

# Knight's 'My Story' is also His Story

Huntington native Bob Hammel  
writes the coach's words in  
long-awaited book

By PAUL SIEGFRIED  
Sports Editor

**B**ob Hammel expected to be in the headlines this month, just not this way.

Hammel, a Huntington native and author of a number of books about Indiana University basketball and coach Bob Knight, was preparing for the much-anticipated release of "Knight: My Story," the book he co-wrote with the longtime Hoosier and now-Texas Tech coach. He

## BOB HAMMEL

### PERSONAL

Born Oct. 6, 1936, in Huntington  
Graduated, Huntington High School, 1954  
Wife Julie. Children Dr. Richard Hammel, Jane Hammel.  
Two granddaughters.

### NEWSPAPER CAREER

Huntington Herald-Press, 1954-63  
Peru Daily Tribune, 1963-64  
Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, 1964  
Kokomo Morning Times, 1964-65  
Indianapolis News, 1965-66  
Bloomington Herald-Telephone / Herald-Times, 1966-1996

### PREVIOUS BOOKS

Glory of Old IU, 1999	Beyond the Brink, 1987
Silver Knight, 1997	The Champs, 1981
Hoosiers: Classified, 1997	NCAA All the Way, 1976
A Banner Year at Indiana, 1993	Knight With the Hoosiers, 1975
Super Scout, 1992	

### SELECTED HONORS

Indiana Sportswriter of the Year (17 times)  
Curt Gowdy Award, National Basketball Hall of Fame, 1995  
Silver Medal, Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, 1996  
U.S. Basketball Writers Hall of Fame, 1990  
Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame, 1997  
Indiana Sportswriters and Broadcasters Hall of Fame, 1998

any of it," says Hammel of his collapse. "They got me off some medication, so I feel a little bit weak. But it's not too bad. I'm just glad to be on two feet."

Knight has long been one of the most intriguing figures in sports, and has drawn even more interest since his dismissal

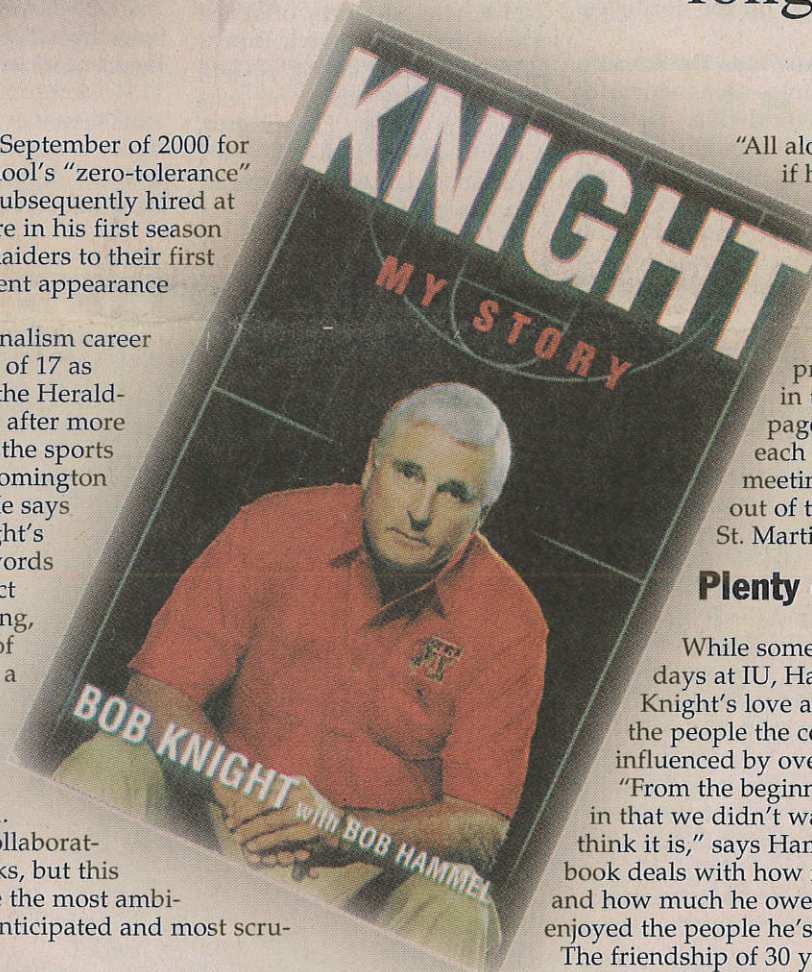
from Indiana in September of 2000 for violating the school's "zero-tolerance" policy. He was subsequently hired at Texas Tech, where in his first season he led the Red Raiders to their first NCAA tournament appearance since 1996.

Hammel's journalism career began at the age of 17 as sports editor of the Herald-Press and ended after more than 30 years as the sports editor of the Bloomington Herald-Times. He says chronicling Knight's life in his own words has been a project long in the making, but the process of putting together a book didn't really begin until just a few weeks after Knight was fired.

The two had collaborated on other works, but this project would be the most ambitious, the most anticipated and most scrutinized.

"About 20 years ago we started talking about it. He didn't want to do it while he was still coaching, not until then," says Hammel. "Then all of a sudden he was through coaching, and we had a lot of time on our hands."

It didn't take long to find a company eager to publish the memoirs of perhaps the most controversial coach in college basketball history.



"All along he would be asked by publishers if he was interested, and he'd always stood it off and said there would come a time," Hammel related. "Then we were in a position to put together a proposal to take to publishers to see if they were interested. We put together an outline that was pretty representative of what would be in the book, and it ended up about 40 pages with a sample of what would be in each chapter. He took that into a day of meetings with publishers in New York, and out of that came the awarding of the thing to St. Martin's."

## Plenty of shared memories

While some of the book deals with Knight's final days at IU, Hammel says the work is more about Knight's love affair with the game of basketball and the people the coach has been associated with and influenced by over the years.

"From the beginning, his intent and mine were similar in that we didn't want it to be a diatribe, and I don't think it is," says Hammel. "By far, the majority of the book deals with how much basketball has meant to him, and how much he owes basketball and how much he's enjoyed the people he's been around in basketball."

The friendship of 30 years between the two helped the process go smoothly.

"We did it with a lot of tapes, but the shortcut to all those tapes, of course, was all the time we'd had together before," says Hammel. "We shared a lot of those memories, so if I'd forget something he'd bring it up, or if he would forget an element of one period, I'd bring it up. We didn't have to fill in

(Turn to Page 5A, Col. 1)



# Hammel writes Knight's story

From Page 1A

each other on a lot of the real rudiments of it."

Hammel, whose only other first-person book told the stories of another Huntingtonian, baseball superscout Jim Russo, says writing another person's words is a little different than his own style of writing.

"It's truly his book, and not mine, so you have to keep that in mind. You might want to say things a little differently, but it's the other guy's book," he says.

But Knight made things easier by being an eager participant in the process of putting together the autobiography.

"Bob was educated and terrific about everything and was very enthusiastic about getting this book done and doing it right," says Hammel. "He went over everything several times and had some great suggestions to make. His eagerness to make the book as good as he could make it was a pleasant development in all this. I wouldn't call it a surprise. He's such an avid reader, the book really meant something to him."

## Change seen in Knight

Hammel says he has seen a transformation in Knight at Texas Tech after a bitter final few years at Indiana.

"The biggest change I see is that he's happy in his surroundings again," says Hammel. "He had gotten such attention here (in Bloomington) that he couldn't be the Bob Knight I know. He was uptight and on the verge of anger a lot. It's a radical change now. He clearly enjoys the people he's around down there. It's been a renewal in a sense that I don't think he ever had a doubt that the kids would respond, and they have. But getting out there and doing it's been the final proof."

Knight arrived in Bloomington for the 1971-72 season and inherited a team that finished last in the Big Ten in four of the previous six years. It took just four years for Knight to build the Hoosiers into a national champion.

Texas Tech has also been a rebuilding job for Knight, but Hammel says there aren't many parallels with the coach's arrival in Bloomington 30 years ago.

"It's not the same, because he's coming in as a huge name in coaching," he says.

But Hammel has seen an effect on the community of Lubbock, Texas, where Texas Tech is located.

"I was having lunch with the editor down there on one of my visits and he said (Knight) has done more for the self-esteem of the town than anything he could remember," says Hammel.

"Lubbock is a pretty good basketball area, for Texas. It's not Indiana; there's obviously a difference. It's a part of the community heartbeat in Indiana, where basketball takes priority over everything. Texas Tech is still more like Texas, where football is huge, and basketball has not been the thing everybody's cared about. But they have responded very, very well. Particularly telling is the road attendance, where arenas sold out everywhere Texas Tech has gone this year."

One of Hammel's favorite stories about Knight's relocation to Texas is told in the book.

"He was at the Dallas airport and a couple of

classic Texas cowboys saw him coming across the lobby," says Hammel. "They went up to him and said, 'Coach, me and Charlie are A&M fans, and we just want to know how long it's going to be before you get things turned around out there in Lubbock?' He told them 'November. I didn't come down here to get my ass beat.' The guy wheeled around and whacked his buddy and said 'I told you, Charlie. From now on, you and me are Tech fans.'"

## Some bitterness remains

Still a resident of Bloomington, Hammel has seen the divide in Indiana fans still loyal to Knight and those who were glad to see him go.

"There is sensitivity there, and I think that showed on Senior Day when (Dane) Fife and (Jarrad) Odle both mentioned Bob and he got a big hand. I think there were people waiting to let them know that they feel one way and we feel another," he says.

The way Knight's dismissal was handled by the Indiana University administration didn't sit well with Hammel, and even the way the school still regards the coach is something of a slap in the face, he says.

"I thought it was a poor political move to put out the basketball press guide with no mention of him until page 116 or something like that. Geez, those were 29 pretty good years," says Hammel. "There have been various places along the line where he was snubbed, and that was probably a recognition of the fact he wouldn't have come back, anyway."

And Hammel also knows the difficult position current Indiana coach Mike Davis was put in as Knight's replacement, first as an interim coach and now as a full-time head coach with a multi-year contract.

"Where Mike is right now is that he has some time now to prove himself as a coach, because he hadn't really done that when he became head coach," says Hammel. "He happened to be in the right place at the right time, but he hadn't really earned the head coaching job at Indiana, one of the great pressure and prestige jobs in the country. But it's his now, and as each year passes, he's going to be more and more on his own, and able to establish the program as his."

As far as Knight's longevity in coaching, Hammel says he doesn't know how many more years his friend will stay on, but he does know Knight is enjoying where he is now.

"There was a time when he scoffed at the idea that he'd be coaching much after 40, and he certainly wouldn't have guessed 50," says Hammel. "Now one of the things that comes out in the book is how genuinely he loves basketball, and how much he owes basketball. I think he'll stay coaching as long as it's peaceful for him. He sees new challenges each time."

Hammel, too, is looking for new projects, including a possible book on legendary sportscaster Chris Schenkel, a fellow Huntington County native from Bippus. But Schenkel, like Hammel, has had some health problems recently, with Schenkel recovering from prostate surgery and suffering from emphysema.

"I'm hoping we can get together," he says. "We've talked about it. If the two geezers can get together long enough, we'd like to do something."