

Sagamore of the Wabash

by

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The French Republic rewards merit most notably with grades of membership in the Legion of Honor, originally created by Napoleon for worthies of his empire. In Britain the sovereign can choose from a range of honors to acknowledge service or accomplishment. Although the Most Noble Order of the Garter is reserved for the happy few, a simple knighthood might be an appropriate reward. Within the royal gift, too, is recognition in the form of a life peerage or even an hereditary title. On the other side of the Atlantic the American president has available the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian honor. In case a potential honoree does not quite measure up to that distinction, there is a second-highest civilian honor, the Presidential Citizen's Medal. Not to be outdone by the executive branch, the Congress created the Congressional Gold Medal, its highest award.

Like nations, professional societies, institutes, universities, associations, businesses, museums, clubs, fraternal groups, and other organizations pay tribute to the meritorious. Such entities, devoted to all kinds of endeavor from the fine arts to professional sports, present scrolls, plaques, medals, trophies, certificates, keys to the city and other tokens of esteem to their laureates. County fairs award blue ribbons; the Kennel Club chooses Best in Show. Athletes compete for the gold and silver and bronze or the Stanley and Davis and Ryder cups. For mathematicians there is the Fields Medal; in the same intellectual realm, there are the Nobel Prizes. The range is wide, running from the House of Hapsburg's Order of the Golden Fleece to

the Boy Scouts' Silver Beaver Award.

Colonels

Among the states, perhaps the best known honor is the Kentucky Colonel. According to the Secretary of State, "The highest honor awarded by the Commonwealth of Kentucky is that of Kentucky Colonel. The tradition began in 1813 during the second term of Governor Isaac Shelby after he returned from leading the Kentucky Militia on a highly successful 'War of 1812' campaign. He named one of his officers, Charles Todd, as an 'aid-de-camp' on the Governor's staff with the rank and grade of Colonel." (Kentucky. Secretary of State, [2012], online) It also owes some of its more recent popular recognition to fried chicken franchises, a sports team, and a cocktail of bourbon and Benedictine.

In 1932 Governor Ruby Laffoon created the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels as "a great non-political brotherhood for the advancement of Kentucky and Kentuckians." (Kentucky. Secretary of State, [2012], online) "Today, commissions for Kentucky Colonels are given by the Governor and the Secretary of State to individuals in recognition of noteworthy accomplishments and outstanding service to a community, state or the nation." (Kentucky. Secretary of State, [2012], online) Colonels may be men or women from any state or nation, deemed worthy for notable contributions in any field.

In keeping with the Kentucky's military tradition, the governors of Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico also commission colonels. In Alabama the title reads, Honorary Lieutenant Colonel, Aide-de-Camp in the Alabama State Militia. Georgia's title is Honorary Lieutenant Colonel, Aide-de-Camp, Governor's Staff. In Louisiana and other states the rank varies a bit, and appointments create full honorary Colonels. North Dakota continues the martial theme with the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award, which "recognizes present or former North Dakotans who have been influenced by this state in achieving national recognition in their fields of endeavor, thereby reflecting credit and honor upon North Dakota and its citizens." (North Dakota. Governor, online.) Along with the fine words comes the honorary rank of colonel in the North Dakota Theodore Roosevelt Rough Riders.

Texas adopted a naval motif and names Admirals in the Texas Navy. The State Library and Archives comments, "During the 1950s Governor Price Daniel popularized a tradition of Texas governors honoring citizens of Texas by proclaiming them 'Admirals in the Texas Navy.' Citizens receive their honorary title for a number of reasons such as special achievement in government service or athletics. The criteria and the selection is at the discretion of the governor. Many citizens are nominated by their state legislators. Native-born Texans are designated as 'admirals;' non-native Texans are 'honorary admirals.'" (Texas. State Library and Archives Commission, online) Landlocked Nebraska also honors notables as admirals, appointing them an Admiral in the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska. Since 1966 Ohio has had commodores (Executive Order of the Ohio Commodores), named by the governor in recognition of contributions to the economy of the state.

Colonel Darrow

The successful play and popular movie *Inherit the Wind* presented audiences with a tale of two colonels. Based on the 1925 Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, the drama featured fictionalized versions of William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow. In welcoming Matthew Harrison Brady (Bryan) to Hillsboro (Dayton), the mayor announces that the governor has appointed Brady an honorary colonel in the state militia. At the trial, the Judge refers to Brady as “Colonel Brady,” and Henry Drummond (Darrow) objects to “all this damned ‘Colonel’ talk” as clear judicial favoritism, prejudicial to his case. The situation is resolved, pending the governor’s approval, by making Drummond a “temporary honorary colonel.” Drummond remarks about his new appointment, “Gentlemen, what can I say? It is not often in a man’s life that he attains the exalted rank of ‘Temporary Honorary Colonel.’” (Lawrence and Lee, 1981, p. 38)

Bryan did not need an honorary title. Although a pacifist, the Great Commoner actually was a colonel, a rank he held during the Spanish American War. In his *Summer for the Gods* Edward J. Larson describes how the real trial judge, John T. Raulston, applied the honorific to Darrow and “adopted the practice—already used by some in town—of referring to Darrow as ‘Colonel.’” Larson ponders the significance of Darrow’s informal honorary title: “Yet some wondered whether the judge extended this designation to Darrow and Malone [Dudley Field Malone, co-counsel for the defense] as a way to avoid calling them ‘mister,’ a title of respect in the South.” (Larson, 1998, p. 149-150)

Non-Commissioned Laureates

State honors are not limited to colonels’ commissions. Alabama created in 1965 a second way to recognize merit, the Alabama Academy of Honor, limited to a membership of one hundred living Alabamians “who have made a significant contribution to the life and times of the state of Alabama and the nation.” (Alabama. Department of Archives and History, online) The highest award in Arkansas is the Arkansas Traveler Award. Delaware recognizes its distinguished citizens with the Order of the First State.

Illinois established the Lincoln Academy of Illinois, whose laureates receive the Order of Lincoln and its medallion. Open primarily to Illinoisans by birth or residence, the award celebrates achievement in various activities, including the arts, business, industry, education, medicine, and sports. The Iowa Award, created in 1948 by the state legislature recognizes “outstanding service of Iowans in the fields of science, medicine, law, religion, social welfare, education, agriculture, industry, government and other public service.” The governor does not select the honorees. The Iowa Centennial Memorial Foundation does, and then only one approximately every five years. (Iowa. State Library, online)

On August 2, 1997 Governor Ralph Pataki of New York announced the creation of the Jackie Robinson Empire State Freedom Medal, and his press release described it as “New York State’s

Highest Honor.” The reverse of the medal is to read “presented to honor conduct exemplifying the spirit as demonstrated by the life of Jack Roosevelt Robinson.” (New York. Governor, online) Like Illinois and New York, Washington also presents a medal, the Medal of Merit.

The state medal of merit with accompanying ribbons and appurtenances for award by the governor, in the name of the state, to any person who has been distinguished by exceptionally meritorious conduct in performing outstanding services to the people and state of Washington, upon the nomination of the governor’s state medal of merit committee.” (Washington. Secretary of State, online)

Elected officials and current political candidates are ineligible for the honor.

North Carolina’s highest civilian award is North Carolina Award, established by law in 1961, and “presented annually since 1964, the award recognizes significant contributions to the state and nation in the fields of fine art, literature, public service and science. Though given by the governor, the award is administered by our agency.” (North Carolina. Natural and Cultural Resources Department, online) The law states, “That the State of North Carolina hereby establishes annual awards, not to exceed six in number, each bearing the name of the recipient, with an appropriate inscription reciting the reason for the award, which form and design shall be approved by the Governor and Council of State.” (1961 Session Laws, pages 1572-1573) There is another honor, the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, often referred to as the state’s highest award. It seems more convivial than the elite North Carolina Award. The governor names members to the Order, and confers upon the honorees “... the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary privileged to enjoy fully all rights granted to members of this exalted order among which is the special privilege to propose the following North Carolina Toast in select company anywhere in the free world:”

Here’s to the land
of the long leaf pine,
The summer land
where the sun doth shine,
Where the weak grow strong
and the strong grow great,
Here’s to “down home”,
the Old North State!” (The Order of the Long Leaf Pine Society, online)

South Carolina names its distinction for one of its natural resources and, being the “Palmetto State,” awards the Order of the Palmetto. More modestly, West Virginia’s highest honor is simply Distinguished West Virginian.

Indiana

Between 1945 and 2006 the highest distinction in Indiana was the designation Sagamore of the Wabash. The Governor’s Office described the award in 1992.

The Sagamore of the Wabash award was created during the term of Governor Ralph Gates, who served from 1945 to 1949. Governor Gates was to attend a tri-state meeting in Louisville with officials from the states of Ohio and Kentucky. Aides to the governor discovered that the governor of Kentucky was preparing Kentucky Colonel certificates for Governor Gates and Senator Robert A. Taft, who was to represent the state of Ohio. The Hoosiers decided Indiana should have an appropriate award to present in return.

The term “Sagamore” was used by the American Indian Tribes of the northeastern United States to describe a lesser chief or a great man among the tribe to whom the true chief would look for wisdom and advice.

Each governor since Gates has presented the certificates in his own way. It has been said that one governor even resorted to wearing a full Indian headdress as he read the scrolls. The award is the highest honor which the Governor of Indiana bestows. It is a personal tribute given to those who have rendered a distinguished service to the State or to the Governor. Among those who have received Sagamores of the Wabash have been astronauts, Presidents, ambassadors, artists, musicians, politicians and ordinary citizens who have contributed greatly to our Hoosier heritage.

It should be noted that Sagamores have been conferred upon both men and women since the beginning of their existence. There is no record of the total number which have been presented, as each governor has kept his own roll; just as each has reserved the right to select recipients personally. (Indiana. Governor, 1992)

A. Brown Ransdell, a staff correspondent of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, reported, with some humor, on the tri-state meeting (which took place in Cincinnati, not Louisville) in the paper's issue of September 28, 1946. Datelined Cincinnati, Sept. 27, and headed “Gates Becomes a Kentucky Colonel As Willis Receives ‘Sagamore’ Title,” the article records the exchange of honors in “colorful ceremonies at the Queen City Club.” Willis's selection of Gates as a “cunnel” observers regarded as “a long step forward toward getting Indiana cooks to stop putting sugar in cornbread.” Ransdell muses on the choice of “neutral territory” in the “era of good feeling” between Indiana and Kentucky. Perhaps it was “because of General John Hunt Morgan's raid from Kentucky during the Civil War. Or it might have been because Hoosiers gripe when they are forced to buy a Kentucky license to fish in the Ohio River.” Gates did make a promise to the Kentuckians. He would not require “G.O.P. officeholders in the state wear a black string tie during their tenure in office.” The reporter also noted, “The title of Sagamore of the Wabash also was bestowed on Republican Senator Robert Taft of Ohio.” A picture of the two governors in a “hands-across-the-Ohio gesture” accompanied the article. (Ransdell, 1946, p. 9)

Another account of the meeting by John T. Cronin appeared in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* of September 28, 1946 under the headline “Indiana Governor Is Kentucky Colonel! Feted At GOP Love Feast In Cincinnati,” with an accompanying photograph of three smiling politicians. The caption reads, “That roll of paper which Simeon S. Willis, Governor of Kentucky, right, is handing to Ralph F. Gates, Governor of Indiana, contains a scroll which “transforms” the Indiana executive into a Kentucky Colonel. Sen. Robert A. Taft looks on. The presentation was made last night at a dinner at the Queen City Club. Willis, incidentally, was rewarded here tonight by

being made a member of the Indiana Order of the Wabash by Governor Gates.” “The Sagamore Indians,” the reporter writes, “were around Indiana for a long time in bygone days, but the order came into being last night, and Governor Willis became the first member.” Hosts of the party, he noted, included Samuel R. Harrell, and the master of ceremonies was Kurt F. Pantzer. “We are in a gay and care-free spirit here tonight,” Pantzer said (“when the levity was reaching the end”). Then he added quickly: “That's because none of us here is running for reelection in 1946.” After a few brief suggestions for changing the present form of government in Washington, Senator Taft suggested that the Democratic campaign slogan will be “Two families in every garage, and spinach in every pot.” (Cronin, 1946, p. 11)

Harrell, Pantzer and Gates

The *Sesquicentennial Scrapbook* is more specific than the Governor's Office about the creation of the Sagamore award. It was, the *Scrapbook* says, “the invention of business executive (and World War I pilot) Samuel R. Harrell and attorney Kurt Pantzer—both good Hoosiers and friends of Governor Gates.” (Guthrie, 1966, p.78) Harrell (1897-1986) and Pantzer (1892-1979) had a lot in common. Both attended (at different times) Wabash College and completed their education in the east, Harrell at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale Law School, Pantzer at Harvard College and Harvard Law School. Both were Presbyterians, and both belonged to the Athletic, Woodstock, University, and Dramatic clubs of Indianapolis. The two also worked together as attorneys in the firm of Smith, Remster, Hornbrook and Smith between 1924 and 1926.

Neither Harrell nor Pantzer was a stranger to organizations. Over the years they served as members or officers of various clubs, boards, and committees. Harrell, among other things, was a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania where a chair is named in his honor at the Wharton School. (Harrell-Sesniak, online) As an undergraduate he had been president of his class and held the position of Chief in the Sphinx Senior Society. While Harrell drifted out of the law into the family milling business, Pantzer became a prominent attorney, a legal authority, a patron of the arts, and a mover and shaker in the Indiana Republican Party (Chairman of the Indiana Republican Finance Committee, 1955-1966). He also assembled an outstanding collection of watercolors by the British artist J. M. W. Turner.

Pantzer's entry in *Who Was Who in America, 1977-1981*, describes him as “co-founder Council of Sagamores of the Wabash.” (*Who Was Who*, p. 441) Harvey Lewis Carter elaborates in *The Life and Times of Little Turtle, First Sagamore of the Wabash*. He writes, “In 1946 Indiana governor Ralph F. Gates created the Council of the Sagamores of the Wabash in response to a suggestion made by Samuel R. Harrell, who had been named a Kentucky Colonel and felt that Indiana needed a similar reciprocal honorary organization. Kurt Pantzer joined with Harrell in devising the details.” (Carter, 1987, p. xiv)

While researching Sagamores in Boone County, Indiana, Ralph Stark reports on various historical details concerning the award in an article for *Boone: Your County Magazine*. He notes that the Council of the Sagamores “was the invention of Mr. Harrell and his good friend and personal attorney, Kurt F. Pantzer, Sr., also of Indianapolis. In particular Pantzer was the author

of the Council's name – Sagamores of the Wabash – and designer of the Sagamore certificate.” (Stark, 1978, p. 9) Governor Gates, he continues, discussed the name of the award, and Harrell suggested “Honorary Citizen of Indiana,” while the attorney general, James Emmert, proposed “Hoosier Schoolmaster.” (Stark, 1978, p. 9) In the end Pantzer's concept prevailed. The Sunday magazine of *Indianapolis Star*, April 4, 1965, also mentioned the Hoosier Schoolmaster, “but that idea was discarded because it ‘didn't have class,’ or dignity, didn't really confer an honor, not that the state didn't or doesn't have proper respect for its schoolmasters. The title of sagamore was deemed to be more deeply steeped in the history of Indiana.” (“A Feather in their Caps,” 1965, p. 24)

Sycamore and Sagamore

Carter considered the suggestion that the Sagamore title may have been influenced by the nickname of Daniel W. Voorhees (1829-1897), a U. S. representative and senator. Voorhees, an accomplished orator, was known as the Tall Sycamore of the Wabash, a designation he acquired “not only because he was tall—over six feet, massive of head, and broad of shoulder, but because, in the excitement of forensics, his hair stood out like the quills of a sycamore's buttonball.” (Wilson, 1966, p. 111)

A Voorhees inspiration is unlikely, Carter concludes, in spite of the similarity of sounds. And after all, Gates (1893-1978), Harrell, and Pantzer were good Republicans, unlikely deliberately to create an award specifically with Voorhees in mind. Voorhees was a Democrat with “long and steadfast service to his party in Indiana.” (Wilson, 1966, p. 111) Not only that, many considered him to have been a copperhead during the Civil War. He opposed freeing the slaves and questioned Lincoln's power to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. (Wilson, 1966, p.111) He also opposed other policies of the president, including “conscription, violation of habeas corpus, and war finances.” (VanderMeer, 1999, p. 408) After the war he favored soft money and low tariffs, anathema to reliable Republicans of the Gilded Age, who vigorously supported a high tariff and a strict gold standard. Carter finds “more likely” the choice of sagamore as an honorific by the Governor and his friends lies in its association with Little Turtle, “a genuine and original sagamore of the Wabash.” (Carter, 1987, p. xiv) “Governor Gates,” he explains, “was from Columbia City, in Whitley County, where Little Turtle was born and resided for most of his life,” and that “was a determining factor in their thinking.” (Carter, 1987, p. xiv)

***The Last of the Mohicans* and Teddy Roosevelt**

Other influences may have been at work. The men surely would have been familiar with the adventure tales of James Fenimore Cooper. They may have recalled *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), in which Chingachgook, the father of Uncas, describes himself as a sagamore and says, “Then they parted with their land. Foot by foot, they were driven back from the shores, until I, that am a chief and a Sagamore, have never seen the sun shine but through the trees, and have never visited the graves of my fathers!” (Cooper, 1896, p. 28) They may also remember the dramatic moment when Uncas, taken captive, appears before the venerable Tamemund, and

proclaims his heroic heritage. Tamenund exclaims, “Uncas, the panther of his tribe, the eldest son of the Lenape, the wisest Sagamore of the Mohicans!” (Cooper, 1896, p. 371) On Uncas’s chest, too, is the bright blue tattoo of a small tortoise, proclaiming him one of the “children of the Turtle.” (Cooper, 1896, p. 372)

A more contemporary source of inspiration may have been Theodore Roosevelt, who named his home Sagamore Hill. In his autobiography Roosevelt wrote, “Sagamore Hill takes its name from the old Sagamore Mohannis, who, as chief of his little tribe, signed away his rights to the land two centuries and a half ago.” (Roosevelt, 1913, p. 342)

Sachems and Sagamores

If the men were uncertain about the term “sagamore” and wished to verify it, they could consult any good dictionary of the time. For that matter, the term appears in Noah Webster’s original 1828 *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, and Webster gives the definition: “Among some tribes of American Indians, a king or chief.” *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (1938) defines “sagamore” as “An American Indian tribal chief, probably of second rank, tho considered by some writers as equivalent of Sachem.” The 1917 edition of *Webster’s New International Dictionary* lists the term as “A chief of a tribe among certain of the American Indians; — generally synonymous with sachem but some make sachem a chief of the first rank and sagamore one of the second rank.”

Sagamore is an old term in the American lexicon. The *Oxford English Dictionary* quotes its usage in a source from 1613, as does *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles*. Most authorities observe that its origin is Algonquian, although some cite more specifically its etymology as Abenaki or another Algonquian tongue. While there is etymological agreement, when it comes to its precise meaning, especially the relative ranks of sachem and sagamore, there is some dispute. *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* (1938-44) has it both ways. It gives the word its Algonquian origin and defines it as “originally, among the Algonquian Indians, a lesser chief, the head of one of the tribes in a confederation presided over by a sachem. At times, however, sagamore has been considered synonymous with sachem.” Most of the uses of sagamore it cites, however, point to the secondary status of the sagamore, as in the c.1618 quotation that notes, “Many provinces ... [are] governed in chief by a principall commaunder or prince ... who hath under him divers petty kings, which they call Sagamoes. [sic]”

The second unabridged edition of *Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English language* (1948) echoes previous dictionaries. It finds “Sagamore. orig., among the Algonquian Indians of North Atlantic Coast, a lesser chief, or the chief of a tribe forming part of a confederation; — sometimes synonymous with sachem.” The word also continues as part of the contemporary Abenaki vocabulary. In Gordon M. Day’s *Western Abenaki Dictionary*, “a dictionary of the Western Abenaki language as it is spoken in the last half of the twentieth century,” (Day, 1994, p. iii) under “chief” appears the entry: Chief, hence secondarily President, lord, also the cusk Brosmius brosmie [a food fish of the cod family]: zogemo AN pl. zogemok loc zogemok. In the initial position the “z” is pronounced as an “s,” Day notes, and the

“o” is pronounced as in the French “pont.” The term, its meaning and pronunciation consistent with its English rendering, still exists in its native form.

In a presentation, “Cooper’s Indians: A Critique,” given before the Cooper Seminar in 1979, William Starna further fixes the difference between sachem and sagamore. He writes, “Leadership roles manifest themselves in different ways. Among the Iroquois, for example, the most visible leaders were of two classes; war chiefs and civil chiefs. The latter are called sachems, a word derived from the Algonquian term Sakamak or Sakamaker [sakamak] [sakam] (cf. Erickson 1978; Goddard 1978). Sagamore, the term most often applied to Algonquian civil chiefs, is also derived from and represents a corruption or Anglicization of Sakamak.” (Starna, 1979, online)

No Sachems for Indiana

Superior in rank or not, the title Sachem would never have done for Indiana’s premier award. It was notoriously associated with New York City politics. A group of thirteen sachems, headed by the Grand Sachem, presided over the Wigwam, headquarters of the Tammany Society, otherwise known as Tammany Hall, the New York County Democratic organization. The Society, infamous since the days of Boss Tweed for its corruption, greed and power, found enemies among reform-minded men such men as Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt, whose campaigns brought additional national attention to the political machine’s unsavory reputation. If memories of Tammany and its sachems had dimmed over the years, the Seabury investigation and Franklin Roosevelt’s dismissal of Mayor Jimmy Walker would have freshened recollections, as would Fiorello La Guardia’s 1933 victory over the still powerful group in the election for mayor of New York City.

No, a sachem would not do, but a sagamore had no negative connotations. By happy linguistic accident the term also suggested wisdom by association with the English “sage” and “sagacious,” and if recalled, Cooper’s fictional Uncas was described as “the wisest Sagamore of the Mohicans.” A sagamore, though, ought to be a sagamore of something. If Little Turtle was the model after all, he provided scant guidance for the name of the sagamore’s realm. His encampment lay along the Eel River, but Sagamore of the Eel as a title does not sound particularly impressive, and it would represent only a small corner of Indiana. If a geographic designation, representing the entire state, or a great portion of it, was necessary, especially if it were a river of significant size, there was only one choice. Indiana could hardly select to honor Sagamores of the Ohio. That left the Wabash, and by coincidence Little Turtle’s Eel is one of its tributaries.

Indiana Gets Sachems after All, and a New Top Honor

The Tammany connection notwithstanding, Governor Edgar Whitcomb, a Republican, created the Confederacy of Indiana Sachems in 1970. About the group, open by invitation only, Susan Guyett writes in the Indianapolis Star of March 19, 2006, “top business leaders (of both political parties) across the state were members. They assisted Whitcomb by welcoming

important visitors, promoted the state and even provided spending money for some projects, according to early accounts. There was a dress code (Brooks Brothers, of course), certificates that included archaic and insensitive American Indian references, rules to follow and dues to pay. The bylaws even refer to an annual ‘PowWow’ each September during the harvest moon.” Guyett continues, “Recipients were commanded to show up ‘accompanied by your squaw’ at the Sheraton Hotel in French Lick to participate in grave deliberations and war dances, partake in feats of strength, feast and drink some firewater and sassafras, and ‘the juice of the grape.’” (Guyett, 2006)

Ralph Stark writes that the Confederacy “was founded during the Whitcomb administration after Governor Whitcomb had witnessed the activity of the Ohio Commodores at a meeting in the Buckeye state.” He adds, “Confederacy members are to appear in uniforms, which they, themselves, buy, at various governmental functions, acting as under-hosts for the governor.” Aside from sporting fancy dress and playing host, the purpose of the Confederacy of Indiana Sachems “is to promote an achievement-of-goal of the governmental and economic institutions of Indiana, to make them sound foundations for progress in the charitable, historic, patriotic, and educational activities of Hoosiers, and promote leadership of the state in such activities.” To round out his comments on sachems, Stark observes, “A letterhead of the Confederacy of the Indiana Sachems acquired by this writer, shows that ‘The Long House’ is the governor's office in the state capitol at 50 North Capitol Avenue, and the Grand Sachem is, of course, Governor Otis R. Bowen. The ‘Wigwam’ of the Sachem Chieftain, Kurt F. Pantzer, Sr., is at 1313 Merchants Bank Building, in Indianapolis. Elder Grand Sachems are past Indiana governors Ralph F. Gates, George N. Craig, Henry F. Schricker, Harold W. Handley, Matthew E. Welsh, Roger D. Branigan, and Edgar D. Whitcomb.” (Stark, 1978, p. 12)

Whitcomb’s exclusive club faded after he left office and disbanded as an entity in 1989. In 2006 Governor Mitch Daniels revived the Sachem award, without reference to Whitcomb, squaws, pow wows or juice of the grape. The new honor, however, is to be awarded annually to a single person. The 2005 (retroactive) recipient was Indiana-born John Wooden, the basketball coach, and for 2006 the title was bestowed on Father Theodore Hesburgh, the longtime president of Notre Dame. Later honorees include philanthropist Jane Blaffer Owen (2007), gospel musicians Bill and Gloria Gaither (2008), longtime university trustee, businessman and civic leader Donald C. Danielson (2009), baseball player Carl Erskine (2010), businessman and philanthropist Bill Cook (2011, posthumously), radio host Amos C. Brown (2015), and Auschwitz survivor Eva Mozes Kor (2017). Elinor Ostrom, winner of the 2009 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, did not make the cut for Sachem and had to settle for Sagamore of the Wabash (2009). Promotion is possible, though. Previous Sagamores have become Sachems, Father Hesburgh, a multiple Sagamore, for example, and Donald Danielson, another multiple Sagamore (and also an Indiana Historical Society Living Legend).

According to a press release from the office of Governor Daniels, “At the time Sachems constituted an honor greater than being named a Sagamore of the Wabash. Bylaws outlined that Sachems were to nominate and recommend Sagamore appointments to the governor.” The release adds, “True greatness is rare, and implies more than just accomplishment. Hoosiers believe that character counts, too, that the kind of life you live matters as much as the achievements you’ve racked up. The Sachem will be reserved for those who led by moral

example as well as successful action.” (Indiana. Governor, 2006)

Accompanying the honor is “a bronze sculpture of a scroll and pipe tomahawk, with the scroll representing the 1795 Treaty of Greenville between the United States and Native Americans and the pipe tomahawk representing a gesture of peace between General Anthony Wayne and Chief Little Turtle. Jeff Fearin, an art and design student at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, created the sculpture.” (Martin, 2006) The scroll reads, “In recognition of a lifetime of excellence and virtue that has brought credit and honor to Indiana.”

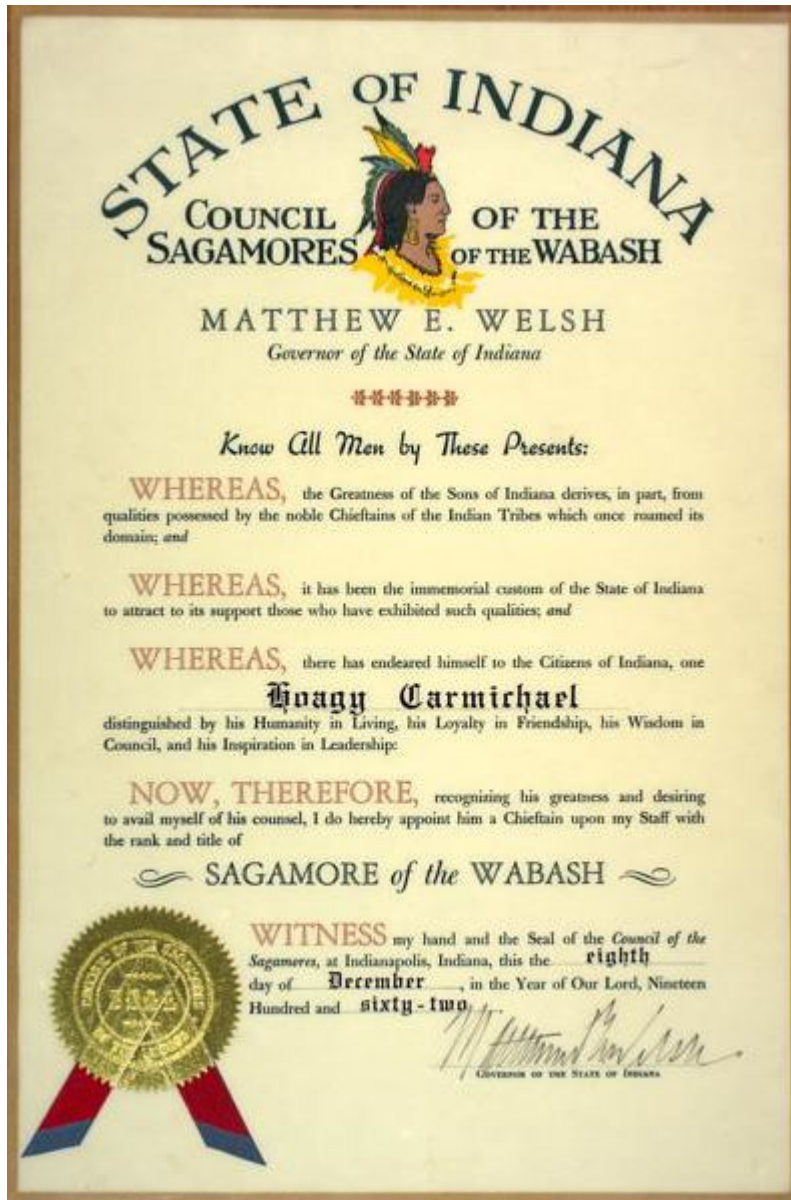
Perhaps the new administration felt there were a few too many Democratic sagamores after sixteen years of government under Bayh, O’Bannon and Kernan. They may also have felt a kind of sagamore inflation had diluted the award. Daniels in fact stated, according to Jim Shella (a two-time Sagamore himself), “The currency’s been badly cheapened.” (Shella, 2017, online) In any event, the time was ripe in the governor’s mind for a more exalted title, a new top state honor, supported by a high moral tone, the Sachem, a rank above the mere Sagamore. The governor does continue to name sagamores, though. Daniels did not abolish the award. He merely demoted it and granted very few.

Sagamore of the Wabash

The information sheet “Sagamore of the Wabash” from the Governor’s office suggests some haste in the creation of the award. Kathy Whyde Jesse, an *Indianapolis Star* reporter, called it a “last-minute face-saving attempt.” (Jesse, 1991, E1, 8) The choice of the name, the wording, and the design of the 11-by-17-inch document proclaiming membership in the Council of the Sagamores of the Wabash, however, seem to indicate some thought. And a desire to make Indiana’s honor, no mere copy of Kentucky’s certificate.

A 1991 Kentucky colonel’s commission features the arched, engraved legend “Commonwealth of Kentucky” above a logo followed by the name of the governor. The text is short, a standard official greeting “To all to Whom These Presents Shall Come, Greetings,” followed by the equally formal “Know Ye That” and the name of the recipient. Then comes “Is Commissioned A KENTUCKY COLONEL” and “I hereby confer this honor with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities appertaining.” That is all; that is the entire proclamation, save for the seal of the commonwealth and the date, the place and the signatures of the governor and the secretary of state. (Kentucky. Secretary of State, [2012])

The Tennessee colonel’s commission is hardly more eloquent than Kentucky’s. It dispenses with most of the formal language and gets to the point. “Whereas,” the governor states, “reposing special trust and confidence in your patriotism, valor and fidelity, I do by these presents constitute and appoint you Colonel Aide de Camp, Governor’s Staff.” A few words follow, but nothing better than an official closing. (<http://www.jimmysnow.com/awards.html>) By contrast, the generous clauses of the Indiana award flatter with warm acknowledgement of the recipient’s superior qualities. The Hoosier chief executive also recognizes the need for good advice in the affairs of state and is not too proud to suggest that he may one day need to call upon the new Sagamore’s “counsel.” That may be cant, but it is sweet cant.



Hoagy Carmichael Collection — IU Digital Library Program

The Governor's Choice

The decision to appoint a sagamore belongs to the governor alone, with no need of legislative approval or counter signature. For those unknown to the governor personally, there is a nomination process. The Awards Coordinator at the Governor's office writes, "The procedure to nominate a candidate or candidates for a Sagamore award is to send to this office a resume for the candidate and cover letter describing your request and the event date for which the award is

requested.” After receipt of the letter and resume, “the request is sent to the Sagamore Review Committee, and their comments go directly to the Governor. Based upon the committee’s comments and the Governor’s review of correspondence, a decision is made to grant or deny the request.” The coordinator concludes, “The Sagamore of the Wabash award is generally given for people of leadership who have completed or retired from a leadership position.” (Personal communication from Linda Ventura, September 4, 2001)

An account from the *South Bend Tribune* of December 10, 1998 neatly illustrates the standards a Governor may favor in appointing sagamores, the kind of service and leadership generally honored and the process by which the award is finally given.

While each individual governor of Indiana assigns his own criteria for this honor, the Sagamore of the Wabash is considered by O’Bannon to be a lifetime achievement award. The Governor’s office cites Paul’s lifetime commitment and loyalty to his community, his region and this state in naming Paul to the honor. According to Richard Paulen, president of the Elkhart Centre board of directors, Paul was recommended for the Sagamore by colleagues and friends on the board of Elkhart’s downtown revitalization program.

Letters of support were provided by Mayor James Perron and Elkhart city councilman Timothy Neese among others. Paul was commended for a “unique ability throughout his life to develop and maintain friendships on both sides of the aisle in local and state politics. You might not always agree with Paul, but he is a man you can always respect,” said Paulen.

“Paul helped found and has served on the board of directors of the Elkhart Centre—his nominating organization—since its inception in 1986,” said Gildea. “His efforts to help strengthen and improve the downtown throughout his life have been tireless. Through the Elkhart Centre he has served on a multitude of committees, including two years as president of the organization, and is an active member of the Elkhart Jazz Festival Committee.” (“Paul Thomas Accorded Indiana Award,” 1998)

A letter from the governor accompanies the certificate. Max Mason, honored on September 16, 2001, received with his award a cordial message from Governor O’Bannon.

Governor Frank O’Bannon
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Mr. Mason:

As Governor of Indiana, I am honored to appoint you a Sagamore of the Wabash and to express the appreciation of all Hoosiers for your commitment to making Indiana a better place to live and raise a family.

As proof of this distinction, please accept this document that proclaims you a “Sagamore of the Wabash.” Also enclosed is a special lapel pin, which I hope you will

wear so that all may know that the great state of Indiana holds you in the highest esteem.

The term “Sagamore of the Wabash” was used by Northeastern United States Native Americans to describe a lesser chief or other great person among the tribe to whom the chief would look for wisdom and advice. You Max, certainly fit that description. You have distinguished yourself by your humanity in living, your loyalty in friendship, your wisdom in council and your inspiration in leadership.

Thank you again, Max, for the contributions you have made to your state. Indiana is better off today because of your dedication to it and your fellow Hoosiers.

Sincerely,

Frank O’Bannon
Governor (“Democrats in Action,” 2001, online)

In addition to the certificate and the letter, Sagamores receive a lapel pin. Should the idea of a pin seem in any way odd, it has precedent in the rosette of the French Legion of Honor. Nobel laureates also receive a pin, along with a heavy piece of gold resembling a diploma, and a large sum of money. (Price, 2002, p. 21)

Pence Changes the Rules a Little

In 2013 the *Indianapolis Business Journal*, among other sources, reported a change in the rules for nominating Sagamores. The Pence administration, deciding to share the wealth, “will allow each of the state’s 150 lawmakers to nominate two residents each year for the recognition, which honors distinguished service,” the *Journal* states. It continues, “The new rules could mark a large jump from former Gov. Mitch Daniels, who awarded 245 ‘Sagamores’ during his eight-year tenure. Pence would have to work to match the numbers reached by previous governors, however. Former Gov. Robert Orr conferred the honor more than 4,200 times in eight years and former Govs. Evan Bayh and Frank O’Bannon each topped 3,000.” (“Pence sets rules for more ‘Sagamore’ awards,” *Indianapolis Business Journal*, 2013, online)

The new rules seemed to agree with members of the General Assembly. Jim Shella reports in his WISH-TV blog, “For lawmakers including Democrat David Niezgodski of South Bend it’s an opportunity to reward people who live in his district. ‘I think it’s a great honor,’ said Niezgodski.” He also quotes Mike McDaniel, a former Republican State Chairman, who observed, “Mitch Daniels gave these things out like he had to pay for them himself. But the people who get them are well-deserved Hoosiers.” (Shella, 2013, online)

On Friday, October 9, 2015, The *Greene County Daily World* published an item, “Delmar Hasler named as Sagamore of the Wabash,” noting that State Representative Matt Ubelhor had both nominated Mr. Hasler and presented him with the award. The account also says, “The Sagamore of the Wabash Award is the highest honor bestowed upon Indiana citizens by the Governor of Indiana. It is a personal tribute usually given to those who have rendered a

distinguished service to the state or to the governor.” (Rochelle, 2015, online) Calling the award Indiana’s “highest honor” in spite of Sachems is not unusual, although other stories refer to it as the second-highest honor, or simply an honor.

As Pence prepared to leave the governor’s office and head east for the vice presidency, he generously distributed Sagamore awards. Brian Slodysko of wane.com observed, “Meanwhile, Pence has awarded a bevy of Sagamore of the Wabash awards in recent days to Republican legislators, state office holders and staffers, as well as Indiana’s outgoing Republican Party Chairman Jeff Cardwell, who is a former Pence staffer. The award was at one time the highest public service honor in Indiana.” He further reports, “Pence’s mass issuance of the awards was mocked by some Indiana Republicans on social media as excessive, but former Pence spokesman Robert Vane said it was appropriate to give the award to his staff. ‘It is completely within Gov. Pence’s character to recognize the staffers who put in 70 hours a week in their service to Hoosiers and his office,’ said Vane. ‘The easiest thing in the world is to give Sagamores to businessmen and large donors, but it’s typical of the vice president-elect to award them to the people who work hard for him every day.’” (Slodysko, 2016, online)

The Honored

Age is no barrier to consideration for the Sagamore award. At sixteen the future Olympic gold medal gymnast Jaycie Phelps of Greenfield was honored for her performance as a member of the bronze-medal team at the 1995 World Championships. (“Sport-by-Sport,” 1996, p. 08E) Ryan White, who contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion and fought to remain in the public schools, received the honor before his death at eighteen in 1990. In 1988 Brett Gibson, then nineteen and president of Mid America Telephone Service, became a sagamore. (Wardell, 1988) On Independence Day 2001 at the St. Augustine Home for the Aged in Indianapolis, Lt. Gov. Joe Kernan presented the award to Gustave Streeter, a 104-year-old veteran of World War I, who had served as an artilleryman in France. (Gelston, 2001, online) For that matter, one need not still be living to receive the distinction. State Representative Craig Fry presented the award to the family of Dan Hayes who was recognized a few days after his death for his “years of service to the community.” (“Late Elkhart Civic Leader Honored with Sagamore,” 2000, p. D7) Bob Klawitter, an environmental activist and founder of the Southern Indiana group Protect Our Woods, died in a traffic accident on September 10, 1996. On January 7, 1997 he was “honored posthumously with a Sagamore of the Wabash Award.” (“Local Headlines,” January 7, 1997, online)

Most Sagamores are Indianans, but the Governor is free to select anyone for the honor, whether or not they have a direct connection with Indiana. In 1975 Iron Eyes Cody, the Cherokee actor seen on television shedding a tear over environmental pollution, became a Sagamore of the Wabash, the first native American to receive the award, according to the *New York Times* of October 15, 1975. More likely he was the son of Italian immigrants, born in Vermillion Parish, Louisiana, in 1904. The *Times* corrected its error in Cody’s obituary, published on January 5, 1999, after Angela Aleiss had earlier revealed his identity as Espera DeCorti in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* of May 26, 1996. Still, if he was not really a native American, he was not a Hoosier, either.

The evangelist Billy Graham, the boxer Muhammad Ali, the body builder and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the violinist Itzak Perlman, the baseball player Pete Rose, the pianist Van Cliburn, and presidents Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, and Harry Truman have been honored with Sagamore certificates. (Jesse, 1991; Denny, 1996) Appropriate reasons often combine with appropriate occasions. Governor Orr made Singer Willie Nelson a Sagamore for his work on behalf of American farmers with his Farm Aid concerts, and Nelson received the award before his performance at the 1986 Indiana State Fair.

Occasionally people become Sagamores as part of a team. Bob Kevoian and Tom Griswold, hosts of the popular and later syndicated, “Bob and Tom Show” on WFBQ, Indianapolis, did. “The duo,” writes the *Indianapolis Business Journal*, “received Indiana’s highest honor — the Sagamore of the Wabash — in 1994 in recognition of their charitable work. Their 20 comedy albums have generated more than \$3 million for various local charities.” (“Who’s Who in Media/Marketing/PR” *IBJ*, 1996, p. 18) In October 1998 some 1400 people gathered to celebrate the partial restoration of the West Baden Springs Hotel. “One of the night’s highlights was the presentation of the Sagamore of the Wabash awards. The presentations were made by Governor Frank O’Bannon to Bill and Gayle Cook for their excellence in pursuing the restoration and their fine job.” (“Local Headlines,” October 12, 1998, online)

Two simultaneous awards for a single project or achievement is hardly the limit. Lt. Gov. Kiernan presided over a Veteran’s Day ceremony during which he presented Sagamore awards to the six Smith brothers of Washington, Indiana. Of the men, ages 71 to 84, five had fought in World War II and one served in occupied Europe following the war. (Perry, 2001, online) On October 16, 2000 WISH-TV reported that Governor O’Bannon honored twelve Olympians at an Indianapolis ceremony. The broadcast included a visual of the “Ceremony and the Sagamore Wabash Honor Plaque Given to All the Olympians.” (“News 8 at Noon,” WISH-TV, 2000, LexisNexis online)

No Indiana governor has yet tried to emulate the Emperor Caligula (assuming the consul tale to be true) and appointed his horse a Sagamore of the Wabash. Robert Orr, though, showed that a Sagamore need not be human or for that matter even animate. Proving his discretion absolute, Orr chose to honor a cartoon character, Garfield the cat. The Louisville *Courier-Journal* ran an item by Fran Richardson of the Associated Press on January 9, 1988 under the headline “Fat cat’s contribution brings him Orr’s thanks.”

Gov. Robert D. Orr gained a new adviser yesterday — a plump cartoon feline named Garfield.

The governor made Garfield a Sagamore of the Wabash — the highest honor an Indiana governor can bestow — for the cat’s efforts to promote higher education to junior high school students.

“Garfield is now going to be a special adviser to the governor of the state of Indiana,” Orr said as he handed the Sagamore parchment to Garfield’s creator, Jim Davis of Muncie.

“I phoned Garfield to tell him he might be honored today and his quote was, ‘It’s about time,’” said Davis, who noted earlier that he was pleased “a self-serving, lazy, apathetic, orange cat” could do something positive for education.

A number of people have received more than one Sagamore award. Being named twice (by different governors) is not uncommon. Being selected three times (or more) is rarer, although not unknown. Among those chosen three times are Judge William Garrard, honored by Governors Bowen, Bayh and O’Bannon. (“Alumni in the News,” 2001, p. 35) and Dean Charles H. Webb of the Indiana University School of Music, honored by Governors Bowen, Orr and O’Bannon. (Indiana University. Office of Communications and Marketing, 2000, online) L. Keith Bulen, an attorney and member of the Indiana House of Representatives who held various other governmental and party positions, received the award four times, from Governors Whitcomb, Bowen, Orr and O’Bannon; he also had appointments as a Kentucky Colonel and an Admiral in the Texas Navy. (“L. Keith Bulen: Background Information,” 2000, online)

According to the obituary of James L. Kittle, Sr, furniture business founder and philanthropist, published in the *Indianapolis Star* of May 1, 1998, “Six Indiana governors named him a Sagamore of the Wabash.” (Francis, 1998, p. E6) Herman B Wells, President and later University Chancellor of Indiana University, also received six Sagamore awards, the last in June 1997 when he was 95 from Governor O’Bannon, who said, “There is no question in my mind the person you would call ‘Mr. Indiana’ is Herman B Wells.” (Ross, 1997, AP Newswire, Dow Jones, online) A feature story on William A. Koch, president of Santa Claus Land, Inc., in *Indiana Business* reported, “Koch has earned six Sagamore of the Wabash honors.” The item quotes him as saying, “I don’t know why I have so many. I really don’t think there should be two given. They should just give you another star, or something like that.” (Hughes, 2002, Dow Jones, online, p. 40)

Sagamore Inflation

Governor Gates appointed only two Sagamores. Henry Schricker, his successor, awarded ten. The third Sagamore was “Judge Will H. Sparks of Rushville and number four was Sanford K. Trippets of Hazelton — the first two Hoosiers to win the title.” George N. Craig “made about a dozen appointments,” and Harold Handley “appointed a few, including the first woman member, Miss Mildred French, first Director of the Indiana Youth Council.” (Guthrie, 1966, p. 78) “That was the trend,” wrote Kathy Whyde Jesse in 1991 in the *Indianapolis Star*, “until Matthew Welsh, political liberal that he was, gave away 100 Sagamores during his term, 1961-65.” (Jesse, 1991, p. E1, 8) The reporter apparently interviewed Lawrie Meldrum of the State Archives and learned a good deal from the archivist, who had been trying to collect a full list of Sagamore recipients. “Former Gov. Otis Bowen’s list fills 11 pages, three columns per page. Gov. Orr’s list fills up four manuscript boxes of paper,” Jesse reports, and “Rosa Parks became the 1,150th person to receive that title from Bayh since he took office in 1989. That works out to be about one Sagamore a day.” She continues, “If he sticks around for another term, Bayh may break the record set by his predecessor, Robert Orr, who awarded 4,207 Sagamores during his eight-year term.” (Jesse, 1991, p. E1, 8) Bayh did not reach the record; a December 1996 account credits him with “about 3,200 Sagamores.” (Denny, 1996, p. F1, 8) Citing Meldrum,

Jesse concludes, “Meldrum says that over the years, some people have nominated themselves for the award. And some nominees have been turned down. But not many.” (Jesse, 1991, p. E1, 8)

A Bloomington reporter, Dann Denny, looked into the award for a 1996 short feature article. Jesse’s headline had read “Sagamore List Mushrooming Once More.” Denny kept to the same theme with “High Number of Recipients Diluting Significance of Award” under a series of pictures of recipients on either side of a reproduction of the certificate, itself beneath the legend “Many More Sagamores.” Like Jesse, Denny pursues the notion of Sagamore inflation. He quotes Martha Wright, a reference librarian at the State Archives as saying, “A lot of governors have handed them out to every Tom, Dick and Harry.” He also writes, “‘It’s still a nice thing, but it’s no longer the high honor it used to be,’ said Lawrie Meldrum, a former assistant archivist with the Indiana State Archives and a Sagamore recipient himself. ‘When you hand out thousands of them, it kind of trivializes the award.’” (Denny, 1996, p. F1, 8)

During the past twenty years, Denny observes, “nearly 10,000 Hoosiers have received the Sagamore.” That represents, however, a small fraction of Indiana’s adult population, and the State Library reported that there are fewer Sagamores appointed each year than Kentucky Colonels. One account, although not cited, maintained that “one Kentucky governor reportedly gave out 1,600 Kentucky Colonel awards in a single year (that comes to 6,400 for a 4-year term).” (Denny, 1996, p. F1, 8)

The *Indianapolis Business Journal* reviewed the numbers, observing that Mitch Daniels jammed on the breaks and in eight years awarded a mere 245 Sagamores. Robert Orr led the list, with 4,200 Sagamores, while Evan Bayh and Frank O’Bannon “each topped 3000.” (“Pence sets rules for more ‘Sagamore’ awards,” *IBJ*, 2013, online)

The Council of Sagamores of the Wabash

There is no actual Council of Sagamores, and it would not be easy to gather its members if one did exist, for there is also no master list of Sagamore recipients. The State Library confirms Denny’s number of 10,000 awards, although their “nearly 10,000” dates from the Gates administration, rather than the last twenty years alone. It also acknowledges that “the number of Sagamore winners has become so large that many years ago the Indiana governor’s office gave up trying to keep track of them.” Further, the Library has no complete list, and what lists they do have “mostly end in the mid-1960s, with a few lists covering post 1960s appointments. What limited lists we have run to several dozen pages.” (Personal communication from Darrol Pierson, September 4, 2001) The Indiana Historical Society has no list, either, and believes no complete list exists. (Personal Communication from Suzanne Crowe, September 13, 2001)

Achievements

Sagamore awards have acknowledged a wide range of individuals for a variety of different services, achievements and distinctions. The politically connected seem to get their share in the name of leadership and public service. Mike Pence proved as much with his farewell gifts,

although it hardly needed proving. Yet, however one might feel about policies, politics or parties, most of the honorees have devoted considerable years and much hard work to their cause and often (although not always) to organizations outside the purely political. A governor who finds a cause or a cultural orientation or a political position congenial may choose to name one of its champions or representatives a Sagamore. Congenial, too, be out-of-state politicians, and for their own reasons governors have honored, besides presidents, men like Sen. John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky (1947) and Rep. B. Carroll Reece of Tennessee (1956).

A fair number of Sagamores are university educators, in particular professors teaching at institutions in Indiana. Press accounts also note Sagamore awards to successful coaches: James Counsilman, Jerry Yeagly, and Bobby Knight; to entertainers: Red Skelton, John Mellencamp, and Hoagy Carmichael; to race car drivers: A. J. Foyt and Arie Luyendyk. The Wright Brothers (not the aviation pioneers, but the band from Indianapolis, known for their smooth harmonies) became Sagamores. So did astronauts Virgil Grissom and Charles Walker, meteorologist Bob McLain of television station WRTV, Gregory C. Reed, national commander of the Disabled American Veterans, and Frederick Lee Kupke of Francesville, who had been held hostage in Iran. The governor's information sheet is right, though, in stating that awards go not only to "astronauts, presidents, ambassadors, artists, musicians [and] politicians," not only to the eminent or to celebrities, major or minor, but to the "ordinary citizens who have contributed greatly to our Hoosier heritage." To be among the select, one need not preside over an academic institution, write "Stardust," win the Indianapolis 500, coach a team to victory in the NCAA, or entertain America by mugging cameras as the ignorant bumpkin Clem Kadiddlehopper.

Volunteer service has traditionally been a reason for making the award, and governors have regularly honored individuals for their contributions to organizations like the YMCA, the United Way, 4-H, the FFA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Little League, the Rotary, Elks and other groups that concentrate on community service. In addition to volunteers, paid employees of non-profit entities also often receive acknowledgment for their efforts. Paid or not, not-for-profit Sagamores have been named for their work in such varied areas as in economic development, chambers of commerce, job creation, children's rights, health care, help for the homeless, civil rights, and ecological advocacy. Church leaders also receive particular attention. So do teachers and coaches in elementary, middle and high schools. It is hardly unusual to see a headline or read a photo caption something like "Janice Soyez, a teacher at Warsaw Community High School for 32 Years, was named a Sagamore of the Wabash at the Warsaw City Council meeting Monday." (Weisheit, 2002, online)

Sagamores Stumble

Not all Sagamores have borne the Indiana honor with untarnished dignity. Anne Gorsuch, administrator of the EPA, was "forced to resign along with 19 other appointees" as a result of "an investigation into political use of waste cleanup funds." (Taylor, 1996, p. 7B) There were "charges of mismanagement and hostility to environmental concerns," ("EPA Integrity," 1984, p. 23) and the House of Representative cited Gorsuch for contempt of Congress. To some measure, politics played a part in Gorsuch's problems, but her actions were at best questionable, and the scandal was deep and nasty. Purely personal conduct has also dimmed a Sagamore's luster. In

spite of breaking Ty Cobb's record for hits, Pete Rose had to leave baseball when A. Bartlett Giamatti, the MLB commissioner, banned him for life from the sport for his gambling activities.

Presentations, Usually without the War Bonnet

The governor's Sagamore information sheet states, "Each governor has presented the certificates in his own way. It was been said that one governor even resorted to wearing a full headdress as he read the scrolls." (Indiana. Governor, 1992) In his article, Denny identifies Governor Schricker as the wearer of the "war bonnet" and notes that Schricker "would make a long-winded speech as he crowned a recipient." He continues, "Governor Craig liked to have a large audience in attendance and have an accordionist play 'On the Banks of the Wabash.'" (Denny, 1996, p. F1, 8) Such stories sound good, and may even be true, but currently awards are made in a more restrained way, and the governor himself need not necessarily be present. The governor's wife has bestowed the award on his behalf as has the lieutenant governor. Other suitable deputies have included state representatives and senators, mayors, university trustees, and officers of associations, volunteer groups, or service clubs.

The setting for making the Sagamore award may be formal or informal. Recognition may come at a regularly scheduled meeting or, more frequently, at some kind of special event, like a banquet, picnic or dinner. A common venue is the retirement party. A description of such an event would resemble the short account of a gathering to honor Norman C. Hester, State Geologist and Director of the Indiana Geological Survey. Dr. Hester "received the honor of being named a 'Sagamore of the Wabash' yesterday at his retirement ceremony. Survey staff, officials of Indiana University, and representatives of numerous state agencies gathered to honor Dr. Hester at a retirement party held at the Virgil T. DeVault Alumni Center on the IU-Bloomington campus. In the name of Gov. Frank O'Bannon, Assistant Director John Hill conferred this award upon Dr. Hester for his service to the state of Indiana in his capacity as Director and State Geologist for the past 12 years." (Indiana Geological Survey, 1998, press release)

Whereas, Whereas, Whereas

Legislatures are not without their own authority to congratulate and commend. Hundreds of times a year the Indiana General Assembly adopts resolutions of tribute, expressed in a series of Whereas clauses describing the major accomplishments and general worthiness of the person or group it wishes to honor. Praise may come from either body of the General Assembly. The House may pass its own resolution on behalf of the House of Representatives alone. The Senate may do the same. They may also adopt a concurrent resolution expressing the sentiments of both houses of the legislature. Most resolutions are agreed to quickly, often in a single day, and the text of the resolutions directs that copies be sent by the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate to those either body or both has chosen to celebrate.

As with the Sagamore award, resolutions salute all kinds of people involved in all kinds of endeavor. They may commemorate an anniversary, a birthday, or a retirement, or they may

acknowledge a victory, a distinction or a special achievement. In 2002 the House introduced a concurrent resolution to commend the Brownsburg Little League baseball team “on winning the State Championship, the Great Lakes regional title and advancing to the Little League World Series.” The resolution concludes, “Whereas, the dedication and commitment of the Brownsburg Little League Team players, managers, and families, and their obvious love for their community and state, will stand as an example of Hoosier values for many generations.” (Indiana. General Assembly. House. Concurrent Resolution 0013, January 22, 2002)

A Senate Concurrent Resolution of the same year honored former President Ronald Reagan on the occasion of his ninety-first birthday:

Second Regular Session 112th General Assembly (2002)
SENATE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION to recognize Ronald Reagan on his 91st birthday. Whereas, President Ronald Wilson Reagan, a man of humble background, worked throughout his life serving freedom and advancing the public good, having been employed as an entertainer, Union leader, corporate spokesman, Governor of California and President of the United States;

Seven more adulatory Whereas clauses follow before the resolution concludes:

Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly
of the State of Indiana, the House of Representatives concurring:

SECTION 1. That the Indiana General Assembly, on behalf of the people of the State of Indiana, do hereby recognize President Ronald Reagan on his 91st birthday and do congratulate and thank Mr. Reagan for his great contribution to American history.
SECTION 2. That the Principle Secretary of the Senate is hereby directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to Grover G. Norquist, President of the Ronald Reagan Legacy Project. (Indiana. General Assembly. Senate. Concurrent Resolution 0018, February 5, 2002)

Distinguished Hoosiers

In response to a query about the Sagamore award, the Indiana Division of the Indiana State Library wrote, “each governor has the right to select recipients as he sees fit.” (Personal communication from Darrol Pierson, September 4, 2001) If the governor does not see fit to award a Sagamore certificate, there is another distinction at hand—“Distinguished Hoosier.” Peter DeKeever, a history teacher in Michawaka, received recognition as a “Distinguished Hoosier” in 1997, and the *South Bend Tribune* explained, “‘A Distinguished Hoosier Award is awarded to those citizens who go above and beyond the call of duty to help their fellow Hoosiers,’ said Steve Campbell, deputy press secretary in Gov. Frank O’Bannon’s Office.” Mr. DeKeever’s award was “one of 400 given across the state each year.” (“Penn History Teacher,”

1997, p. D3) Earning one distinction does not preclude earning the other. You may be named both a Sagamore and a Distinguished Hoosier. The 1992 obituary of August Ferdinand “Bud” Hook, chairman emeritus of Hook Drugs, reports that “Hook received a multitude of awards and citations during his lifetime, including Sagamore of the Wabash (1969) [and] Distinguished Hoosier (1970).” (“Former Hook Chairman Dies at 85,” 1992, PR Newswire, LexisNexis online)

Hoosier Living Legends

A new honor appeared for Indianans, although it does not come from the governor. The Indiana Historical Society created the “Hoosier Living Legends” award and introduced it “in 1999 as part of the grand opening festivities for the Indiana Historical Society’s new headquarters.” The first year recipients were chosen by vote, and the list included Larry Bird, Bobby Knight, David Letterman, Ruth Lilly, John Mellencamp, Oscar Robinson, Kurt Vonnegut, and Herman Wells. Since the initial selections, Living Legends have been chosen by “a committee of the Historical Society staff members and volunteers.” Among those honored were Joshua Bell, David Baker, Otis Bowen, Jim Davis, Theodore Hesburgh, and Lawrence Einhorn. (Personal communication from Suzanne Crowe, January 22, 2002)

No Need for Official Toasts

Indiana Sagamores may raise their glasses, but they have no official poem to recite in praise of the Hoosier State. Their Council cannot boast of a tradition reaching back to a time when Adams and Jefferson still lived. Some may feel that the enthusiasm of governors for naming an increasing number of Sagamores has diminished the significance of the award. Yet people are pleased to receive the honor. Denny quotes one honoree who received the award along with a standing ovation. She said, “It was one of those times when you don’t know if you’re floating or walking, if you should just smile or try not to cry.” (Denny, 1996, p. F1, 8) An account from the *Purdue Exponent* reported another new Sagamore as saying simply, “I certainly was overwhelmed.” (Jones, 2000, online)

Governor Orr presented William Prather, Jr., president of the Hardee’s restaurant chain, with his Sagamore award at the opening of a Hardee’s in Martinsville, where Prather was born. In a short feature on him, *Nation’s Restaurant News* reported, “The honor he treasures most is the “Sagamore of the Wabash Award...” The item continues, “It’s the highest civilian award in the state of Indiana. The plaque hangs proudly in my office.” (Van Warner, 1990, online) When Cyrus Nifong, 86, received his Sagamore award at a Jefferson Jackson Day dinner, he said, “I was very humbled. I don’t really know how to describe how I feel though. I’ve never done anything for glory.” Mr. Nifong, active in church and community affairs for decades, refused to boast. His wife had to do it for him. The presenter at the occasion, the person who had recommended Nifong to Governor O’Bannon, took joy in seeing Nifong recognized and said, “I was thrilled to give him that award. He has been a lifelong inspiration to me.” (Ochstein, 2002, online) That is a fine comment, and it illustrates how much meaning the Sagamore certificate

has, not only to those whose name is on it, but to those who have the pleasure of presenting it to someone they feel worthy of acknowledgement.

Watch Mitch

A presentation by Mitch Daniels (Governor Mitch Daniels Surprise Sagamore Presentation) appeared on YouTube, published on Apr 30, 2010.

April 29, 2010- Governor Mitch Daniels stopped by the WSBT Studios in Mishawaka to recognize anchor Cindy Ward for all of her contributions in and out of the newsroom over the past 25-years with a Sagamore of the Wabash, the state's highest honor. Ward has been active in such organizations as the United Way, Go Red for Women and the American Cancer Society and is always quick to donate her time to help emcee events for other organizations in Michiana.

Watch Mitch and the WSBT News crew: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDiKvDubEj4>

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