

Friends for life

WELLS, TRUMPY SHARE THOUGHTS ON LONG-LASTING FRIENDSHIP

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CANTON, Ohio — For half a century, Bill Wells and Bob Trumpy have been the best of friends.

Wells, currently the mayor for Murray, Kentucky, and Trumpy, a longtime NFL tight end before becoming one of the top broadcasters in sports history, have shared many moments together over the years.

Trumpy was in Calhoun County for Wells' induction into the mayoral position and stood up in his wedding, while Wells has been all over the U.S. to follow Trumpy's football and broadcasting career.

Two months ago, Wells and his wife, Anne, made a long trip from Murray, Kentucky to Canton, Ohio for one of Trumpy's biggest achievements, which was announced at the 2014-15 NFL Hall of Fame Induction.

While names like Ray Guy, Aeneas Williams, Michael Strahan, Derrick Brooks, Claude Humphrey and Andre Reed were being enshrined as some of the best the NFL had ever seen, Trumpy was receiving the Pete Rozelle Radio & Television Award — an honor reserved for the greats like Jim Nantz, Al Michaels, John Madden, Pat Summerall, Dan Dierdorf, Dick Enberg and others.

It was a moment, Wells said, he didn't want to miss.

"It was quite a weekend," Wells mused.

One year together in the early 1960s at the University of Illinois was enough to bring together Trumpy, Wells and close comrades in John Farthing and "Spunky" Patton.

All from different parts of the "Land of Lincoln," the fearsome four had all entered college as the pledges for the Sigma Chi fraternity, but while most of the class had been friends in high school, Wells, Trumpy, Farthing and Patton leaned on each other to kindle a friendship.

Wells remembers it like it was yesterday — he and the other three bonded over playing intramural and fraternity league basketball and each enjoyed sports. Farthing and Trumpy were all-state Illinois football and hoops players in high school, while Wells was "just" an all-West Illinois linebacker.



Above, former Cincinnati Bengals tight end and professional broadcaster Bob Trumpy (left) and Bill Wells (right) embrace during the Pro Football Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at Canton in early August. Below, the Bengals organization had a nice advertisement for Trumpy in the HoF program.

"During basketball games, Trumpy used to come out and say to me, 'Bill, get in there,' and I'd go out there as a sub," Wells said. "When Trumpy wanted back in, I would just say 'yes, Mr. Trumpy' and sit down. We never lost a game that year."

Aside from sports, Wells and the gang spent the year hanging out quite a bit.

Trumpy recalled the moment that solidified his friendship with Wells for life.

During Trumpy's lone football season at the University of Illinois, a horrific snowstorm blew in on a Friday afternoon, and every weekend, Wells would go home to Monmouth, Illinois, to see the "love of his life" in Anne.

With most of the roads closed, however, Wells needed to borrow a friend's car to tackle the snow-packed roads, Trumpy remembered, and he decided to go with Bill on the treacherous trip.

Inevitably, Wells and Trumpy got stuck in the snow — together having to wave down a truck on the highway so Wells could hitch from Champaign to Peoria in order to get closer to home.

"I think early on that's what solidified our friendship," Trumpy said.

The following sophomore year at Illinois would see Trumpy transfer to Utah and play football, Wells return to Monmouth for college



The Cincinnati Bengals congratulate
BOB TRUMPY

The 2014 recipient of the Pete Rozelle Radio & Television Award
On the field and in the booth, Bob Trumpy is first class.



Wells, Trumpy...

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and Patton also go elsewhere, but Farthing would remain at the University of Illinois – eventually becoming president of the Sigma Chi chapter on campus.

Farthing's inauguration and

Trumpy's career at Utah were enough to keep the gang engaged in one another's lives, while marriages, births and national events often warranted a reunion.

"We had such a wild and crazy time, that I imagine it's just as better that we weren't together all the time," Wells remembered.

Added Trumpy: "Whenever we have a minute together, we instantly turn 19 years old. The stupidity...our wives all roll their eyes and laugh."

Trumpy would eventually be drafted as a tight end and wide receiver by the Cincinnati Bengals in 1968, becoming a premiere weapon under offensive coordinator Bill Walsh – the creator of the West Coast offense.

Trumpy's success in the NFL as a player also brought the group together, often times resulting in weekends at professional stadiums to watch their friend dominate defenses with his size and prolific hands.

After an extended career on the gridiron, Trumpy put on a headset and set up shop in the broadcasters booth – another place the troupe was able to visit and remain close friends.

In 51 years, the circle of "brothers" has shared joy and pain with each

other – most recently gathering in grief over Patton's death from a heart attack in 2008.

Though unable to make the funeral, Trumpy said he drove to be at the graveside – describing the time as "awful" and "absolutely untouchable."

"These guys are always in my heart," he said. "Whether it is the happiest or saddest moment, I have to share it with them."

"Fifty-one years as friends is a long time."

