

# WABASH VALLEY

## PROFILES

*A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.*

### Paul Frisz

**F**or four decades, Paul Christopher Frisz was Terre Haute's "Mr. Baseball." President and general manager of the Terre Haute Baseball Club in 1955 and 1956 and a walking sports encyclopedia, he also amassed one of the nation's largest private collections of baseball memorabilia.

In 1965, Frisz co-founded the Society of American Baseball Research, a national organization now comprising more than 4,000 members which has had an immense impact on the manner in which baseball records are maintained.

The youngest of nine children (Mary, Wilfrid, Ethel, Helen, Blanche, Leo, Clarence, Fabian and Paul) of Joseph W. and Elizabeth (Kintz) Frisz, Paul may have inherited a passion for commitment.

Early in this century, Joseph, a thriving Terre Haute grocer with a store at 14th and Locust, was one of Indiana's most prominent conservationists. In 1909, the elder Frisz bought a 65-acre resort and 40-room inn in Montgomery County. Before Joseph's death in 1939, the Frisz resort property encompassed 2,112 acres. Several years after Joseph's death, the property was sold to the state for Shades State Park.

Born in Terre Haute on July 1, 1907, Paul attended St. Ann's School and the University of Dayton Prep School, where he excelled in football. He earned a college degree from the University of Dayton in 1928. Frisz was junior class president and the first president of Phi Lambda Chi social fraternity. He was also chosen U of D's "Most Practical Student."

After college, Frisz established sales records with Mcfadden Publications Inc., rising to district manager of the Atlantic states. Then he was sales manager for National Coil Piston Ring Co. before returning to Terre Haute to manage a successful insurance business. In 1948, Paul acquired the Central Hotel at 714 Ohio St., the former home away from home for visiting celebrities and numerous Terre Haute Phillies baseball players. Frisz's expanding baseball collection occupied "Room 1" in the hotel and he served as a director of the Terre Haute Fans Association for five years, beginning in 1950. As attendance at Memorial Stadium began to decrease with the arrival of television, Vern McMillan, Anton Hulman Jr. and others urged Frisz to guide the Three-I League team. Frisz devoted many hours to saving the local franchise, but with heavy heart announced its cessation effective July 4, 1956. He continued to operate the Central Hotel until Aug. 3, 1968, retiring to devote his time to his collection.

Paul died Jan. 2, 1990, at age 82, survived by his wife, the former Janet Walker, whom he married Feb. 7, 1945. Jan still resides in the family's Terre Haute residence. Frisz and his first wife, the late Virginia Deforrester, were parents of two children, Mary Joan Frisz of Middletown and Dolores Goins of Grosse Ile, Mich. Two grandchildren, Paul and Mary Anna Bonvallet, survive. Granddaughter Jeanna Marie Bonvallet died in 1983.



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