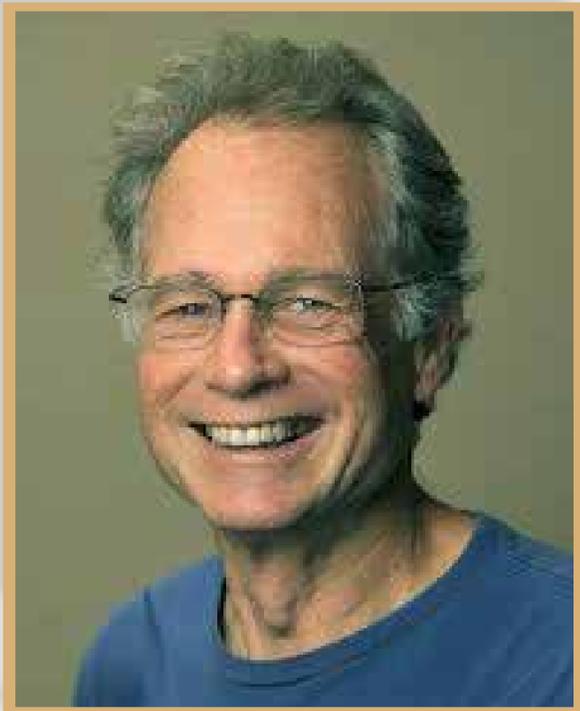




SANTA BARBARA COURT OF CHAMPIONS

JOHN ZANT | 2016 INDUCTEE



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John Zant went to work as a sports writer for the News-Press after graduating from UCSB in 1968. Although his own athletic background was football and track, he discovered basketball was very special in Santa Barbara. In his first three years on the high school beat, he covered some games of the great Santa Barbara High team of 1969-70 (Jamaal Keith Wilkes, Don Ford et al) and covered every game of the fabulous 1970-71 Dos Pueblos Chargers all the way to their CIF 3-A championship.

When the SB Dons battled Bill Laimbeer and Palos Verdes in the 1975 CIF playoffs, and when they took on Long Beach Poly in 1976, the stories were written by Zant. He covered UCSB men's basketball from 1977 to 1983, not the most glorious period in the Gauchos' history. When he gave up the beat, he expressed doubts that Jerry Pimm could turn the program around, thus losing his prophet's license.

Zant was writing columns when Pimm took the Gauchos to the NCAA tournaments in 1988 and 1990. He got back to

covering games in 1992, when Mark French took the UCSB women's team to the NCAA tournament and gave champion Stanford a run for the money.

Zant was the first area newsman to cover women's basketball on a regular basis, feeding the community's growing interest in the sport. He covered all games during the UCSB women's run of nine consecutive NCAA appearances (1997-2005), including 2004 when they gave Connecticut a scare in the Sweet Sixteen.

Since leaving the News-Press in 2007, Zant has been writing a weekly sports column for the Santa Barbara Independent.

Basketball has provided him with a wealth of material, from the consistent successes of the UCSB and Westmont College teams – including a national championship for Kirsten Moore and the Warrior women – to the excitement of high-school rivalries.

Thank-yous: Donn Bernstein, publicist extraordinaire, who got me my first job. Philip Patton, my first boss, and his son Mark, who took over the Gaucho men's beat. High school coaches Don Volpi (RIP), Maury Halleck and Jack Trigueiro, who helped a running back appreciate the art of dribbling. Classy college coaches Mark French, John Moore, Kirsten Moore, Bob Williams and Jerry Pimm. All the basketball stars who are in the Court of Champions or will be someday, and the role players who made teams successful. My children Joe, Francie, Joanna and Chris, who learned to read for themselves because I wasn't always there for bedtime stories. Marianne Partridge and the Independent, a home for my writing, and my wife Kathleen Rodriguez, who keeps me going.