

# Pat Fellingner

## Altoona Catholic great found success, happiness at Indiana

By NEIL RUDEL

Nancy Fellingner only wishes her late husband could be here to accept his Hall of Fame award.

After all, she said, he always loved coming home.

Pat Fellingner was a standout football and basketball player at Altoona Catholic, graduating in 1952. He went on to become a three-year starting end in football from 1953-56 at Indiana University, where he met Nancy in a Spanish class.

The couple married in 1956, remained in the Bloomington area and raised five daughters. Pat made his career in business, first as a pharmaceutical representative and then as an owner of a beer distributor, before dying of a sudden heart attack caused by arterial sclerosis in 1987.

He was 52.

"I always felt kind of bad that we settled here because in Altoona, everybody knew Pat," Nancy said from their home in Huntingdon, Ind. "I think it was hard for him not to go back to Pennsylvania. He was so proud to be from Altoona, and he loved his hometown."

It loved him, too.

Altoona Catholic and Bishop Guilfoyle High School historian John Conlon didn't hesitate when asked to describe Pat's athletic exploits.

"If I were to list the five best to ever come out of Altoona Catholic, Pat would be on the list," Conlon said. "He was great."

Though Fellingner chose to focus on football, many felt he was equally talented in basketball.

"He was 6-foot-3, and that was big at that time," said former teammate and best friend Russ McConville. "His rebounding was his strong point. I thought he was just as good in basketball as football. He had an all-around game."

McConville remembers Fellingner being inserted into a key basketball game at Cresson as a sophomore.

"They had a great team, too, and we wouldn't have won without him," McConville, who went on to

play basketball at Bowling Green, said. "The pressure didn't bother him at all."

Ron Rickens was a standout at Cresson who went to college at Michigan State. He played against Pat in high school, and the two hooked up in the Big Ten.

"Pat was a good athlete — no question about that," Rickens, a guard and linebacker, said. "In high school, he caught a touchdown pass to beat us. I still remember that he was a focus of our scouting report and how our coaches were high on him.

And then when I went to Michigan State, we played at Indiana, and I got a chance to visit with him when we got to town on Friday, and we related back to our high school days. He was a personable individual and we became friends."

Conlon added, "Pat was a great player and a great kid."

Fellingner, ironically, will be inducted with Bill Saller, a former teammate and fellow 1952 grad. They were known as the "twin towers" while playing for Altoona Catholic and in the postseason tournaments around town that were popular then.

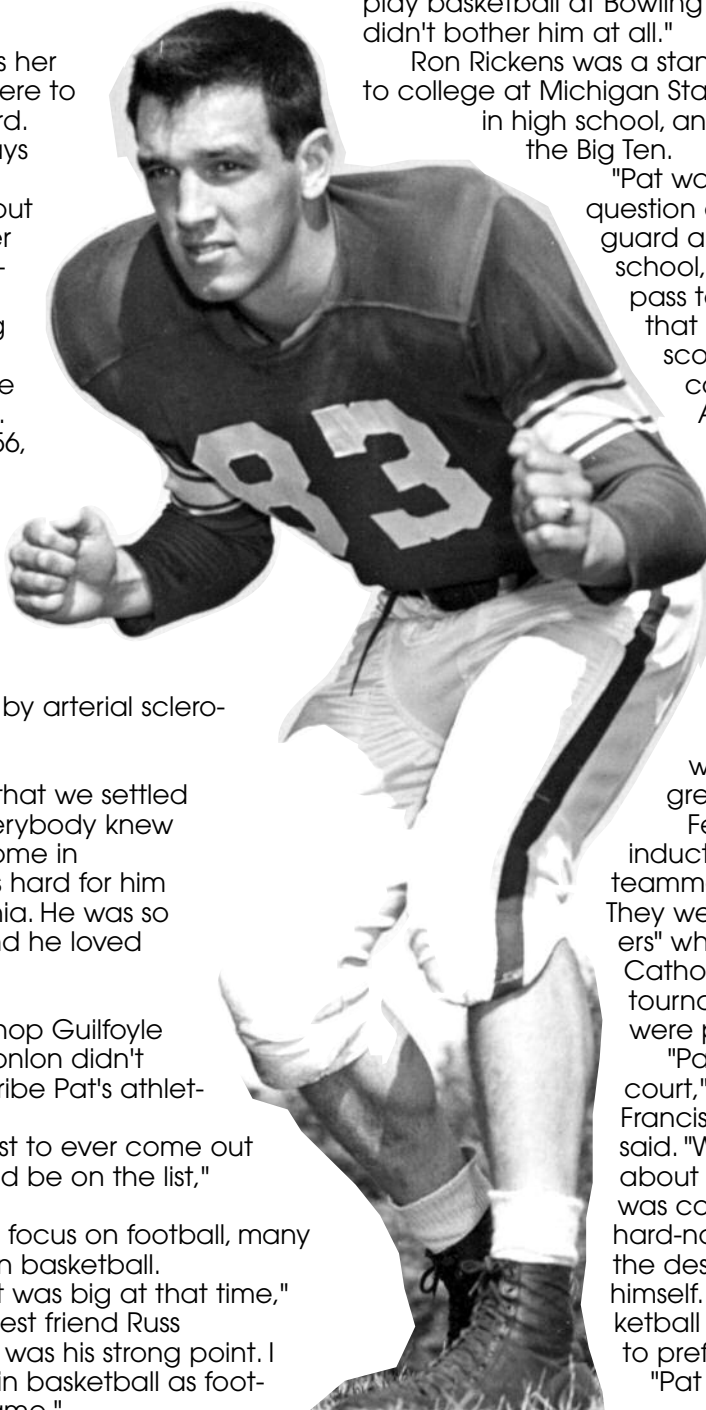
"Pat was intense on the court," Saller, a starter on St. Francis' NIT teams in 1954 and '55, said. "What I remember most about him is his perseverance. He was confident, and he was a hard-nosed athlete. He just had the desire to win and to better himself. He was going to play basketball in college, but he seemed to prefer football.

"Pat was top-shelf."

Fellingner also played baseball, golf and he was a handball champion in the Bloomington

area, having played two days before his death.

"When he died, people didn't realize how many



**Following his days at Indiana, Pat was in two NFL camps.**



**Pat and wife Nancy with daughters Mariann, Kathy, Michelle, Amy and Lynn on the way.**

things he did," Nancy said. "They were surprised he was in the Reserves and he'd joke, 'think about it, I live with six women.' He had a good sense of humor, and he was so modest."

The Fellingners didn't have any boys, but Pat's influence rubbed off on his girls.

"His daughters were real athletic and he more or less made them take tennis lessons and try every other sport under the sun," Nancy said. "They loved it."

The IU football team, then as now, struggled during Fellingner's three seasons. He played in the North-South Classic and was

signed by the Philadelphia Eagles. Fellingner played in a couple of NFL exhibition games before a military commitment forced him to leave the team.

"That was really sad because he was so disappointed that the Army wouldn't give him (an extension)," Nancy Fellingner said. "He had a two-year commitment and he felt sure he'd be able to fulfill it after he had a chance to play pro football."

When he returned from the Army in 1958, Fellingner tried again with the Houston Texans (now the Kansas City Chiefs) of

the old American Football League, but an injury ended his hopes.

Fellingner's father, Joseph, played semi-pro football. He was close friends with Fred DelGrosso and he later started a family food brokerage business.

In addition to his wife and five daughters, Fellingner is survived by a sister, Delores Koeck, and brothers Dick, who lives in Altoona and Mike, who lives in State College.

"We'd come back about three times a year," Nancy said. "We'd bring all the girls in the station wagon, and we'd do things in the different mountains and we'd go to the park. He loved Pennsylvania."



## *Fellinger bio*

**Sport:** Football.

**Hometown:** Altoona.

**College:** Indiana University.

**Hall of Fame achievement:**

Three-year starter for the Hoosiers.

**Current residence:** Deceased.

Widow Nancy will accept the Hall of Fame award.

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