



LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC



Source: The Floyd County Library

*A Message from the NAFC Education Foundation
Alumni Coordinator, Sherri McKeen*

Spring is in full swing, and we are steadily approaching the end of the school year. The Floyd County Library, an integral part of our school community, is hosting the NAFC Elementary Schools Art Show. We encourage those living locally to check out the creative work of our young artists being displayed at the New Albany Central Library through May 2nd. Just because school may be out soon, the learning doesn't have to end. Readers of all ages can register starting May 1 for the summer reading program. The "Galactic Adventures!" theme comes from a special exhibit coming to the Floyd County Carnegie Library Cultural Arts Center – you'll want to keep reading to get all the details.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

If you're looking at this newsletter, then maybe the old expression "birds of a feather stick together" applies to you... that is, referring specifically to people who enjoy *reading*. Lots and lots of our friends, especially our schoolmates of yesteryear, like reading a well-written story.

By contrast, far fewer people feel confident about their ability to write something that others would like to read. It's all the more reason that we admire those people who have successfully written... *and* had PUBLISHED... an entire book!

Ronnie Dreistadt FCHS '89 and David West Reynolds NAHS '84 each have a treasure chest of other talents. Ronnie has a history of over twenty years as a museum education director. David's lifework will be on "museum display" at the Floyd County Carnegie Library Cultural Arts Center (formerly called "the Carnegie") this summer.

Both of their stories are worth sharing with a child or grandchild in your family. Even in this era of fifteen second videos, we will need kids who grow up to author books for centuries to come!

Introduction and profiles contributed by Rex Bickers, FCHS '70

From various past issues of Alumni Spotlight, you might already know that we have a fondness for those who like history ([Feb 2023](#)). In some cases, we've profiled people who *made* history ([Sep 2022](#), [Nov 2022](#), [Jul 2023](#)).

**RONNIE DREISTADT
FCHS 1989**

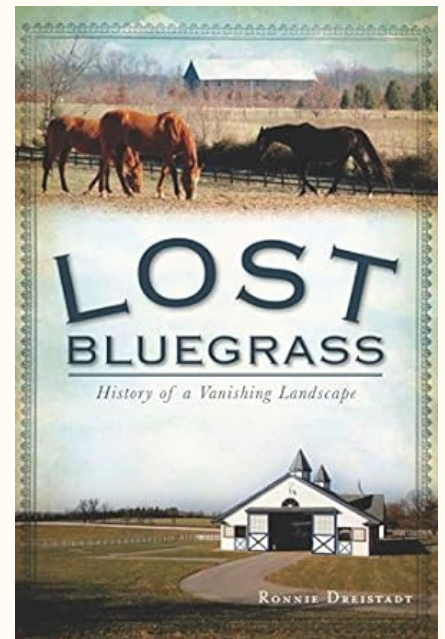


Ronnie Dreistadt left Floyd Central with an appetite for history; it led him to a degree in American History (IU Southeast, 1995). From there, he found a career path that let him dive deep into what he enjoyed. Starting with an entry-level job at Culbertson Mansion, he was soon hired by the Kentucky Derby Museum, in the shadows of the famous Twin Spires. He'll tell you today... when he began, he knew almost *nothing* about horse racing at all. As he learned and advanced, it was clear: becoming the museum's education director is all about storytelling. He has a knack for it and he shared one that's been popular with his FC classmates. It began with one of the many unexpected responsibilities and opportunities he had, working at Churchill Downs.

In 2009, he was actually *in the winner's circle*, setting up the Kentucky Derby trophy (yes, it *is* 14 karats solid gold). He really had to focus, concentrating while TV cameras zoomed in and out. Knocking the trophy over would've been a *big* blunder. Repeatedly, he heard a voice calling out his name. He couldn't pinpoint who it was... until he saw his classmate Mike Olmstead (FCHS '89), working as an on-air reporter that day. They high fived and... in Ronnie's own words... it left him with a "very cool reminder" of what he calls "those vital common roots we share, the treasure of where we came from." It's something important that Ronnie values very much.

In the museum, stories are built from artifacts, photos, and of course, the written word. Visitors need it packaged into bite-sized quantities. His job has prepared him to reach further; it made him eager to tackle writing that goes distinctly beyond a 400-word tableau. Writing a book grew from what he knew.

His first book, (2011) "Lost Bluegrass: The History of a Vanishing Landscape" focuses on Kentucky's historic horse farms; exploring land use management and its role in the state's billion-dollar Thoroughbred industry. His second book, "Wicked Tales From the Kentucky Derby" was published in 2022. It's a collection of ten stories that recount calamities, true crimes and other misfortunes. They help complete the full Derby picture and the culture surrounding it. As "Wicked Tales" was set to go to press, Ronnie felt ready to try something more demanding and more creative, in the world of full-length historical *fiction*. The initial sparks of "River Road" comes from a true story. It's about a murder, its investigation and trial. He's been writing and re-writing for over a year. Now 2024 is the real work... the final steps leading to actual publication.



Ronnie has always relished keeping a finger in several "active pans over the fire." He works for Veneto Collaboratory (Boston), writing experiential tour scripts for organizations nationwide. He also serves as the Education Coordinator at Louisville's Locust Grove, saying he's compelled to be around "old stuff." He and his wife Shellie live in Sellersburg with their three kids. They're enrolled at NAHS (Jacqueline, junior) and Hazelwood (Caleb, grade 8 and Mary Kate, grade 6).

At his Hall of Fame induction (2022), David West Reynolds invoked memories from both Scribner Jr. High and from NAHS. He recalled great teachers, yes, but equally... vital encouragement of his talents, and the invitation to seek adventure, especially thanks to crossing paths (twice) with Mr. Carl Booth (in David's case, he had Mr. Booth both before and after his relocation from Scribner to NAHS).

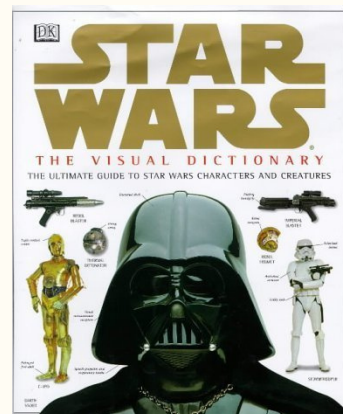
Well before his teen years, David was artistic with mechanical drawing skills that his teachers had never seen in a grade school student. He produced early versions of drawings that he continued to perfect into junior high. Remarkably, he created finalized drafts of a "cutaway" (Star Wars) lightsaber at Scribner! It was so detailed that it was later used by Lucasfilm as the basis of the official lightsaber workings.

He earned double B.A. degrees (1998) at IU Bloomington (paleontology, plus classical and ancient studies), then completed two graduate degrees at the University of Michigan: an M.A. (1992) and his PhD (1996) in classical archeology. He followed up his formal education with a set of life-changing encounters and explorations, most notably in the country of Tunisia.

He trekked from its eastern (Mediterranean) coastline to the western Algerian border. He logged detailed descriptions of six desolate areas; taken together, he found over twenty sites, filmed as (the planet) Tatooine. They appeared in the (original) 1977 Star Wars blockbuster motion picture, and their coordinates had become lost to Lucasfilm. Soon after, David received a stunning offer to work with George Lucas himself, at Skywalker Ranch (located in Marin County, CA).

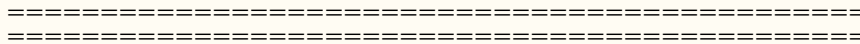
He took part in many Lucasfilm endeavors, but the most tangible piece of David's connection to the Star Wars franchise was his transition to best-selling author, creating ten titles in in the series of Visual Dictionaries and Cross Sections books, published by Dorling Kindersley. His 1999 volume "The Visual Dictionary of Star Wars, Episode I - The Phantom Menace", together with "Star Wars: Episode I - Incredible Cross-Sections" resulted in reaching #1 on the NYTimes best-seller list in July of 1999.

DAVID WEST REYNOLDS
NAHS 1984



No less important were two space exploration titles: “Kennedy Space Center: Gateway to Space” and “Apollo: The Epic Journey to the Moon 1963-1972” (with contributions from lunar mission commanders, Schirra and Cernan). The NASA books represent an inflection point, leading to authorship of other (*non-fiction*) work, including the Hammond Atlas of World Religions, a collaboration with six co-contributors. As a documentary consultant, he jumped from writing *about* exploration... to *becoming* an explorer, engaged in Arctic science on an icebreaker.

In recent years, David has been happy to return to southern Indiana with his wife Khin. He’s assimilated and honed his myriad experiences from the past three decades... forging an inspirational message. It’s at the core of the exhibition, “Star Wars Meets Indiana Jones: the Hero’s Journey of Dr. David West Reynolds” at the Cultural Arts Center in New Albany (opening May 11 and running through August 31). It profiles his entire multifaceted career... with artifacts, Star Wars wardrobe displays and collectibles, combined with the power of words, imagery and videos. Visitors will marvel over a feast that spans his early days, both local and across the Midwest, leaps into cinema’s imaginary worlds, and then the gee-whiz of actual space travel that we’ve witnessed in our lifetimes. With sprinklings of dinosaurs and Ice Age fossil cave deposits, you’ll find surprises ‘round every corner.



Source: The Floyd County Library

May 11 will be a big and exciting day for the Floyd County Library with the kickoff of the summer reading programs. and, at the Cultural Arts Center, the opening of the most important exhibition of the year. The Cultural Arts Center anticipates that admission to the exhibition will need to be capacity controlled. Timed admissions will be assigned on a first come, first served basis, between 11 am and 5 pm. Admission is free.





Is there someone you want to nominate for the 2024 Royal Court? The 2022 and 2023 Alumni Royal Courts were such a success, and we will continue this tradition again in the fall.

Each Royal Court included eight prestigious alumni with four from each high school. These individuals competed for the crown by raising funds to support NAFC teachers and students. Thanks to the generosity of the candidates and our community, more than \$95,000 has been raised to further the mission of the NAFC Education Foundation through our Royal Court competitions.

Do you know an NAFC alumnus who would be an excellent champion for our students and teachers? Please send recommendations by June 1st to Sherri McKeen, Alumni Coordinator, at smckeen@nafcs.org.



When alumni donate to the New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation, you are investing in the success of all NAFCS students and educators. Alumni donors become Legacy NAFC members through an annual donation.

Make your impact today and become a Legacy NAFC Alumni Member.

JOIN NOW

The New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that works in conjunction with NAFC Schools to provide privately funded supplemental resources and programs to students, teachers, and schools. Legacy NAFC is the official alumni support group of the NAFC Education Foundation and New Albany Floyd County Schools.

www.NAFCEdFoundation.org/alumni

For more information, contact contact Sherri McKeen at smckeen@nafcs.org or 812-542-2242 at the NAFC Education Foundation.



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