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"I don't get sick. I don't observe major holidays. I'm a jackhammer."

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Mary Stewart, The Michigan Difference

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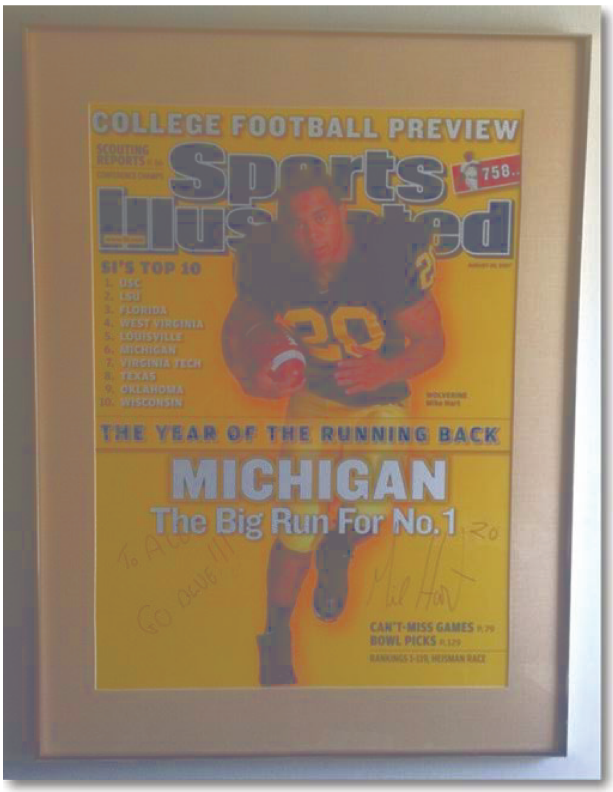
By Ace — July 10th, 2015 at 3:01 PM — 29 comments

Filed under: mike hart the michigan difference



Mike Hart sidled through the narrow wooden door frame of Room 1310. As I sat at the front desk trying not to make any sudden, embarrassing movements, he made a beeline for Mary Stewart's office, like so many others who passed through Event Services at the Michigan Union.

Moments later, I sheepishly tried to hide my glee and the lingering sting from Hart's handshake as Mary introduced us and told him about my blog, playing me up like a big-shot writer instead of some underclassman with a blogspot page read by dozens. Hart left for practice after a quick chat. When he did, Mary put forth a standing offer: if I

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needed anything from Mike, just ask her.

It was the summer of 2007. I was heading into my sophomore year at Michigan and my second working as a receptionist in the Events Services office. Hart had just made the cover of Sports Illustrated. To me, we lived in two different planes of existence, even if we occupied the same campus. To Mary, we were equals, two more people she'd help in whatever way she could.

My brother's birthday and that of one of my closest friends fall on the same day in November. They're both big Michigan fans and huge fans of Hart, so as the date approached I purchased a couple souvenir footballs from the store in the Union basement; I wrote my brother's and friend's names on a piece of scrap paper and put the package in Mary's office; she promised she'd have Hart inscribe a message to each the next time he dropped by.

At my next shift, Mary called me into her office. She had the footballs with Hart's signature, but she also had a question for me. Mike had received two jumbo-sized posterboard copies of his SI cover, she said, and he didn't know what to do with the second—would I, perhaps, want it? I didn't know what to say. I'm pretty sure I managed to garble through a "yes, please" and several "thank you"s before floating back to my desk. The next week, she handed me the poster, personalized to me from Mike. I smuggled it back to my apartment like a priceless piece of stolen artwork.

To this day, that cover is framed in my home office.

Today, Mary retires after 42 years working at Michigan, and mine was but one of hundreds, if not thousands of lives she affected in her relentlessly positive, caring, supportive way during her time here; if you don't believe me, just read the many testimonials in Rod Beard's profile of Mary at the *Detroit News*. (Read that regardless, please.) In my three years at the Union, Mary was my unofficial counselor, a role she served for so many students over the years, including a long list of athletes.

When I needed someone to talk to about anything, I headed straight for the extra chair in her office, if it weren't already occupied by one of her many visitors. When my brother, whom she'd never met, needed some extra money one summer, she hooked him up with a job at the Art Fair. My mother heard so much about her that she insisted on coming in to work with me one day to meet her; she still asks about Mary, and vice versa. She took me to a football luncheon so I could meet Rich Rodriguez and have him sign my hat. Even after I was fired from that job for calling in sick too many times, I still dropped by Room 1310, and every time I did I felt like I needed to come back more often.

During my first year or so at the Union, I watched in wonder as football players past and present walked by my desk and sat down at hers. The hat with Rodriguez's signature stayed in her office, collecting a hodgepodge of signatures: Jamar Adams, Ryan Mundy, Zia Combs, Chris Perry.

Before too long, though, my wonder focused less on the players than Mary herself. For a while, I wondered how she managed to do her job of coordinating events in the Union—a day didn't go by without at least a couple visitors—until I realized that many of the connections she made came from going above and beyond the call of duty to help out student groups, especially those for black students. If you passed through Mary's office, she became a part of your life, and there was no better testament to that than her office walls, so filled with pictures and letters from those she'd touched that one felt only the love that bound them all together prevented the walls from collapse.

Simply by coming into contact with Mary, I'm a kinder, more thoughtful person, and I know I'm not alone in feeling that way. What she brought to the University, the way she connected with people with no more common ground than the school they attended, is why I feel such a powerful bond with Michigan and the athletic department in a way I'll never feel about the Lions, Red Wings, Pistons, or Tigers.

When someone asks me about The Michigan Difference, I say Mary Stewart *is* The Michigan Difference. While Michigan will miss Mary dearly, her legacy will live on; in honor of her four decades of incredible work, two alums have created the Mary Stewart Scholarship Fund. I can't think of a better tribute.

Thank you so much for being you, Mary, and congratulations on your retirement. I promise I'll be in touch soon.

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OT: Anyone watch the debate tonight?
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75 replies
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July 10th, 2015 at 3:17 PM #2

JCass
Joined: 09/08/2010
MGoPoints: 245

It's amazing how many

It's amazing how many people's lives she touched throughout the years. Seriously, I was one of many, but she made it feel like when I was in that office, I was the most important.

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July 11th, 2015 at 12:22 AM #3

steve sharik
Joined: 08/08/2009
MGoPoints: 8373

Weird

Mary, Brian, and I all lived in the same condo complex at the same time for a brief period.

#coolstorybro

During one of the golf outings one of those years, Mary brought Chris Perry's daughter over to my place for a playdate with my son, who--despite being older--got his ass whooped by young Ms. Perry. The playdate didn't last long. My boy's definitely a "lover not a fighter," as he now gets his 5-year-old ass whooped by his 3-year-old sister.

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July 10th, 2015 at 3:41 PM #4

MGoBrewMom



Joined: 08/13/2009
MGoPoints: 11941

Thanks Brian!

Who knew you were/are close with her too. I was hanging with her when I had a school girl crush on the football players, and watched them all pass by going to the training table in the Union basement...I worked there when I was 14, but before then I'd hang out with her at the desk answering the old fashioned switchboard.

Great tribute to her, Brian. Thanks for the post.

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July 10th, 2015 at 3:43 PM (Reply to #4) #5

Yo_Blue



It was Ace's post Mom.

It was Ace's post Mom.

"I hope that someday we will be able to put away our fears and prejudices and just laugh at people."

- Jack Handy

an unexpected use
10 replies
Actual FOOTBALL content POSBANG!
51 replies
Hello: Dylan St. Cyr - 2018 Hockey Goaltender
12 replies
1 of 9 ››

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Transcript proves NFL didn't know air pressure could drop naturally
Question: "So prior to this game, okay, had you ever heard of the Ideal Gas Law?"
0 comments
As ESPN Loses Viewers, Some on Wall Street Move to Sidelines on Disney
dead horse dot gif
0 comments
Linebacker Joe Bolden takes control for Michigan Wolverines
"He shows up every day, and he listens and he works really hard," Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh said. "He does what he says he's going to do. Those qualities, he showers our football team with that every day, and the smart ones will watch Joe Bolden and see that he's having success with that template. He'll be playing football for a long time, but I think he's going to be a heck of a coach, too."
1 comments
The Safety Dance - WSJ
it appears i have been accused of being a garbled englishist
0 comments
Summer Update: Werenski Looks Back on Whirlwind Summer
Mike Spath points out that doing an interview for the official site is a pretty good indicator he'll be back.
0 comments
College football's 25 Most Intriguing Coaches of 2015
frank beamer #1
5 comments
BRING YOUR CHAMPIONS,

Joined: 08/24/2010
MGoPoints: 190837

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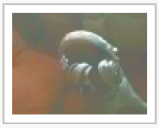
July 10th, 2015 at 3:43 PM (Reply to #4) #6

AlaskanYeti



Joined: 11/27/2012
MGoPoints: 1116

Pssst....

Pssst.....Ace wrote this post.

Alaska Standard, 8:00 A.M. kickoff...

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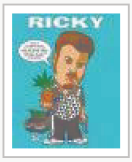
July 10th, 2015 at 3:59 PM (Reply to #4) #7

Ricky from Sunnyvale



Joined: 12/15/2014
MGoPoints: 10090

Great post Brian, just

Great post *Brian*, just amazing!

It doesn't take rocket appliances...
Go Blue

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July 10th, 2015 at 5:41 PM (Reply to #7) #8

MGoBrewMom



Joined: 08/13/2009
MGoPoints: 11941

Nice of you

to take time out of your busy day to be a smartass. I know you're super important in real life, that's why you post so infrequently and so perfectly here.

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July 10th, 2015 at 4:25 PM (Reply to #4) #9

Sam1863

OK, Mom got the name wrong.

OK, Mom got the name wrong. That's one mistake in six

THEY'RE OUR MEAT: Media Day

"The face of the operation is Briatore (referred to exclusively in the film by his colleagues and angry, chanting detractors as "Flavio"), an anthropomorphic radish who spends most of his time at QPR plotting to fire all of the managers."

0 comments

Jim Harbaugh Spends Day Testing Every Single Seat View In Michigan Stadium - The Onion - America's Finest News Source

At press time, Harbaugh had sent Michigan's athletic department an envelope containing a heavily annotated seating chart, a list of the 63,000 seat views he had found unsatisfactory, and a glowing 70-page report on section 25, row 12, seat 9, which he claimed is "exactly what the great sport of football is all about."

1 comments

Mitchell nearing the end($)

this week in unintentionally grim-sounding recruiting headlines

3 comments

Burke battles uncertainty in upcoming 3rd NBA season

"It's tough and that's the word to use -- uncertainty," he told MLive. "That's kind of where I'm at right now."

0 comments

Jordan Morgan signs with French professional team | MLive.com

can hang out with Alejandro Bedoya now

1 comments

University of Michigan alums start menswear line

"We were always infatuated with dress shirts," Moffie said. "Big companies don't really design with athletes in mind."

0 comments



Joined: 04/27/2014
MGoPoints: 3172

years.

But her story was a nice addition to Ace's great tribute to this terrific lady. Congratulations on making a difference to the lives of so many people, Mary Stewart.

Enjoy your retirement, and GO BLUE!

"It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard everybody would do it."

"The hard is what makes it great."

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July 10th, 2015 at 5:42 PM (Reply to #4) #10

MGoBrewMom



Joined: 08/13/2009
MGoPoints: 11941

doh!

I'm a dork. Downvoted myself for the lapse in reading the details...

Sorry Ace.

Top

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July 10th, 2015 at 7:35 PM (Reply to #4) #11

befuggled



Joined: 07/01/2008
MGoPoints: 1559

I thought it was Brian at first, too

I had to doublecheck the byline when I realized that Brian had graduated long before Mike Hart made it to campus.

Where's Charlie Bauman when you need him?

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July 10th, 2015 at 4:17 PM #12

Hartwelr

Joined: 02/27/2009
MGoPoints: 57

I think we overlapped at the

I think we overlapped at the Union, Ace. In my 9 years as a building manager at the Union spent a lot of time in 1310 and saw countless current and former students come into see Mary and relate all they hoped to/have achieved to her. Mary was also willing to help any student that needed it, and the scholarship fund is one of the most fitting retierment gifts ever.

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July 10th, 2015 at 10:00 PM (Reply to #8) #13

Blue_2008



Joined: 04/10/2011

MGoPoints: 14

Hey I know you, how's it

Hey I know you, how's it going? I don't want to compromise my mgoblog identity but I was a building manager as well - I was the tall blonde guy

Top

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July 12th, 2015 at 6:17 AM (Reply to #8) #14

philclar



Joined: 12/23/2008

MGoPoints: 98

Mary, a delight to be around

What up, building managers? Seeing Mary everyday and holding all those keys. Best job ever

Top

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July 10th, 2015 at 4:19 PM #15

HailToTheVictors1

Joined: 02/23/2015

MGoPoints: 247

Congratulations

Enjoy your well deserved retirement!

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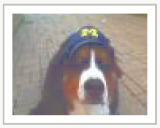
July 10th, 2015 at 4:23 PM #16

wolverine1987



Joined: 07/07/2008

MGoPoints: 5940

Well done Ace.

Nicely written.

"Before I could pull the trigger, I was hit by lightning, and bitten by a cobra."

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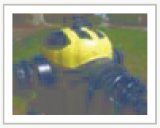
July 10th, 2015 at 4:55 PM #17

MGoRob



Joined: 03/14/2010

MGoPoints: 3218

I'm confused. So what was her

I'm confused. So what was her job? Was she helping athletes or students? Makes it sound like she's a super counsellor or something. Makes me wish I had met her while I was there

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July 10th, 2015 at 7:55 PM (Reply to #12) #18

Mabel Pines



Joined: 10/02/2010

MGoPoints: 11077

I agree with you.

congrats to her and sounds like she helped many people. I did not know her or have an advisor either. would have been nice.

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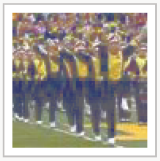
July 10th, 2015 at 5:15 PM #19

Bando Calrissian



Joined: 07/02/2008

MGoPoints: 32439

I was on campus the same time

I was on campus the same time as Hart, the entire four years. Ran into him quite a few times, actually. Always a really, really nice guy. Gonna dust off this story again, apologies that I cut and paste it, no time to type it all out again:

During the 2006 season, I had a giant lecture class in Angell that happened to be at one of the times athletes could fit class into their schedules. As a result, 3 of the starting 5 basketball players, most of the volleyball team, the soccer teams, other various sports, and damn near all of the football team (it seemed) were smattered throughout the room. The defensive backfield used to sit in a huge block in the middle section in the back, the offensive line squeezed in down the row, a lot of high profile skill guys... Leon Hall was in my discussion section.

So one morning I, tiny marching band kid, am sitting in the last row by the door with my laptop tuned to MGoBlog. I happen to be reading a front page article with a big as life picture of Mike Hart on the screen. Suddenly, someone slips in late and plops down in the seat next to me. I look over, and it's Hart. He looks at my screen and laughs a bit. I couldn't close that window fast enough.

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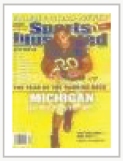
July 10th, 2015 at 5:33 PM #20

thejive84



Joined: 01/23/2011

MGoPoints: 45

my favorite

Still to this day my favorite player. I have his jersey in the closet. Might have to bring it out for ol' harbaugh this year.

Blue fan in the south.

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July 10th, 2015 at 5:55 PM #21

DoubleShot

Joined: 04/15/2015

MGoPoints: 33

Glad to see Mary get some recognition

I worked at the Union from 1992 to 1995 as a Student Building Manager and got to spend hours in those offices with Mary and the crew in Scheduling. She definitely deserves the tribute. It was always great to see her when I was a student, and 20 years later when I moved backt to Ann Arbor, seeing her there and saying hi as though I'd only been gone a short time made it a true homecoming.

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July 10th, 2015 at 8:51 PM #22

A2YpsiBlue



Joined: 08/29/2012

MGoPoints: 386

Great story

Thank you for sharing.

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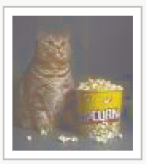
July 10th, 2015 at 9:04 PM #23

4godkingandwolv...



Joined: 08/06/2008

MGoPoints: 7718

You're a damn fine writer,

You're a damn fine writer, Ace.

Do Something. If it works, do more of it. If it doesn't, do something else.

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July 10th, 2015 at 9:50 PM #24

Blue_2008



Joined: 04/10/2011

MGoPoints: 14

I used to work in the Union

I used to work in the Union during my time at Michigan as well. While I didn't have a close personal relationship with Mary I remember her being one of the nicest people and the many athletes and others going in and out of her office.

Crazy, I probably met you back in the day Ace and didn't even realize it. I would have been there at the same time.

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July 12th, 2015 at 5:35 PM #25

mgoblue0970



Joined: 11/22/2008

MGoPoints: 5906

Mike Hart will always be my

Mike Hart will always be my hero for getting under the skin of Mark Dantonio... there's a hundred or so players on the roster, times all the players that shitty school in East Landfill plays in a season equals a shit ton of opponents on the other side -- yet, for some reason, that smug fuck Dantonio decided to get all buthurt over ONE individual player's post game interview.

"Little brother"

... and the rest is history!!!

Never wrestle with pigs. Everyone gets dirty, and besides, the pig likes it. --George Bernard Shaw

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July 13th, 2015 at 10:14 AM (Reply to #24) #26

saveferris



Joined: 07/02/2009

MGoPoints: 9846

While I will be the first to

While I will be the first to call Mark Dantonio a petty, thin-skinned asshole, it's never sat well with me that we continually give ourselves a collective high five for dropping "Little Brother" on them back in 2007 when all MSU has done since then is hand us our lunch every year. There's a lot of reasons to revere and appreciate MIke Hart as a Michigan football player, but his conduct after the 2007 MSU game shouldn't be one of them.

"...what do you say, is it the new Bluesmobile or what?"

"Fix the cigarette lighter."

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July 16th, 2015 at 7:16 AM (Reply to #27) #27

mgoblue0970

If you're paying attention,



Joined: 11/22/2008
MGoPoints: 5906

If you're paying attention, it's that insufferable fanbase which reinforces the Lil Bro moniker rather than what the scoreboard says.

Never wrestle with pigs. Everyone gets dirty, and besides, the pig likes it. --George Bernard Shaw

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July 13th, 2015 at 10:10 AM #28

octal9



Joined: 11/11/2008
MGoPoints: 5762

Worked in the Union for

Worked in the Union for catering & the billiards room for six years in the mid 2000s. Mary was a very bright spot in 1310. She'll definitely be missed there.

Mary if you read this, sorry about that one event report that one time. Yeah, you know the one! - J

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July 13th, 2015 at 12:23 PM #29

Blue Bennie



Joined: 03/02/2009
MGoPoints: 284

Michigan Union

I'm curious how many Union workers we have here. I worked at the ticket office '91-98.'

I did work a little with Mary during my tenure. The black fraternities and sororities booked the Union through Mary, sold tickets to their parties through the ticket office, and worked with the building managers and security the night of their party. The black frats and sororities had so many hoops they needed to jump through.

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