

# Looking Back: Former Freeporter compiles list of local heroes

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Freeport, Ill. —



*Illustration 1: W.T. Rawleigh poses with two of his grandchildren at the statue of Abraham Lincoln, the debater, at Taylor Park. Rawleigh donated the statue to the City of Freeport. Rawleigh is considered one of the top local heroes. Provided*

included many military veterans who gave their lives in the service of their country. Bike did not go deeply into information on all of the local heroes, but merely listed them and their general contribution. Some of his listings demand further information. Of course Bike includes the obvious heroes of local history such as William “Tutty” Baker, Freeport’s founder, and others such as industrialist W.T. Rawleigh and social reformer Jane Addams, both of whom are widely known. But Bike wanted to also include on his list those less touted. So here is a sampling of those Bike acclaimed as local heroes, listed in alphabetical order:

Robert Bike of Eugene, Oregon, a Freeport High School graduate, has compiled a list of “famous Freeporters” which contains some names you and I would not recognize and some who might surprise us.

Bike says he is “a prolific researcher and writer” who is concerned with people from this city who have made great achievements but have gotten little recognition. He said he has already written about quite a number of them.

Sometime back, Bike e-mailed me his list and some of those names and achievements are news to me who has thought in the 30 years I have been involved in local history I had heard of them all. Not so.

Let’s explore Bike’s list which he says he is still working on. He doesn’t go into much detail as to the way most of the people have achieved fame, but maybe some of you readers can fill in details. We can’t list them all but will try to pick out some of the most intriguing.

Bike included native Freeporters “those who have had the good fortune to be born in Freeport but were then snatched away by their parents and never returned,” as well as those who “came from somewhere and did their life’s work in Freeport or did something remarkable there,” and those who “lived much of their lives elsewhere and retired to Freeport, died and are buried here.” He also

## The List in Part

Dan Balz whom Bike identifies as a columnist for the Washington Post and author of “The Battle for America 2008: The Story of an Extraordinary Election” is one of the first on the list. Bike said he had read the book “and it’s pretty good.” Balz has also written “Storming the Gates: Protest Politics and the Republican Revival.”



*Illustration 2: Long time Freeport Fire Chief John Rodemeier is standing (right) at the old City Hall in 1885. These public servants were often overlooked as local heroes. Provided*

Games,” Bike stated.

“Dan has worked for the Post as National Editor, Political Editor and White House correspondent,” Bike notes. “He frequently appears on television as a guest expert on Meet the Press and Washington Week.” Bike adds that Balz was an athlete as a Freeport High School Pretzel in 1964. (I personally saw Balz just days ago reporting on network television.)

Horatio Chapin Burchard served as a U.S. Congressman from 1869 until 1879, after having ascended from the Illinois legislature.

Bike names Carl Cain in red letters adding that Cain grew up in Freeport and was a top basketball hero here. He went on to become “Winner of a Gold Medal in Basketball at the 1956 Olympic

Games,” Bike stated. McKinley “Deacon” Davis was also a local basketball great and joined the famous Harlem Globe Trotters. He went on to excel as a social worker.

William Dole Eckert became a Lieutenant General in the United States Air Force and later was named Commissioner of Major League Baseball.

Clark Eichelberger became Executive Director of the League of Nations Associations and is credited with convincing world leaders that a United Nations should be formed. Eichelberger was a consultant to several U.S. Presidents and the League of Nations Secretariat. This man also was named a delegate to the 1945 conference in San Francisco which led to the formation of the United Nations. Eichelberger served on the committee which created the first working draft of the Charter of the United Nations and authored several books about the organization.

Roger Hayes who played guitar in several Freeport bands went on to write a book, “On Point, A Rifleman’s Year in the Boonies 1967-1968” which became a textbook for the U.S. Army War College.

Art “Doc” Hillebrand was named to the College Football Hall of Fame. Homer Hillebrand became a Major League baseball player.

## Politics, Sports and Business

Alexander Cameron Hunt was one of the first 25 students in Freeport schools in 1837 and became the city’s second mayor serving in 1856 and 1857.

Preston Pearson, a basketball and football star at Freeport High School, went on to play basketball at the University of Illinois and played running back and receiver in the NFL for the Baltimore Colts, the Pittsburg Steelers and the Dallas Cowboys. He played in 5 Super Bowls.

Bike said Pearson scored 33 touchdowns during his 14 seasons with the NFL.

Bike names W.T. Rawleigh as a Freeport entrepreneur, industrialist and philanthropist. William Avery Rockefeller, father of billionaire John D. Rockefeller, attains the list without mention of the scandal of his living in Freeport under a false name and in a bigamist marriage.

Bike names Adolph Rupp, Freeport High School basketball coach who coached at the University of Kentucky and was named to the Basketball Hall of Fame.



*Illustration 3: Robert Bike*

### **Military Heroes**

Nathan Salisbury, a soldier, actor and playwright was co- owner of the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show which traveled throughout the country putting on exhibitions.

Three Schofields were noted for their military exploits. Charles Brewster Schofield, was an Indian fighter who "just missed Custer's Last Stand." George Wheeler Schofield and John McAlister Schofield both served as Union generals during the Civil War. John went on to win the Medal of Honor and become Secretary of War and Commander of the Army. He was superintendent at West Point Academy and was an author.

John Wilson Shaffer was a Civil War General and became Governor of Utah.

Ted Snyder was named to the American Hall of Fame as a lyricist and composer. Clyde Southwick was a professional baseball player. Jack Warhop was a Major League baseball player.

Bike of course names Spencer Tracy who he states appeared in 74 films winning two Oscars for Best Actor and nine nominations for that honor.

Bike named George Zipf as a professor at Harvard University and an author.

We've skipped many on Bike 's long list. The military heroes were too numerous to mention here.

There are doubtless more of those achievers who could be mentioned. If Robert Bike comes up with more we'll let you know. He asks, though, that those who have their own suggestions of local unsung heroes to feel free to e-mail him at robertbike@comcast.net "and" he says, "tell me why."

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