

The
PLUCK
of the
IRISH

10 Notre Dame sports figures
who made a difference



By Jim Hayden

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A unique anthology of 10 individuals who influenced, or were influenced by the University of Notre Dame make up the new, inspirational book, *The Pluck of the Irish: 10 Notre Dame sports figures who made a difference*.

But it is not just about athletes. As noted in the second Foreword by the award-winning *Los Angeles Times* sports editor **Bill Dwyre**:

“Some of them are famous athletes – a quarterback who broke records, a running back who was a Vietnam war hero, a basketball star who pioneered race relations. There’s a story about a hall-of-fame coach, a swimmer whose accident almost left her paralyzed, a broadcaster who wasn’t good enough to play sports, but excels at describing them. There are stories about Pulitzer Prize-winning authors, who explained what happened on the playing field and also why.”

But the first profile “is the story of a priest who made sure that everyone at Notre Dame was a good person as well as a good athlete, coach, or teacher; a leader, who made a difference at his university, and all over the world.” That would be the Father **Theodore Hesburgh**, who served as the president at Notre Dame over a period of extraordinary change for 35 years from 1952-87.

Written by **Jim Hayden**, himself a Notre Dame graduate, the book is aimed at middle-grade readers and up and is a fun and enjoyable read for anyone who wants to understand the positive impact that an institution like Notre Dame can have during a crucial, formative period of their lives ... and how students, staff and administrators can have a profound impact on the university they attend.

Muffet McGraw, the coach of Notre Dame’s astonishing 2018 NCAA women’s basketball championship team is profiled. Wrote Hayden, “If you’re not on Muffet’s team, you wish you were” and details her journey as a high school point guard from Pottsville, Pennsylvania to professional basketball and – like a point guard – being in charge of teaching championship basketball to young women in South Bend, Indiana.

So is the son of a railroad boilermaker from Connellsville, Pennsylvania who came back to Notre Dame after serving in World War II because it “was a place where good things happen to you.”

Johnny Lujack became the Heisman Trophy winner and won letters in four different sports.

Then there was the youngster from Green Bay, Wisconsin who described himself as “distinguished by flaming hair, milk-bottle glasses, and the two left feet of a nonathlete.” He wanted to go to Notre Dame because a friend of his did, and was studying the fascinating world of journalism. The “nonathlete” became the intermediary for millions who learned about sports from the typewriter of **Red Smith**, one of the finest sportswriters who ever lived.

The Pluck of the Irish opens with a tribute to **Harry Ornest**, whose family’s contribution made this book possible. Ornest is best remembered as the owner who rescued the St. Louis Blues of the National Hockey League in the 1980s, but who had a lifetime of success in managing teams and enjoying sports of all kinds.

It finishes with a dozen facts and anecdotes about Notre Dame, including – on page 150 – who wrote the “greatest of all fight songs,” the Notre Dame Victory March. A great way to end an easy-to-enjoy book that not only informs, but like any good teacher, also provides inspiration and lessons which can be applied in the future by students of any age.

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Fun Fighting Irish Facts and Tales

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☛ **ABOUT HALEY SCOTT:**

“Haley Scott's redemptive story remains one of the most remarkable not only in Notre Dame athletics, but also in the history of the University. Her ability to battle her way past the original diagnosis of likely paralysis to eventually return to the pool qualifies as one of the great motivational tales featuring Fighting Irish sports figures. She continues to tell her story today in an effort to influence others who fight against tough odds – and Jim Hayden relates her inspiring journey perfectly.”

~ *John Heisler, Senior Associate Athletics Director, University of Notre Dame*

☛ **ABOUT GEORGE BLAHA:**

“George is a Michigan institution. For more than 40 years, people’s lives have revolved around what George has to say about the Pistons. He has his own signature style. It is never 7 minutes and 38 seconds left to play. It is 7 and 38. He called tremendous games about tremendous payers, and when the Pistons won that ’89 title, it capped his career.”

~ *Kelly Tripucka, Notre Dame All-American basketball player (1977-81); 10-year player in the National Basketball Association (1981-91) and Pistons television analyst for FSN Detroit (1993-2001).*

☛ ABOUT TOMMY HAWKINS:

“Tommy Hawkins was a superb communicator. He enjoyed several extraordinary careers – basketball, broadcasting and as a sports executive – while he lived an exemplary life for inclusion. Tommy represented the Dodgers with class and was a significant contributor to the Dodger organization.”

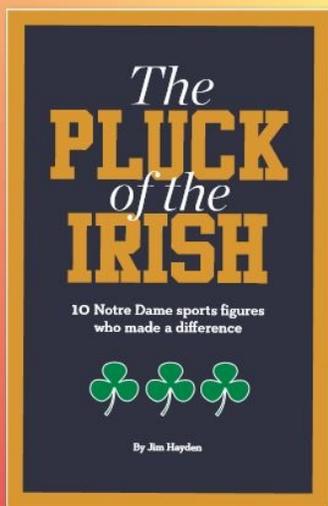
~ *Peter O'Malley, President, Los Angeles Dodgers, 1970-1998*

☛ ABOUT RED SMITH:

“It was the Super Bowl, 1981, in New Orleans. I was seated in the press box next to Red Smith. He was an incredible sports writer. I was a sports writer. I didn't care who won the game. Getting seated next to Smith was my victory. We talked. We bonded. He was from Wisconsin. I was from Wisconsin. He went to Notre Dame. I went to Notre Dame.

“After the game, he made his way to the interview area, a frail man navigating the post-game quote-gathering circus. He was slow to return to the press box. I worried about him. When he returned, he looked frail, feeble, winded. I couldn't imagine him writing anything good at that point. The next day, I read his column. It was wonderful, like eating whipped cream.”

~ *Bill Dwyre, 1996 Associated Press Sports Editors Red Smith Award winner, Los Angeles Times Sports Editor (1981-2006) and columnist (2006-16).*



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THE PLUCK OF THE IRISH – An intimate look at the men and women whose deeds and exploits have contributed to the near mythological history that is now Notre Dame Athletics. Father Theodore Hesburgh 🍀 Johnny Lujack 🍀 Haley Scott DeMaria 🍀 Red Smith 🍀 Muffet McGraw 🍀 George Blaha 🍀 Pete Duranko 🍀 George Dohrmann 🍀 Tommy Hawkins 🍀 Rocky Bleier. Notre Dame Legends all!

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About Author Jim Hayden

Jim Hayden graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts. He has an Masters in Business Administration from Central Michigan University. Some of the subjects of *The Pluck of the Irish* and several of its sources were his classmates at Notre Dame.

A former senior partner and creative director at Ogilvy & Mather in New York and Los Angeles, Hayden earned more than two dozen national and international creative awards. His clients included Mattel, American Express, Dollywood and Paramount Pictures, and many others.

He decided to become a free agent in 1997 and as a freelance copywriter, he has created and supported campaigns for 20th Century Fox, Gensler Architects, Jaaks Pacific, Microsoft, Universal City Hollywood and many more.

He conceived of the London Underground line of youth-oriented fashion, obtained the necessary approvals and is the worldwide licensing agent for the British fashion line known as “The Underground.”

For many years, Hayden has been the weekly voice of world, sports and national news on the Braille Institute’s network for the blind and reading disabled.

He was born and raised in Shepherd, Michigan, but grew up in New York, and currently resides in Beverly Hills, California.