

Our State[®]

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WITH BIG PINNACLE.

For the Win

He trekked to Kenan Stadium in the fall for football and caught matinees at The Varsity in the winter and bought Billie Holiday's *Lady Sings the Blues* and Harry Belafonte's *Calypso* from Kemp's. He picked up his starched button-downs from Tar Heel Cleaners on Franklin and took dates to Dairyland for the Royal Banana Split, 39 cents, and bought potatoes and potted meat from Fowler's Food Store. At the close of basketball season on March 1, 1957, he cheered from the stands at Duke Indoor Stadium as his beloved Tar Heels capped an undefeated season, led by "big Len," Lennie Rosenbluth, and on that day in his sophomore year, my dad became a fan for life.

For the next 58 years, he rarely missed watching a game, and not just Carolina basketball, either. He got a kick out of Coach K's Cameron Crazies, loved watching Spud Webb dunk for NC State and Muggsy Bogues dart down the court for the Demon Deacons.

Truth be told, my dad was a fan of all sports; he respected the drive and passion of players, admired their commitment to excellence, appreciated the tension of competition. As a spectator, he felt the exhilaration of a win and the despair of a loss. I can still hear his hushed whispers of "get in the hole" for Jack or Fuzzy or Tiger. He loved Chris and Steffi and Martina, and I remember him handing me his old wooden Bancroft racket when I said I wanted to learn how to play the game myself and spent the spring knocking tennis balls against the side of the house.

He followed track and field; his health — he had a weakened heart from a bout of rheumatic fever as a child — had



prohibited him from playing sports, but he'd managed the track team at Carolina and later, when I was a kid, he listened to all of the American Legion Post 45 baseball games on WKXR-AM 1260 in Asheboro.

Earlier this year, after the NC Sports Hall of Fame announced its 2020 inductees, I got the urge to spend a day at the gallery, on the third floor of the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh. If you haven't been, here's what you'll see: Richard Petty's stock car gleaming in that signature Petty Blue; Enos Slaughter's baseball bat; an exhibit devoted to Appalachian State University's jaw-dropping 2007 football win over the University of Michigan; banners and pennants honoring more than 400 players and coaches. And at the end

of the hall devoted to basketball, you'll see a television replaying games.

Watch. There's UNC defeating Georgetown in the 1982 NCAA Final Four, No. 23 shining like a superstar; there's Wake Forest winning the ACC in 1961 and 1962. And then there's the 1983 NCAA game between NC State and the University of Houston, and suddenly, I'm no longer in the museum, but back in the den with my dad, my Monday night homework pushed aside, the two of us riveted to the screen, Lorenzo Charles making his winning dunk, two seconds before the buzzer, and there's the coach, Jim Valvano, bouncing across the court, overcome with excitement, jumping, twisting, and my dad, the forever Carolina fan, jumps up, too, electrified, elated. Watching it again, I understand that *this* is why games are played, and why we watch, and how, in these unforgettable moments replayed so many years later, we can feel so alive.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth".

Elizabeth Hudson
Editor in Chief