

Longtime Morning Call sports columnist, editor Paul Reinhard has died

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Retired Morning Call sports Columnist Paul Reinhard stands next to a two seat Indy Car driven by Mario Andretti at Pocono Raceway [Kevin Mingora/The Morning Call]

It is with complete sorrow and sadness that I write of the passing of my former boss, colleague, mentor, friend and hero, Paul Reinhard. He died Saturday night after receiving hospice care in recent weeks related to a heart issue.

Reinhard was a Morning Call sports department fixture for more than 60 years.

A 1958 graduate of Allentown High School and a 1962 Moravian College grad, he was a writer, sports editor, columnist and most recently a freelancer writing about IndyCar and NASCAR racing; the Parkettes and gymnastics; his dear friend Mario Andretti; and Lafayette College football, where he forged a tight bond with former Leopards coach Frank Tavani.

“This is incredibly sad,” Andretti said when told the news Saturday night. “We just talked twice in the past week. He was a dear friend and we were close for many years. He was the man. He was our anchor in terms of racing coverage. I got to know journalists from all over the world and Paul ranks right at the top. He did his job, I did mine, but there was a personal touch there that went beyond our jobs. I think Paul knew my career and my history better than I did.”



Former Morning Call Sports Editor Paul Reinhard and Dr. Rose Mattioli shared a friendship that lasted for many years. (Contributed photo)

One of Reinhard’s biggest stories in recent years was an October 2018 feature in which he provided a detailed account of [Dale Earnhardt Jr.’s quiet visit to the 1803 House in Emmaus](#) and how Earnhardt’s great-grandfather was one of the founding fathers of the borough. “You get what you pay for.” This phrase is used to justify the high commission rates traditional real estate brokerages charge. The implication is that if you want full service with...Almost no one knew the connection. Somehow, some way, Paul did. This was vintage Reinhard. He was able to mix great information in an easy-to-follow manner and with a very human touch. It is no wonder that his piece was one of the most popular sports stories in 2018.



Dale Earnhardt Jr., center, poses with freelance writer Paul Reinhard and Dick Farmer, who gave Earnhardt a tour of the 1803 House in Emmaus. (Morning Call file photo)

But to me, Reinhard was much more than a great writer. Put simply, he was one of the most important people in my life. It was his coverage of high school sports in the 1960s and early '70s that sparked my interest in becoming a sports writer. It was kind of cool and fitting that he was the one who hired me full time in 1982 when I was still in college and desperately needed a job, with marriage and a son on the horizon.



Retired Morning Call sports columnist Paul Reinhard, left, and Morning Call senior sports writer Keith Groller get ready to ride in a two-seat IndyCar driven by Mario Andretti at Pocono Raceway. (Morning Call file photo)

I was determined to never make him regret his decision to go out on a limb and hire a 21-year-old kid who hadn't yet completed college, especially when I knew he had a stack of applicants about a foot high on his desk. He made sure I stayed in college and got my degree, which I did, on a 5 ½-year plan.

He was my boss for approximately the first 20 years of my career and continued to counsel me as he moved into a columnist role and then kept in close touch after continuing to write in retirement as a freelancer.

Reinhard loved to write and to his very last story, few could write better than him, especially about racing, Mario and Pocono. To the day she died, Dr. Rose Mattioli, a co-founder of the track, loved Reinhard and beamed whenever she'd see him in the Pocono Raceway press room.

I often wondered why he kept writing even to the age of 80, but he said it kept his mind going.



Paul Reinhard and Keith Groller were honored in April 2019 at DeSales University by members of the Lehigh Valley sports community. (Mark Wogenrich/The Morning Call/Mark Wogenrich/The Morning Call)

More than that, I believe writing kept Reinhard in touch with people, and no one enjoyed being around people more than him. No one could work a room like him, moving from person to person, finding something cheerful, something amusing to say to make everyone he met feel just a bit better about themselves and their day.

There is so much to say about him and I will eventually find more appropriate words as I come to terms with this tremendous personal loss.

Just this past week, he sent me a text message saying he was rooting for me as I covered basketball at PPL Center. I didn't know what that meant at the time, but I think I do now.



Paul Reinhard and Keith Groller pose for a photo in the Yankee Stadium press box in November 2014 before the start of the 150th football meeting between Lehigh and Lafayette. (Beet Bowman)

Reinhard wanted me to find the right words to celebrate local basketball's biggest week. He knew I loved basketball since the time he saw me sitting in the corner of Allen High's Little Palestra with my scorebook on my lap at age 9 or 10.

My father and Reinhard were teammates on Allentown High's 1957 undefeated football team and they were friends until my father's death in January 2019.



Tailback DeAndre Morrow, right, with Paul Reinhard during the Lafayette football media day in the Pfenning Alumni Center. (Monica Cabrera)

It is a comforting thought to believe he is now reunited with my dad and his longtime buddies and colleagues Ted Meixell and Terry Larimer, who both died last year. I know it was tough for Paul to see so many of his good friends leave him in recent years, starting with John Kunda in 2005.

I feel quite fortunate and blessed to have forged a bond with him through our trips to Lehigh football games, weekends at Pocono and other places.

We shared the memory of covering the 150th meeting of Lehigh and Lafayette football in 2014 at Yankee Stadium and later shared laughs along with fast rides with Mario in the two-seater at Pocono.



Paul Reinhard, former Morning Call Sports Editor, recovers from open heart surgery at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Cedar Crest. (DENISE SANCHEZ / THE MORNING CALL)

We shared a night together at the Lehigh Valley Sports Hall of Fame in May 2017 when I got to introduce him as the John Kunda Print Media Award recipient.

In April 2019, we shared a very special night at DeSales when it seemed like a Who's Who of local sports personalities showed up to pay tribute to us. While I thought it should have been Paul's night alone, there was no one else I would have wanted to share an unforgettable night like that with.

Making it even better was that Terry German, who helped arrange the whole evening, named Allentown School District scholarships in Reinhard's and my honor with funds raised from the night.

Hopefully, the Allen High students who receive the Reinhard Journalism Scholarship will know something about the special person it is named for.

I know so many people young and old got to know him at his church. He was a beloved figure there who enjoyed preaching the gospel. I can imagine his was a comforting, strong, supportive voice to so many and he could reach people in a way few others could.

He once told me in a quiet moment that he did not fear dying. He appreciated what he had in his life and if God was ready to take him, he was ready to go. He dearly loved his family and didn't want to leave them, but he assured me in that strong, uplifting leave-no-doubt voice of his that he was going to a better place.

It is ironic that on Saturday night, I sat in Paul's seat in the Lafayette football press box and thought a lot about him and how he always handled himself with a sense of professionalism and class in an often chaotic and volatile profession.

After a busy week I was going to call him Sunday to talk about being in his seat and much more. I wish I had made that call earlier and now I regret that I never got to say goodbye and tell him again how much he meant to me.

But I think he knew what I thought of him. I told him many times that he saved my life.

I don't know if he believed me, but it was the absolute truth. My wife felt the same way and while she has heard me complain about a lot of things and a lot of people at one time or another over nearly 40 years in this highly egocentric, high-stress business, she had no tolerance for any criticism of Paul Reinhard. She thought the world of him.

"Remember what he did for us," she'd say. "Yes, I do," I'd reply.



Nazareth's Mario Andretti, left, walks with Morning Call sports reporter Paul Reinhard on the infield of Pocono Raceway before an IndyCar race July 3, 1971. (FILE PHOTO / THE MORNING CALL)

I remember what he did for me and so many others over a life's worth of giving.

He will be dearly missed by his family, by the readers of The Morning Call, by Mario Andretti and the racing community, by Lafayette College and Patriot League sports, by his church, by so many people he touched through his 80-plus years on this earth, and most definitely by me.

Morning Call reporter Keith Groller can be reached at 610-820-6740 or at kgroller@mcall.com. Keith Groller has covered sports at The Morning Call full-time since 1982. He's been inducted into five local Hall of Fames for his coverage, won the Publisher's Excellence award in 1999, and won numerous community service awards. He covers HS football, basketball, softball, Lehigh football and major auto races at Pocono.