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IWU Alumnus Dave Kindred Reflects on Past, Present and Future of Journalism

May 31, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Pulitzer Prize nominee Dave Kindred, '63, returned to his alma mater last month to share five decades of journalism experience with Illinois Wesleyan students in the May Term course Editorial Writing and Reviewing.

An English major during his years at IWU, Kindred still recalls his days of sports editing for *The Argus* and working his way through school at the local newspaper, *The Pantagraph*. He has since become a legend in the sports journalism world, writing for respected newspapers *The Louisville Courier-Journal* and *The Washington Post*. Although Kindred received the 1991 Red Smith Award for lifetime achievement in sports journalism and was elected to the 2006 National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association Hall of Fame, he regards his 1998 Illinois Wesleyan's Distinguished Alumnus Award as one of the highlights of his life.



Sports writer Dave Kindred conducting a May Term writing class with Matt McShane '13.

Kindred lived through the journalism revolution, witnessing the highs and lows throughout the years. "At *The Washington Post*, I wrote four or five times per week from everywhere in the world on every major sporting event, every time trying to make the column the best one I ever wrote," said Kindred, a hopeless romantic for print journalism. "That era, the late '70s to the late '80s, was the newspaper world's golden era, every newspaper flush with money and ambition. It was a great, great ride, perhaps never to happen again."

The author of eight books, Kindred describes how the paper has changed with the digital age in his latest, "Morning Miracle: A Great Newspaper Fights for Its Life," which provides an inside look at *The Washington Post* at the height of its glory.

"Journalism is in danger," said Kindred. "If news organizations must continue to cut costs, primarily by dumping staff, inevitably the quality of journalism will suffer along with a debasement of its values and ideals."

Kindred admitted he does not know how the industry will make it through the Internet revolution. "Someone must find a way to make the kind of money that enables major metropolitan newspapers and television networks to keep the full staffs of reporters, editors, and producers necessary to do the demanding work of reporting the news," he said. "If the people of journalism's golden age perfected the craft, it's up to the new generation of journalists to re-invent it for a digital age."

Kindred's class, which focused on column-writing styles and techniques, gave that new generation access to the golden age experience by using Skype to connect students with respected journalists like Mary Schmich of *The Chicago Tribune*, Gene Weingarten of *The Washington Post* and Bill Plaschke of *The Los Angeles Times* and ESPN.

Aware of the challenge journalists now face to re-structure the industry, Kindred emphasized how essential it is for students to adapt in an ever-changing field. "Certainly, I embrace the full range of technological changes. No one should try to hold back that tide," said Kindred, who has a Twitter account and now writes for *Golf Digest* magazine, both in print and online, as well as online for the National Sports Journalism Center. "If I were 20 years old again, I'd be mastering every fancy new tool in the box: audio, video, podcasts, tweets and whatever is next."

And while some say it is foolish for young people to enter a field rapidly approaching its expiration date, Kindred believes the business is far from dead—after all, people will always crave news. According to him, instead of clinging to hard-copy

newspapers, good journalists should abandon their fear of technological change and embrace new developments that can work in their favor.

Kindred's final words of advice reveal he remains a true English major at heart. "Read everything, write all the time," he said. "Remember the words of our fellow Illinoisan, Abe Lincoln: 'I will study and prepare myself, and when the time comes I will be ready.'"

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