

Gary Fauber

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

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Gary Fauber (b. April 19, 1974, Montgomery, WV) is the Sports editor at the Beckley Register-Herald. In the late 1990s, he wrote a professional wrestling column called Title IV for the paper.

This interview is part of a series of interviews with independent professional wrestlers and individuals related to the wrestling scene in West Virginia.

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EH: Emily Hilliard

GF: Gary Fauber

00:00

EH: So why don't you introduce yourself and tell me your name and where you're from and when you were born.

GF: My name is Gary Fauber, I'm originally from Montgomery, West Virginia. I was born April 19, 1974.

EH: Could you tell me how you got into wrestling?

GF: When I was I think I was 7 years old, it was 7 or 8 years old, I actually was introduced to it by my mom of all people (laughs). She was familiar with WOAY Saturday Nite Wrestlin' here in the area and we actually saw some wrestling on Super Station WTBS as it was known back then, and she just kind of started reminiscing about things that she had seen and I was just hooked from that point.

EH: So did she go to the WOAY matches as a kid?

GF: I don't know that she attended the matches, but I know she watched it on TV and you know, had a lot of interesting stories to tell, yes.

EH: Yeah, I've been trying to get in touch with Shirley Love. Haven't had luck yet, but hopefully. So why don't you tell me how the column came about.

GF: Yeah, I started here when I was 22 years old and just like I said, I've been a wrestling fan for most of my life and just through general conversations with others here, colleagues here at work, some of them were wrestling fans as well, and just you know, that common bond. And as you know, as I...they decided, there were a lot of wrestling fans around here, so they thought well, why don't we let you do this on a weekly basis and it seemed to really take off.

EH: So did it start--it started as covering WWF and AEW?

GF: WCW. Yeah, WWF and WCW for a while. Yeah, and just basically just kinda gave my opinion on maybe that preceding week's Monday night show. And then kind of maybe previewed going into the next week and you know, like I said, I really got a good following of people were happy to see something, you know wrestling fans were definitely happy to see that kind of voice in the paper.

EH: Was it always in the sports section?

GF: It was, yeah it was in the sports section, usually it ran every Sunday morning. Yeah.

EH: And then how did you get into covering local wrestling?

GF: It was a funny story, I was actually driving home from work one night-- I lived in Montgomery at the time so I had to gas up, make sure I had enough gas to get to Montgomery and stopped in to pay for my gas and the guy who was working you know, started talking as if he knew me, and he introduced himself as the Cuban Assassin, Richie Acevedo, and told me--I started talking to him about all of the independent wrestling organizations in business around here, which I had no clue of. I honestly had no clue they

existed and yeah, from that point he and I struck up a friendship and talked often and through email or telephone, whatever. And I actually got to go out to a few shows and everything. I have a night job and obviously their matches are after hours and so it was hard for me to get out to many of 'em. But I got to a few and it was fun to get to know a lot of the local guys around here that I wouldn't have known before.

EH: So what were the main storylines at that time that you remember?

03:46

GF: It's so hard for me to remember know 'cause it's been so long since I've done that. But I just remember one in particular was a guy that I actually grew up with named Jeremy Tolley. He became a popular guy here and he graduated from Fayetteville High School. Eventually another Fayetteville graduate got into the local scene as well and he was what you would call a baby face, a good guy, and one of the shows I was actually at, I had written a column previously about Jeremy and Jeremy at the show I attended got, he got attacked and this new guy from Fayetteville named Ron Ray, he came out to help Jeremy and cleared the ring and everything. Held up his hand to show everybody he was okay, and then all of a sudden he turned on him and attacked Jeremy and then after he got done with the attack he kind of, he grabbed the microphone, addressed the crowd and one of the things he said was, "Where's my newspaper article?" So without me knowing, I got into a little you know, a 15 second part of the angle there. And then a week or two later I was able to go to another event and he kind of took the mic at the beginning of the show, explained his actions and everything and after it was all over, he and I talked and I got to do a column on him, so there's just, there was just lots of interesting angles at that time.

EH: What kind of feedback did you get from readers?

GF: It was mostly positive. Like I said, I think they appreciated having that different pace, you know, professional wrestling at that time had more of a stigma so to speak, at that time then it does now. And you know, so I think some of the mainstream--it's all over mainstream now, obviously, and back then it wasn't and so I think people, you know wrestling fans appreciated seeing that and most of the feedback I got--it was mostly positive, you know, of course any time you're in the business, you're gonna express an opinion or whatever that other people aren't gonna necessarily agree with and then you're gonna get the negative emails, the negative letters, and everything. But I was never--I can only think of one time I was actually confronted personally, you know, face-to-face. But I remember that person kind of being sort of out of touch with reality (laughs) to an extent. But other than that, really really positive feedback on everything. It was a lot of fun and the-- I didn't get to do it a whole lot of time. I mean it was a few years, but as I evolved in this job it got to where I wasn't able to find the time to do it. But it was a fun experience.

06:39

EH: Do you remember what years it ran from?

GF: I'm thinking (sighs) I'm gonna say probably the spring of '97 and then I'll guess, it got to the point I couldn't really finish anymore, I'm gonna guess somewhere in 2000.

EH: Yeah, that sounds right from what I've found. What was that stigma and how do you think that's changed?

GF: You know, professional wrestling, everybody had--the people who didn't like wrestling said it was fake, everybody knows what's gonna happen and everything. And now, now a days, especially on the national scene, they're really kind of not shying away from kind of acknowledging without coming out

and saying it that things are pre-determined. And I think that's a good thing. I mean, we just like... personally me, I just enjoy being entertained--that's what it was all about was being entertained, and you know, you just have to look at things in a reality-based way. And it was, to me that was never a problem.

EH: Yeah, I think, you know, some of the--I think it's had a different perspective because people watch TV shows that are pre-determined (laughs) you know.

GF: Right.

EH: And thinking about it as a narrative.

GF: Exactly, and that was always my argument. You watch I don't know, you watch a soap opera on TV-- you know, that's not real. You know. Yeah, I mean, so that was always my argument. Just watch it and be entertained, take it for what it's worth, what it is, and you'll enjoy it.

EH: Yeah. And the wrestlers that I've interviewed have said, well we actually do get hurt physically, and we're putting our bodies on the line, and you know, walk away with black eyes. So in that sense it is real.

GF: I agree. I think--and that was what--these people are athletes. I mean they are. It may be pre-determined, however you want to term it. But they are athletes. You can't... I defy anybody who just thinks they can go into a wrestling ring and do the things they do--go and try it and I guarantee you'll come out with a different perspective on everything, and you hear all the time about the injuries these wrestlers sustain and unfortunately it's cost a lot of people their lives. You know they become addicted to the pain killers and things of that nature and it's from that perspective it's every bit real.

EH: You really have to trust the person you're wrestling to not snap your neck!

GF: Exactly, yes. And I was watching a match one time and I watched actually a midget wrestler spear a regular-sized wrestler, and that was when I realized it's so much--it's more about the guy selling the move than it is about the guy executing the move. Yes.

EH: What do you think wrestling's particular popularity in West Virginia is about?

GF: Say it again, I'm sorry.

09:57

EH: What do you think wrestling's particular hold and popularity in West Virginia--what do you think that's about?

GF: You know (sighs) I think as far... you mean as far as like the independent scene and everything?

EH: Yeah.

GF: I think it's just they can probably identify with the people. I mean a lot of--I guarantee you a lot of these people who were in the stands watching these guys wrestle are friends of the wrestlers. Like I said, and like I mentioned, one of my friends growing up was a wrestler here. So I think it's just a case of being able to identify with what's going on, you know, with the people who are performing.

EH: Yeah, and a lot of the West Virginia wrestlers don't necessarily have the wrestler body, and they were saying, well it's kind of like you root for the guy who you could be at the bar, sitting next to or something. And it's kind of a game of underdogs anyway.

GF: Right, exactly, I agree with that. Yes.

EH: Let's see...So why--what do you think for you is your, or was your interest in it and fascination with it?

GF: You know, I was really--I think about that a lot 'cause I hear, you know a lot of the complaints that wrestling fans have today with the WWE is there's not enough, not enough attention given to the actual wrestling. It's more about talking and everything. To me, that was, personally that was the attraction. I loved the storylines, I loved the angles, I loved the soap opera part of it--that was what drew me to it. I mean, not that I didn't respect what they were doing physically. I see some of the things they do, even from the technical part of it to the hardcore part of it, and I just--there's no way I could do it. I'm just telling ya, I could not do that. And but like I said for me personally, I just liked the angles, I liked the theater that goes along with it.

EH: Yeah, I think that's why I think it's fun too 'cause sometimes at the shows in Madison if the wrestling goes on too long, I'm just like ugh! I just want the story. I like the heels and the faces--that's what does it for me.

GF: Right yeah, and I think sometimes and this is an unfortunate thing but back in the 80s when I started watching wrestling and everything, putting people in a rear chin lock for 5 minutes--that was acceptable. Now it's like a basketball mentality now--if the actions' not constant, constant, constant, people lose interest. And that's just a, that's a commentary really on society today. You know, social media and everything, everything has to be now, now, now. So you know so, that was never a problem for me honestly. I didn't mind going through those matches because I knew, because I loved watching wrestling on TBS Saturday Night's 2 hours. I loved all the drama. It was more about that than it was the actual wrestling.

EH: Yeah, I think in some of the newspaper articles from maybe like the 50s, in West Virginia, they had like 3 rounds, and it was bells and they were timed matches, but they seemed really long. I think they've shortened.

GF: Yeah, and that was--that may have been acceptable back then. People probably went in knowing that's what was gonna happen. And wrestling is just changed in different phases through the years.

EH: Did you, were you aware of any other columnists around the country who did wrestling columns?

GF: Yes...and there are guys, you mean as far as when I started doing it? At the time?

EH: Yeah.

GF: Yeah, there were a couple and I think they're still doing it. One is named Dave Meltzer, I believe he was doing it at the time. It seemed like there was one whose name was Bob Rider. It seems like?

EH: Where were they?

GF: They were, now where they were I don't know. I know they were on the national scene. And obviously, it's more so now with the mainstream popularity wrestling has taken in the last 15-20 years. But those are two that come to mind. Yeah.

EH: And when you stopped doing it, it was mostly because you didn't have time anymore?

GF: That was it yeah, it wasn't from a lack of interest or anything like that. I enjoyed doing it. I really, really enjoyed it and I didn't make it every Sunday--sometimes I just didn't have anything to write about or didn't have the time at that particular week. But like I said as my responsibilities grew here, it just became more of a time issue and you know. I've had people, you know, I still have comments today--hey you need to bring your wrestling column back. Yeah, so. A lot of times now it's a space issue as well. So but...yeah. I do miss doing it. I look back on it and think you know, how fun it was. And even, you know I'm not as big a wrestling fan today as I once was and I think it just comes from you know, I have a family now--I'm married, have 3 kids. It just comes from a lot of things but I think back about not just the column but you know, just getting together with people at football games I was covering or whatever and after it was over you know, just talking about wrestling and things like that. It was a lot of fun.

EH: Have you done any wrestling pieces since then?

GF: Not many. I've done a couple probably. I did one on Richie, the Cuban Assassin. One of his--I think Richie has gone in and out of retirement three or four times (laughs). Once it's in your blood it's hard to get it out. But I think I did a story on him one time, about coming out of--going in for retirement actually. And but this--there have been very few.

EH: Did you ever know--there was a character or wrestler The Black Diamond who was--he was African American, he was a former coal miner. He was in that Saturday Nite Wrestling documentary?

GF: Now that you say that, that sounds familiar but I'm not familiar enough with the history of it.

EH: Yeah I think he's from Beckley. I was just trying to find some of those guys who are still around.

GF: Right, yeah.

EH: And particularly interested in people who do these racial or ethnic stereotypes because it's so fascinating.

GF: Yeah, definitely. Richie may be somebody you could talk to. I don't know if you've talked to him yet or not, or reached out to him.

EH: Yeah, I should. I think he's on twitter.

GF: Yeah he is, and he's definitely on Facebook. Yeah.

EH: I should talk to him. Well is there anything else you would like to add?

GF: No. I think that's it. Just I really thank you for this opportunity. It was great thinking about it and you know, it's definitely a fun and important part of my life, part of my life history.

EH: Well, yeah, I found all the articles through the Kanawha County Public Library--they're online so if you want to take a trip down memory lane you can check it out, or I can send you some of the pdfs.

GF: Yeah, that's fine too. That'd be great.

EH: Cool! Thanks so much.

GF: Thank you for doing this.

EH: Yeah.

17:55

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