

INDUCTEE PROFILE

Center of attention

Slogik's presence aided title runs at Altoona, WVU

By John Hartsock

Altoona Mirror

Standing 6-foot-3 during her days at Altoona Area High School in the mid-1980s, Tracey (Slogik) Biesecker enjoyed a height advantage over most opposing players.

That didn't necessarily translate into the game being easy for her, though.

As a high school senior, Slogik was one of the hardest workers on Altoona's first PIAA Class AAAA state championship team in 1986 that racked up a perfect 31-0 record and defeated Downingtown for the gold medal at Hershey-Park Arena.

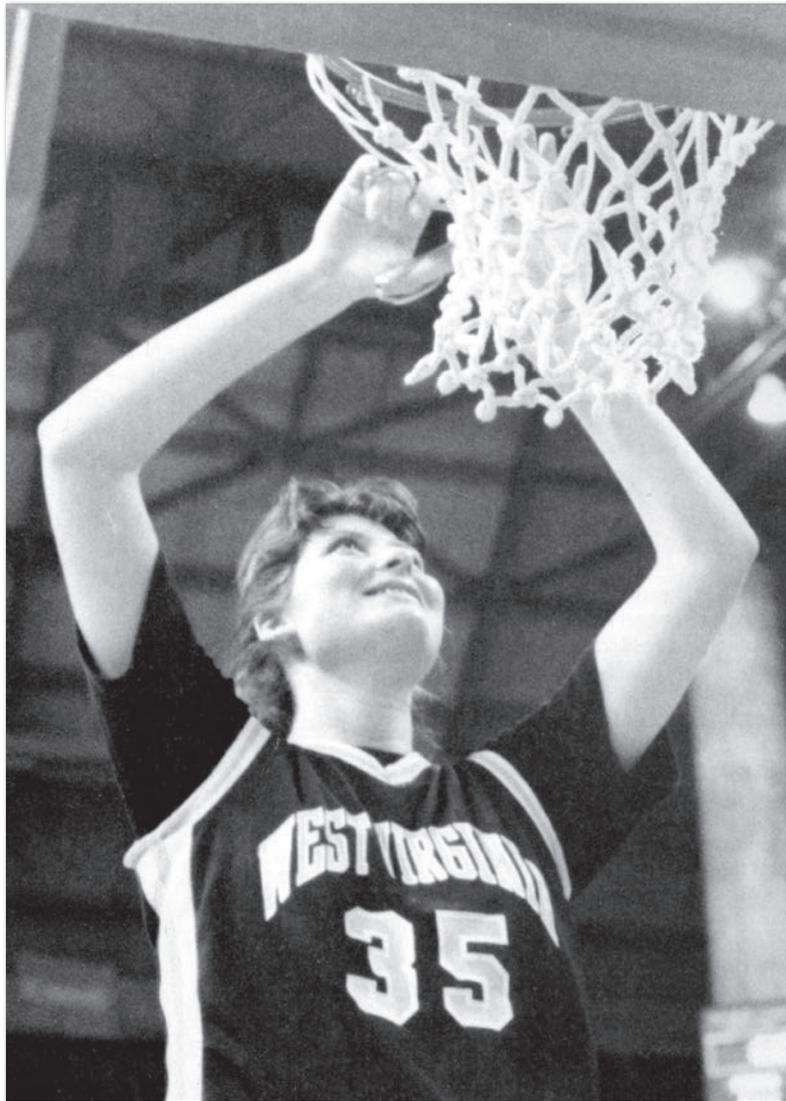
That Altoona team was also named the nation's mythical national championship team by the USA Today newspaper.

Art Taneyhill, who was the coach of Altoona's four PIAA title teams in 1986, 1988, 1994 and 1996, said Slogik benefited from her work ethic as much as from her height.

"At the time, there weren't too many big kids her size playing basketball in the state, so that gave her a distinct advantage and it certainly helped us," Taneyhill said. "But she had to work very hard to get herself ready to play for us, because we were a good team.

"She had to put a lot of time in on rebounding, and on shooting around the basket," Taneyhill said. "A lot of kids have her size but aren't willing to pay the price. She was, and she helped us to an undefeated season and a national championship."

Slogik also parlayed her skills into a scholarship to West Virginia University, where she helped the Lady Mountaineers to a berth in the NCAA tournament as a junior in 1989.



Tracey was a four-year starter at West Virginia and helped lead the Lady Mountaineers to the Atlantic 10 championship in 1989.

Her accomplishments have earned her induction into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

"I worked hard, I always had a basketball in my hands — whether it was doing drills, running, jumping rope, shooting, or playing pickup basketball," Slogik said. "I was very passionate about it, I loved it. It did not feel like work. I wanted to improve myself."

Taneyhill was a demanding coach with his players whose approach reaped good dividends. When Slogik first arrived with the program as a sophomore, Taneyhill noticed that she lacked the necessary arch on her shots.

So he stood behind her at practices, holding a broom, forcing Slogik to elevate her shots.

"In the beginning, she wouldn't arch the basketball," Taneyhill remembered. "She thought, because she was so big, that she could just turn and shoot. I got a broom, and I would stand behind her, and sometimes, when she wouldn't jump high enough, I just blocked her

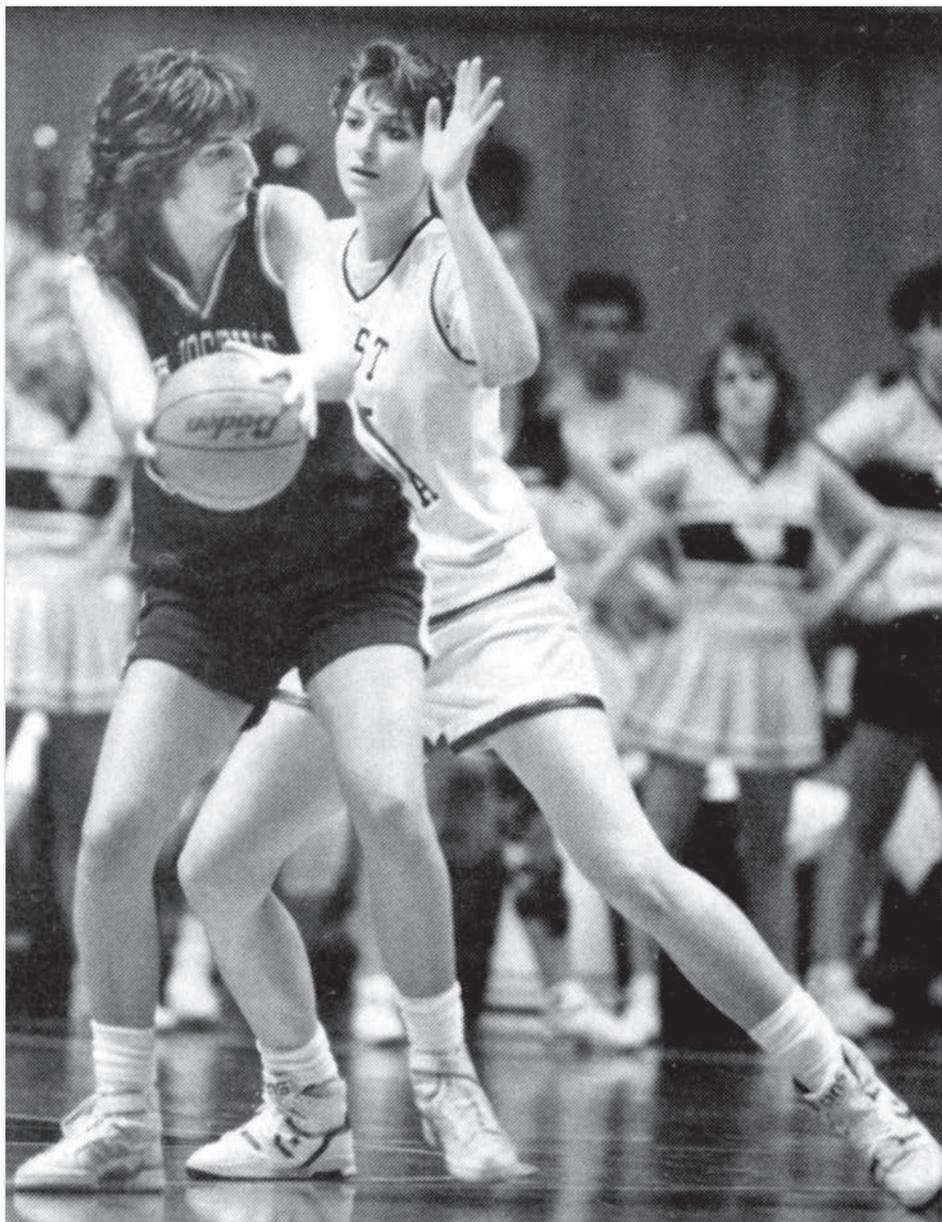
shots. She was a very smart girl, and she learned."

Slogik remembered Taneyhill's tactics with the broom fondly.

"As a tall person, I shot differently than if I had been shorter," she said. "He really helped me elevate my shooting by using that little trick. He was an excellent coach with shooting."

Along with her rebounding and inside scoring prowess, Slogik helped the Altoona team by drawing double and triple teams from opposing defenses and her knack of being

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Her 6-foot-4 frame and defensive prowess allowed Tracey to play a season in Switzerland following her WVU career.

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able to kick the ball out from the paint to an open teammate.

"I think that Tracey faced a ton of pressure from the moment that she stepped in the Altoona gym," said Slogik's lifelong friend and Altoona teammate, Jennifer (Shingler) Hansberry, who was a member of the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame's induction class in 2016. "There were not too many people 6-3 playing back then, but she handled it with composure and grace. She was double and triple-teamed, especially in her senior year, but she always had the ability to kick the ball out to an open teammate. She had kind

of a quiet intensity about her, and she was a leader."

Shingler Hansberry, now a Pittsburgh attorney who herself went on from Altoona High School to play collegiately for the University of Pittsburgh women's basketball program, was chosen by Slogik as a presenter for this year's Hall of Fame induction.

"She had a high IQ for basketball," Hansberry said. "She was great at the inside-out game, she was a great foul shooter, and she had a very pretty shot with a nice shooting touch. Without Tracey, the 1986 team would have been a very good team that would not have won a state championship. With Tracey, the 1986 team was a great team that did win a state championship."

Shingler Hansberry is honored to be Slogik's Hall of Fame presenter.

"She's not just a teammate — she's a lifelong friend," Hansberry said. "We played on the same junior high team at Roosevelt, the same high school team at Altoona, and we played against each other all four years in college when I was at Pitt, and she was at West Virginia."

Slogik had many offers to play collegiately but chose West Virginia and never looked back. A four-year starter at WVU, she helped the Lady Mountaineers to a 24-8 record and a berth in the NCAA tournament in the 1988-89 season.

After winning the Atlantic 10 Conference tournament, WVU defeated Western Kentucky in the first round of the NCAA tourney before being eliminated by Virginia in the second round.

"A couple weeks before the Virginia game, I broke my hand in practice, and I played with a cast on my hand. It really limited what I could do," Slogik said. "But it was awesome to make it that far. I have no complaints."

Slogik captained the WVU team in her senior season, when she averaged double figures in scoring.



Slogik bio

Sport: Basketball
High school: Altoona
College: West Virginia

Hall of Fame achievement: Tracey was a four-year starter (1986-90) at West Virginia and the team captain as a senior. The Mountaineers won the Atlantic 10 for the first time in 1989. She played one season of professional basketball in Switzerland and helped lead Altoona to its first PIAA title in 1986, when the Lady Lions were ranked No. 1 by USA Today.

Current residence: Altoona



Tracey teamed with 2016 inductee Jennifer Shingler to lead the Altoona Lady Lions to their first PIAA championship in 1986.

She played under Kittie Blake-more, who started WVU's program in 1973 and won more than 300 games in 19 seasons.

"Tracey was certainly very important to our program," Blakemore, now retired and living in Virginia, said. "She was one of my taller players, for one thing, and you didn't find that many women as tall as she was (back then). It was wonderful to have someone as talented and could play basketball as well as she did. I was very happy to have her on my team."

Blakemore called Slogik "very coachable, one of our better players and a very im-

portant part of that team. I haven't seen her in such a long time, but I'm very glad she's being inducted into your (Blair County) hall of fame."

After graduating from WVU, Slogik played one year of professional basketball in Switzerland and was invited to a tryout for the Women's National Basketball Association's (WNBA's) inaugural season in 1995.

She declined the invitation, because the timing just wasn't right.

"I had been out of basketball for a couple of years," she said. "If it had been right out of college, I would have given it a shot."

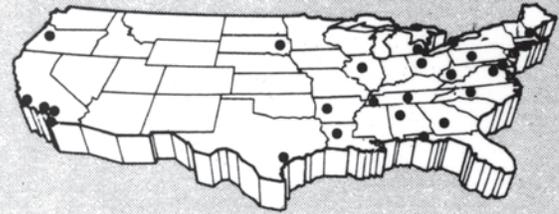
Slogik and her husband, Curtis, are the parents of two grown daughters, Natalie, 22, and Alayna, 18. Slogik, who earned her bachelor's degree from West Virginia and her master's degree in counseling from Penn State, has been a school counselor at the Altoona High School for the past two decades.

"I work with phenomenal people — the other counselors, teachers and administrators," she said, "and I really love working with the kids."

Slogik was a "bit caught off guard and surprised" at her upcoming induction.

"I'm humbled and immensely appreciative of this honor," she said. "I am so excited and proud to be considered in the same company of so many amazing athletes from our area."

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL FINAL SUPER 25 WHERE THE TEAMS ARE



1 Altoona, Pa. (31-0)

Last week: 1. National champions were led by seniors Jennifer Shingler (16 points a game) and Tracy Slogik. Coach Art Taneyhill's team won the Class AAAA state championship. Sophomore Debbie Taneyhill, the coach's daughter, averaged eight assists per game.

2 Shelbyville, Tenn. (39-0)

Last week: 2. Won Class AAA state title. Jill Mitchell averaged 17 points a game, Angela Moorehead 23 points and 11 rebounds and Jena Jennings 16 points, six rebounds and three assists. State runner-up in 1985 and 1984.

3 Brookings, S.D. (23-0)

Last week: 3. Won Class AA title. South Dakota Player of the Year Renae Sallquist, a 6-3 senior, averaged 17.1 points and 10.1 rebounds. Amy Mickelson averaged 18 points and 11 rebounds. Brookings has 48 consecutive wins.

4 Dawson, Ga. Terrell County (27-0)

Last week: 4. Won Class AA title. All-state selections Nancy Marshall, a 5-11 junior, and 6-4 center Tammye Jenkins averaged 18 and 20 points a game.

5 Nashua, N.H. (24-0)

Last week: 5. New England's top team won 46 consecutive games and its second consecutive Class L state championship. Junior forward Stephanie Byrd averaged 16.3 points a game and junior forward Celeste Lavoie averaged 15.8.

6 San Diego Point Loma (31-1)

Last week: 6. Won third consecutive state championship and is 93-1 in three years. Three-time all-state selection Terri Mann, a 6-2 junior, averaged 24 points and 14 rebounds.

7 Pasadena, Calif. Muir (29-1)

Last week: 7. Finished the season as state Southern Section Class 4A runner-up. Handed Point Loma its only loss, 68-50. Muir was led by the Jordan twins, both 6-2 seniors. Pauline averaged 24 points and 13.7 rebounds and Geannine averaged 15.7 points and 12.3 rebounds.

8 Washington, D.C. H.D. Woodson (29-1)

Last week: 8. Coach Bob Headen's team won its fourth consecutive Inter-high League title. Tanderia Green, a 5-11 senior center and all-metropolitan area player, averaged 22.5 points, 15 rebounds and three blocked shots a game. Two-time area selection Kammy Brown, a 5-9 senior, averaged 18 points and eight assists.

9 Natchitoches, La. Central (36-0)

Last week: 9. Won Class AAAA state title. Shantel Hardison, a 5-8 junior guard, was tournament MVP and a three-time all-state selection. She averaged 15 points, five assists, five steals and eight rebounds a game.

10 Tipp City, Ohio Bethel (27-0)

Last week: 10. Two-time Class A player of the year Kelly Lyons, a 6-3 senior center, averaged 31 points, 14.5 rebounds and led team to first Class A state championship. Third-team all-state player Sandy Kobelak averaged 13 points a game, and Gina Soncarato averaged 13.5 points.

(Courtesy USA Today 1986)