

**Paul Sisco**  
**Class of 1944**

*“Oh the places you'll go! There is fun to be done! There are points to be scored. There are games to be won. And the magical things you can do with that ball will make you the winning-est winner of all.”*

Dr. Seuss', "Oh, The Places You'll Go!" best describes Paul Sisco's life. At age 88, the Morton College alum still finds himself front and center for the day's big events whether as a reporter or participant.

He unknowingly witnessed the testing of the atomic bomb. He was less than 10 feet away when Jack Ruby shot Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. He remembers the most devastating loss in Morton High School's sports history. He was at baseball's longest playoff game. And, in between, he interviewed famous athletes, world leaders and Presidents over a 50-year career.

That's why Sisco elected to follow in the footsteps of his brother, Augie, and cover the news and rather than make it like Joe, who worked for four U.S. Presidents as a diplomat and statesman. Augie eventually became assistant managing editor at the Chicago Sun-Times.

“I never really wanted to do anything else,” said Sisco, who resides in Bethesda, Maryland. “The first day at Morton High School, I walked into the school newspaper office and said, ‘I’m here.’”

When World War II ended, the new GI Bill provided Sisco with a ticket to any college in the country. He chose Morton College, interestingly for many of the same reasons students give today as they did back in 1946. Sisco also was on familiar grounds at Morton College, having spent the 1944 spring semester there before enlisting in the Air Force in that June.

“With the GI Bill, I could have gone anywhere,” recalled Sisco, a mid-year graduate of Morton High School in January of 1944. “I always wanted to go to Morton Junior College. Two of my three brothers went there. I wanted to stay at home, so I picked MJC. I look back at MJC as two great years and some of the most fun I’ve ever had.”

The influx of returning veterans across the country on the GI Bill gave Morton College its largest freshman enrollment at the time.

“It was very crowded,” Sisco recalled. “We were on the third floor of Morton (East) High School. It’s not like the beautiful campus you have today. The feeling I had with the guys coming back from the service that they were rather anxious to get going. They were in a hurry and wanted to move on.”

Sisco was able to pursue his two great loves at Morton College – baseball and journalism. The war didn't diminish his skills after a three-year layoff as Sisco hit a team-high .429 for Morton College's 1947 squad, a notable improvement from his .316 showing in 1944.

He also served as sports editor of the Collegian, belonged to the Press Guild, was freshman class treasurer and recognized in the 1948 Pioneer yearbook as a campus leader.

Sisco's skills on the diamond earned rave reviews. The 1947 Collegiate described his performance in a doubleheader: "Paul Sisco seems to have formed the habit of starting games off right. In the first game, he slashed a single to left, and to, leadoff the second, the third sacker added a hard-hit double to left."

The instincts and insights displayed in his Collegian column, "As Seen from the Bench," showed why he turned out to be an all-pro in the world of reporting first on the local scene for The LIFE and later at the national levels at UPI and ABC News.

One of Sisco's Collegian column items pointed out the absurdity of a Big Nine (now Big Ten) conference rule regarding junior college transfers. Interestingly, the rule impacted Sisco when he played 150-pound football and varsity baseball at the University of Illinois.

"At this present time, a Morton Junior College graduate must play a year of freshman sports before being eligible for varsity competition," Sisco wrote. "Already juniors, that leaves only one year of eligibility. It's almost an impossibility to play in the power-laden Midwest."

Looking back on it nearly 65 years later, Sisco said, "That was the rule and it didn't matter. It did seem a little strange."

His pre-reporter days taught Sisco that the government isn't always forthcoming. Sisco, who entered the Air Force in June of 1944, remembers being in Alamogordo, New Mexico, to do a scheduled 5 a.m. crew training mission when they spotted a huge flash on the horizon.

"The officers told the crew it was an ammunitions explosion and that training flights were canceled for the day," said Sisco in the Bethesda Magazine interview. "Of course, it wasn't too long before we found it was the atomic bomb test."

Sisco was one of four brothers to serve in World War II. Joe and George, who still has Morton College's highest single-season batting average with .588 in 1941, were in the Army. George, an Army medic, was part of the first hospital detachment into Berlin after World War II. And Augie was in the Navy.

Sisco played two seasons of minor-league baseball for the Chicago Cubs in 1949 and 1950. At the time, there was no draft and teams often relied on scouts or open tryout camps to find players. Sisco thought he made a good showing at a Boston Red Sox tryout session before signing with the Cubs a week later.

He injured his throwing hand during his second season and the Cubs wanted to send him to the Three-I League. Little did Sisco realize he was deferring his dream of reaching the big leagues for 57 years when he decided to give up baseball.

“The Cubs were going to send me down to the D League,” Sisco recalled. “It didn’t seem right, so I decided to let it go and hang it up. Shortly after, I got a job at The LIFE. I was getting married and I was 24. It’s not like today where there’s so many teams. Back then, there was only eight teams in each league.”

That started Sisco on a career path that landed him in the National Television Academy’s Gold Circle.

Even early in Sisco’s career, he displayed an uncanny ability to be around the day’s big story. At The LIFE, none was bigger than Morton High School’s 1951 basketball team. Four players were named to the all-Suburban League Team. As a youth growing up in Cicero, longtime St. Joseph basketball coach Gene Pingatore described the ’51 team as his boyhood idols.

They entered the state playoffs undefeated and ranked No. 1 in the state before losing to Hinsdale in the regional finals.

“They were better than Morton’s 1932 and 1941 teams,” said Sisco, referring to Morton’s two state championship basketball teams. “Vopicka (Morton coach Jim) never forgot that loss.”

The biggest story of Sisco’s professional career came with United Press International in 1963, two days after President John F. Kennedy has been assassinated. UPI sent Sisco to Dallas to cover the aftermath and he found himself stationed in the police station where suspected assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was going to be moved to the courthouse to be arraigned.

“There was absolutely no security,” said Sisco in an interview with the May/June 2013 issue of BethesdaMagazine.com. “Oswald comes walking out, and all of a sudden this guy, Jack Ruby, steps out of the crowd and shoots him. We were all stunned, but I told the cameraman, ‘Don’t stop the camera! Don’t stop the camera!’ ...Everybody was yelling. The cops were shoving everybody around. And then they dragged Oswald back into the station.”

Sisco is probably the only Morton College alum to wind up in the pages of Warren Commission Report, established by President Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate the Kennedy assassination.

Try this one in today’s highly-scripted media world. The day after Willie Mays hit a record-tying four home runs in a 1961 game against the Milwaukee Braves, Sisco and a camera crew knocked on the San Francisco Giants star’s door at the old Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago.

“He greeted our camera crew in a shirt and shorts,” Sisco said. “We probably woke him up. We did the whole interview from the waist up. Ten minutes later, our cameraman said, ‘Wait, we’ve got to do it over.’ Mays graciously did a second interview.”

He interviewed the likes of Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Sonny Liston and covered World Series and All-Star games. Sisco covered every presidential convention from 1952 to 1988, only missing the 1960 Democratic convention won by Kennedy. He reported on Lyndon Baines Johnson’s decision not to seek re-election in 1968 and Richard Nixon’s 1974 announcement that he would resign as President.

“We were in the White House’s Briefing Room,” said Sisco of Nixon’s resignation. “It was so crowded. I sat on the floor next to Sally Quinn (who eventually married the late Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee).”

In 1966, UPI transferred Sisco to its Washington office. The move was supposed to be temporary, but became permanent when the bureau chief was reassigned. ABC News bought out UPI’s Television News Division in 1980, but Sisco stayed on as bureau chief until he retired at age 72 in 1998.

The word retirement isn’t part of Sisco’s vocabulary. Sisco worked at the front desk of a tennis center of where he played. He finally got the long-awaited call-up to the major leagues when the Washington Nationals hired Sisco as an usher in 2007. He’s spent the last eight years as an usher for the Washington Nationals and was there the entire six hours and 23 minutes of the team’s playoff-record tying 2-1, 18-inning loss to the San Francisco Giants October 4th in Game 2 of the 2014 National League Divisional Series.

“I’m still recovering from that one,” said Sisco several days later. “I enjoyed the season, but it was tough to lose two games at home and be expected to bounce back.”

Sisco has watched the media landscape change dramatically in his lifetime. During the 1960s, UPI’s main clients were CBS and ABC. For one thing, film had to be shipped air express. It couldn’t be transmitted via satellite.

Sisco watches Fox News, but added, “Just watching TV only is pretty hard to get the full insight of the news. You need to read one or two newspapers a day.

“It’s a different time,” Sisco continued. “You didn’t have 24-hour news cycles. There’s various forms of technology that were non-existent. The only thing we had back then were newspapers and then the networks started slowly rolling out one news show. You really can’t compare because it’s much faster and non-stop. I’m not sure if it’s better because you don’t have time to reflect before you write or go on TV.”