



Fowler W. Connell

Apr 18, 1924 — Oct 6, 2026

Danville, Illinois



Fowler Connell, long-time Danville sportswriter and sports broadcaster, died at age 102 at 11:40am on Tuesday, October 6th at Heritage Health in Hoopeston Illinois.

Fowler began his sports media career in 1949 at the Champaign News-Gazette where he was a copy editor and sport writer before joining the Danville Commercial-News in 1953. He became sports editor in 1964 and held that position until he retired in 1989.

He subsequently teamed up with WDAN as a panelist on the Saturday Morning Sports Talk show and as a color commentator on high school and college sporting events.

He covered University of Illinois football and basketball for more than 70 years and never missed a day of work in that span.

Fowler was a past president of the Illinois Sports Editors Association and was inducted in the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1979.

He was born April 18, 1924, in Chicago Illinois, the son of Alfred F. and Dorothy Connell. Fowler spent his formative years in Kansas City, Mo, graduating from Paseo High School in 1941 and attending Kansas City Junior College before joining the U.S. Navy in 1943.

He served three years in the Navy, two and a half years as a radarman aboard the heavy cruiser USS Boston (CA 69) in the South Pacific during World War II. Fowler was present in Tokyo Bay as a witness to the last day of the war. His ship was deployed to Hiroshima Japan in late 1945, Fowler having seen the aftermath of the destruction of the city, was something he talked about in later years. Prior to his passing, Fowler was among the last known crew member of the USS Boston still alive from WWII.

After discharge from the Navy as a first-class petty officer, he continued his college education. After graduating from junior college, he enrolled at journalism school at University of Missouri and graduated in 1949.

He was a member of the Golden K Kiwanis Club for more than 30 years. He served as president on two occasions and also served as division lieutenant governor.

During his time as Golden K president he was instrumental in chartering the Kiwanis Key Club at Danville High School and Builders Club at North Ridge Middle School.

He was a member of the American Legion Post 210 and was a volunteer at the Illiana Veterans Administration Hospital for over 35 years.

Fowler also volunteered at North Logan Health Care for over 30 years, calling BINGO for residents, plus monthly assistance at the Danville Township Food Pantry.

One of Fowler's continuing legacies was helping to establish the John Dickson Memorial Sportsmanship Award. Established in 1976, the award honors outstanding sportsmanship in football, volleyball, boys' and girls' basketball.

Among the many awards Fowler received were the CRIS Healthy Aging Center Senior of the Year, the IHSA Distinguished Media Service Award, Vermilion County Principals Association award for 70-years of service and induction into the Illiana Sports Hall of Fame.

In 2004 the Commercial-News and WDAN published "Sports Through My Eyes, 50-Years of Danville Area Sports History in Words, Sight and Sound with Fowler Connell". It featured a collection of his favorite stories and a companion CD of radio broadcasts; this book was a celebration of his career with proceeds being directed to a scholarship fund at Danville Area Community College.

When readers and listeners think back on Fowler's work it was his "Connell Corner" weekly Commercial News columns, his adventures of "Frank and Harry" at the local watering hole or the spirited banter on WDAN's Saturday Morning Sports Talk that will be remembered for years in the future.

A lifelong baseball fan, he fell in love with the Boston Red Sox in 1936 when they acquired Jimmy Foxx, in true Red Sox fashion he hated the Yankees to the end. In celebration of his 99th birthday in 2023, the Red Sox Radio Network provided a special on-air tribute to their favorite listener in Danville Illinois. As a 14-year-old, he witnessed the final game of Yankee great Lou Gehrig, as he and his mother attended an exhibition in Kansas City, he was proud of that Yankee accomplishment.

The Mike and Julie Hulvey family would like to thank all of those who cared for Fowler later in his life. He was blessed with an amazing team at Heritage Health in Hoopeston, Iroquois Memorial Hospice and special friends like Scott Eisenhauer and Doug Barnette who kept close tabs on Fowler.

Fowler will be laid to rest at a public graveside service at Danville National Cemetery at the VA Illiana Medical Center at 10am, on Friday October 9th. A public lunch and celebration will follow at the American Legion Post 210 in Danville from 11am to 1pm.

Memorials can be made to "Rose's Food 4 The Children" a weekly program providing food to Danville area children, or the Danville Human Society. Fowler loved children and dogs.

Sunset Funeral Home and Cremation Center in Danville, Illinois assisted with arrangements. Online condolences, fond memories, and photographs can be shared on Fowler's Tribute Wall at www.sunsetfuneralhome.com

Fowler leaves us with his favorite saying:

"Everyday is a good day, some days are just better than others".