

Golembiewski wrote the book about local TV

By Amy Rabideau Silvers of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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Dick Golembiewski



Dick Golembiewski (left) with his brother Patrick in 1965
with local kids show host Pops (Tommy Richards)

Long before Dick Golembiewski wrote the book on the history of Milwaukee television, he grew up on a happy diet of local kids' shows and horror movies.

His writing projects were first inspired by Scary Monsters Magazine. Golembiewski, a self-described chronic horror show-watcher in his youth, offered to write about "Dr. Cadaverino," his favorite local horror host. The 1996 magazine piece led to research and writing about other hosts - including Rick Felski ("ToLouse NoNeck") and Bob Hersh ("The Advisor") - and then to his own Web site, [Milwaukee TV Horror Hosts](#).

That, in turn, led to years of research and writing for his massive "Milwaukee Television History/The Analog Years." Published in December by Marquette University Press, it will receive the Milwaukee County Historical Society's Gambrinus Prize later this month. Richard G. Golembiewski died of a heart attack Sunday, March 29, 2009 after shoveling snow with his family. He was 51.

He earned a degree in mechanical engineering at the Milwaukee School of Engineering, then worked for Harley-Davidson and firms involved in the auto racing industry. Golembiewski returned to MSOE, working as a professor, as director of the mechanical engineering program and with the Society of Automotive Engineers student design committee.

His television research came at a good time.

"I was going through a devastating, unilateral divorce, which led me to pursue a career change," he wrote in the preface to his book. "I found that immersing myself in some project helped me to maintain my sanity."

Ever the engineer, he began with a chapter on television technology, though most of the book is filled with the people and programs known to local viewers.

His research detailed the evolution of local programs - everything from daytime to bowling shows to news. Personalities include Jack DuBlon, who appeared as Dr. Cadaverino on WITI-TV's "Nightmare Theatre" and as the man behind Albert the Alley Cat, the station's weather puppet.

"There's enough detail in 'Milwaukee Television History' to satisfy the pickiest reader, but Golembiewski is essentially telling a story, one station at a time," Milwaukee historian John Gurda wrote in a recent column.

Earlier, Golembiewski also was on the air at WMSE-FM (91.7).

"Others knew me as 'Dick Nitelinger,' the DJ who produced and hosted 'Folk City' on WMSE from 1984-1992," he wrote, "while still others figured out that the Dick Golembiewski doing 'Milwaukee Talking' immediately after that show for a couple of years was the same person."

"He always said he had a face for radio," said Maureen Kondrick, manager of Marquette University Press.

Friends new and old were stunned to learn of his sudden heart attack.

"He had a fantastic memory," said John Retzlaff. "I've never met anyone like him."

Retzlaff and his wife, Kathleen Retzlaff, became friends with Golembiewski while looking for information on her first husband, the late Ward Chase, earlier "Mac the Mailman" on children's programs. The couple underwrote publishing expenses for the book.

Golembiewski also remained active in Society of Automotive Engineers competitions, and as a volunteer with a number of organizations.

"He acted like all of Milwaukee was his backyard," Kondrick said.

For Golembiewski, the book became a labor of love.

"You don't do it for the money," he said in a recent interview. "You do it to give something back to the community, something back to broadcasting."

Survivors include his parents, George and Bernadine, and brother Patrick.

Visitation was Friday, April 3, 2009 at St. Roman Catholic Church, 1810 W. Bolivar Ave.
