



## Charles N. "Chuck" Hildebrand

May 30, 2022

Charles Nathan "Chuck" Hildebrand, a sports journalist and author whose career spanned more than 40 years, three states, five books and thousands of bylines, died May 30, 2022 in Greendale, Wisconsin. He was 65.

Mr. Hildebrand was born in 1957, in Mountain View, Calif., to Lamar Hildebrand and Gladys Ann Goldstein. He spent most of his childhood in the San Jose area, which in the 1960s and 1970s routinely produced world-class athletes in every sport. Mr. Hildebrand demonstrated a knack for reporting and writing at an early age. From the time he was 12, he was determined to cover and chronicle these athletes and their accomplishments, and achieved his first newspaper byline - atop a story on future baseball Most Valuable Player Ken Caminiti - when he was 15.

Through his early newspaper work, he became associated with Campbell Little League in Campbell, a suburb of San Jose. Mr. Hildebrand joined the league as a paid announcer, scorekeeper and announcer in 1974, and Campbell teams won national championships in Little League (1976 and 1979) and in Pony League (1978 and 1979) while he was there. Later, Mr. Hildebrand coached at various levels in the Campbell system, and in 1982 reformed the city's American Legion program, which went 44-15 during the two seasons he ran the team. Mr. Hildebrand coached 25 players who went on to the college ranks, along with several who played professionally.

While he was involved with Campbell baseball, Mr. Hildebrand graduated from Del Mar High School in San Jose in 1975, and then attended San Jose State University for four years, serving as the sports editor of the Spartan Daily, the SJSU student newspaper, in 1978 and 1979. During the summer of 1979, the Peninsula Times Tribune, a Palo Alto based daily newspaper for which Mr. Hildebrand had free-lanced during his time in college, hired him as its high school sports director. He later covered every major sports beat for the Times Tribune, including Major League Baseball, the National Football League, and NCAA football, baseball and basketball. He covered all three of the Bay Area's seminal sports events of the 1980s: The San Francisco 49ers' 28-27 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on "The Catch" by Dwight Clark in the NFC title game in 1982; the University of California's 1982 football win over Stanford in one of the most controversial finishes in American sports history; and the Loma Prieta earthquake before Game 3 of the 1989 World Series. Mr. Hildebrand also was in the press box at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles in 1988 when Kirk Gibson hit his game-winning home run in Game 1 of the World Series.

Mr. Hildebrand left the Times Tribune in July 1992, less than a year before the paper permanently shut down, and worked for the Santa Cruz Sentinel and Associated Press for five years before moving to Nevada in 1997. He was also a high school classroom teacher and baseball coach during that time. In 1998, Mr. Hildebrand, sensing the need for a statewide publication to cover high school sports in Nevada, formed Nevada Prep, a weekly newspaper that circulated throughout the state. A year later, he became one of the first journalists to operate a legitimate news medium on the Internet, launching NevadaPrep.com and operating it out of his home in Winnemucca, Nev. The website was a resounding financial and artistic success, and was widely copied by many of the newspapers whose editors had previously scoffed at the idea of the Internet replacing the newspaper as the medium of news

choice.

In 2008, after running the website for 10 years, Mr. Hildebrand sold NevadaPrep.com and returned to California to begin work on his second book, on former Santa Clara University basketball coach Dick Davey. (His first of five books, *Bronco Sundays*, had been published in 1998, at the same time Hildebrand was completing his move to Nevada. It was a history of Santa Clara's football program, which was widely known as the Notre Dame of the West through the 1930s and 1940s.) Mr. Hildebrand followed the Davey book with *The Last Baseball Town*, on the Campbell youth baseball dynasty of his youth, and *Hey, I Was At That Game!*, on his major league, minor league and amateur baseball travels from 1965-91.

While still living in California, Mr. Hildebrand, a Milwaukee Brewers fan since the 1980s, made several visits to Milwaukee, and was captivated by the city's charm and the friendliness of its people. He purchased a home in Milwaukee in 2012 and moved there permanently three years later. In 2016, he published his fifth book, *Sad Riddance*, about the 1965 Milwaukee Braves during that franchise's final year before its move to Atlanta.

After moving to Milwaukee, Mr. Hildebrand became a staunch supporter of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's baseball program, believing that UWM, as the only NCAA Division I program in Wisconsin, was ready to become nationally prominent, especially after moving into its new ballpark for the 2020 season. Mr. Hildebrand also was a member of the Guardian Society of the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, and served two terms as a board member of the Mitchell Gallery of Flight at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport. He was a longtime member of the Milwaukee Athletic Club.

Mr. Hildebrand is survived by a half-brother, James Hildebrand of Tucson,

Ariz., his uncle Howard Goldstein of Saratoga, Calif., and various cousins, nephews and nieces. He also remained in close touch with many of his former players and students from his Campbell, Stanford and Nevada years, along with athletes he covered as a journalist. Mr. Hildebrand always described his coaching work with young people, particularly athletes, in this way: "I always had three goals for each of the teams with which I was associated. First, I wanted our last game to be our best one, no matter where we were in the standings. Second, I wanted every player to be better at the end of the season than he had been at the start. Third, and most important, I don't want to be anyone's last coach. I didn't want anyone to turn away from baseball because he had a bad experience with me."

During the last months of his life, Chuck was at peace surrounded by his beloved friend Karyn Birmingham, who adored him to the end. Dear friends like Sean, Jack, Jim, Chris, Scott and Bill also remained loyally and lovingly beside him as he made his journey home. Thanks and gratitude to the many caretakers from Aurora at Home Hospice, Synergy Healthcare and Therapy at Home for the tireless dedication to assisting Chuck during this time. A brilliant, kind, loving soul, Chuck made friends easily. He was quick with interesting and amazing facts about sports, history, politics and music. Additionally, he always added a little flavor to conversations with his quick quips and funny remarks. Generosity and kindness were among his many gifts, always caring for those in need with no expectation of anything in return. When thanked for his generosity, he would often say, "It's the least I can do, and I always do the least I can do". Truly one of a kind, Chuck will be remembered and loved by many, not marked by how he died but rather by how he lived.

In lieu of flowers, donations to youth-oriented organizations and complexes in California, Nevada and Wisconsin are preferred.

Friends will gather for a Celebration of Chuck's life on Friday, June 17, 2022 at

ROZGA FUNERAL & CREMATION SERVICES – ROZGA-WALLOCH  
CHAPEL (4309 S. 20th St, Milwaukee, WI 53221) from 4:00 - 6:00 PM.  
Private inurnment will take place at Forest Home Cemetery, Milwaukee, WI.

# Cemetery Details

## Forest Home Cemetery

2405 W Forest Home Ave  
Milwaukee, WI 53215

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life Gathering

JUN 17. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Rozga Funeral & Cremation Services - Rozga-Walloch Chapel  
4309 South 20th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53221  
(414) 281-7145  
<https://www.rozgafuneral.com/>

# Tribute Wall

CF

“*Connie Curley & Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Charles N. "Chuck" Hildebrand.*



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**Connie Curley & Family** - June 17, 2022 at 10:10 AM

LW

“*Loved your book on the Milwaukee Braves leaving Milwaukee. God speed.*



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**Louise Wisinski** - June 15, 2022 at 10:52 AM

JH

“*I was President of Campbell Little League when Chuck came to ask for the job of your Major Division Scorekeeper and announcer. We felt he was a great guy and gave him the job right away. He also prepared the ball field before games. He was friendly with everyone and everyone enjoyed his company and conversations. He was very well-liked and was a hero to the ball players. He followed the tournament teams and was one of the great supporters of the 1976 CLL National Champion teams. As an employee, he was prompt, reliable, and respectful. He was a great asset to the program and those who knew him will be saddened by his death. He is in our memories forever!!! Thank you, Chuck!!*

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**John Hanrahan** - June 13, 2022 at 04:53 AM

SE

*John, thank you for sharing this memory. One of Chuck's greatest joys was the time he spent with Campbell Little League, he often shared memories of the adventures and fun he had being part of such an amazing town and successful program as the CLL. He insisted that he be buried with his Campbell Little League LLWS trophy; it meant that much to him.*

sean - June 15, 2022 at 02:12 PM

RS

*As a former coach in Reno, Nevada at Hug High School, I had the opportunity to be interviewed and have many of our games covered by Chuck. During those years Chuck and I became close friends and as he started to become a local fixture in Northern Nevada. Chuck always rooted for the underdog was never one to back down from a fight or controversy. He was always fighting for sports equity and equality. He was also a leader of thinking outside of the box when it came to high school athletics and was always stirring up issues and topics with the Nevada State High School Athletic Association, NIAA.*

*As the current president of the NIAA Board of Control, I can say that the state has surely moved in the direction that Chuck has wanted with our recent state wide realignment of schools, league make-up and sport by sport divisions state wide. He would be proud to know that his vision and many of his ideas that he spread through his many communication outlets have been put in place.*

*It's been over a year since I reconnected with Chuck, the Hug High School weight room is named after "Chuck Hildebrand" for a wonderful donation he provided to the school sparked a community donation campaign that raise funds to build the school one of the finest weightrooms in the city.*

*Chuck was a very generous individual that not only supported high school sports in Northern Nevada, but also community and youth sport programs as well. I am saddened by the loss of a long lost friend and he will continue to be in your prayers as I reflect on our relationship, conversations and great memories.*

*Rest In Peace-Chuck  
Rollins Stallworth  
Former Head Football Coach  
Hug High School Reno Nevada*

Rollins Stallworth - June 15, 2022 at 02:34 PM

AM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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**Amanda** - June 12, 2022 at 12:05 PM

BS

“ Chuck,  
*It was so appropriate to have first met you at a book signing. Our mutual interest in history and baseball brought each of us to that event and led to a lasting friendship and association on the airport museum board. Your generosity with the scholarship program helped so many local high school students get a head start. For that, you positively affected their lives. I enjoyed our many conversations and was always amazed at how you were able to connect sports and aviation history. I'll miss those conversations and your witty comments.*

*In keeping with the aviator's farewell to those who have Gone West ... "Blue Skies and Tailwinds" my friend. Bill*

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**Bill Streicher** - June 10, 2022 at 05:47 PM

SH

“ Chuck, my bud! :) I always enjoyed spending time with you, you were a joy to be around, that's for sure.... 😊 I am so glad that I got the pleasure of being able to meet you, and best of all being able to be one of the lucky ones not to only just be your care giver but to also be your friend I hope Heaven is just as amazing as you are..... Rest In Paradise sweetheart always and forever ❤️😊 always.....Shannon

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**Shannon** - June 09, 2022 at 03:35 PM

CJ

“ It was such an HONOR to have not only met this man but to have taken care of him. Love his wit and sense of humor

Cindi J.

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Cindi J - June 07, 2022 at 02:47 PM

CH

“ I was blessed to be able to be with you in your home, we would laugh and talk and I would never forget the moments we shared together you are an amazing man and I loved talking sports with you thank you for being you

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Cheryl - June 07, 2022 at 12:14 PM

JQ

“ I will miss visiting you Chuck and being amazed at your vast knowledge of sports, history & other topics you had interest in. You are resting in peace now after putting up a long & courageous fight.

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Jack Quinlevan - June 07, 2022 at 10:09 AM

KA

“ What a blessing to have known you 🙏. You filled my heart with love, joy, laughter, knowledge, and wisdom. I miss you so much and I know you are at peace now. You are now my guardian angel 😇. Thank you Chuck, for being “YOU!”  
#watching the Brewers from the best seat in the house 💙💛

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Karyn - June 07, 2022 at 09:00 AM

SE

“ *Truly an amazing life.  
God Bless You Chuck.  
You were truly one of a kind and your jovial and generous spirit will  
be greatly missed.*

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**sean** - June 07, 2022 at 08:00 AM