we moved to the old Dodgeland (Juneau) high school. Olympian Ben Peterson held the Camp of Champs on one side of the building and we rented a room for two years. Ben ceased his camps in Juneau and we subsequently found ourselves looking for another home. After a temporary move to Ben's facility in Watertown, Tom McGarvie found us a large room in the Watertown YMCA. It is heated, has a bathroom, security, and most importantly, is dry. It is now home

to collections of memorabilia, publications, books, posters, banners, and provides work space for archiving Wisconsin's wrestling history.

Thanks to a few *'always available'* Sages, we had help for moving the many containers from place to place, often wondering where we would go next. For now, the YMCA is the right place. Feel free to spend a day browsing through the collections. Tom McGarvie and/or Don Hale will be your host. Accessibility is on the same schedule as the YMCA hours. We will be meeting there frequently, sorting and cataloging materials.

The publication, "Wisconsin Wrestling, 1941-2007", is now being revised with updated statistics. The new edition is being shared by John Hatfield, Random Lake and Mike Briggs, Plymouth. Contributions will be solicited from other coaches and alumni. Watch for their communications at wiwrestling.com, wwca.org, and other media sites.

While all this was *'going on'*, Bob Olson, New Richmond continues his 10/yr *'on-going'* project documenting every head coach in Wisconsin's wrestling history. A recent tally numbers over 7000 coaches. Bob is now expanding the data to include information that will allow us to keep them in touch with wrestling. He is always receiving information on coaches and schools. In the near future we will publish Bob's work as a part of the pursuit of Wisconsin's wrestling history.

Tom McGarvie, Watertown, has been at my side for several years and will assume the responsibility needed to stay the vision of Coach Martin. History doesn't stop because some of us fade away. They simply become a part of it. Tom has committed to continue the effort. Personally, I will still tag along making periodic journeys to Watertown to sit in on the sorting and cataloging. All of you are welcome to do the same.

The Sages/Alumni, are under an umbrella of the WWCA Executive Committee. They have never failed to give us 100% support for our efforts. In the name of every coach and every team that stepped on a mat, it is important that we continue to give all who love the sport *'their story'*. Those who succeed us will bear the responsibility of continuing the effort. Those who preceded us deserve the credit and our best effort to *'preserve our history and perpetuate the vision of George Martin'*.

Yours in Wrestling,

Jim Stephenson