

ABOUT ME...

Born in a log cabin in central Kentucky... oops, sorry, wrong autobiography!

I was born and raised in Cicero and Berwyn, IL, graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1989 with a B.S. in Ecology, Ethology, and Evolution (a fancy term for Zoology).

Taught summer school (science and math) at my high school alma mater, DeLaSalle Institute in Chicago, before heading to the Pacific Northwest to be a research intern at The Whale Museum in Friday Harbor, WA (San Juan Island). Studied killer whale (orca) and Dall's porpoise behavior.

Became a substitute teacher in January 1990 at several local parochial schools while earning my substitute teaching certificate. In Fall of 1990, began subbing at various local public schools, including RBHS, at which I became their primary science and math sub. Enrolled at St. Xavier University in Chicago to earn my teaching certificate (Spring 1992) and an M.A. in Education (1996).

Student taught at RB from January to March 1992 and was hired to the faculty that summer. Have taught all levels of Biology (three), along with Chemistry, General Science, and Introductory Physical Science. Proposed and created the Applied Zoology course in 2002 (which began in the Fall 2003). The course has grown into the most enrolled senior elective in Science with most years having at least three sections (80+ students).

In the Fall of 2011, became an Adjunct Professor with Aurora University to teach classes for science teachers at the Brookfield Zoo.

In November 2013, successfully passed my National Board Certification, one of the most rigorous and challenging programs a teacher can undertake (and less than 3% of all teachers nationally earn). In June 2017, one of my portfolio entries was selected by the National Board to be showcased on ATLAS, an online resource for teachers pursuing their National Board Certification. Was also nominated for a Golden Apple for excellent teaching in December 2018.

Have coached and sponsored the following over my 25+ year career: Junior High Softball (boys), Wrestling (RB Head Coach - 8 years), Chess Team (13 years Head Coach at RB, many years as an assistant at DLS), Little League (both boys baseball and girls softball - T-Ball through Majors), Travel Softball, Ecology Club, and Snowball. Was also the Voice of the Aquatic Bulldogs from 1992 to 2018 (girls swimming, boys swimming, water polo).

Have been a three time president of the local teachers' union (RBEA), as well as Secretary, negotiator, and Welfare Chair and committee member. Have sat on innumerable school committees and also sit on the board for the Aaron Semenske Scholarship Foundation. Am currently the president of the Riverside Brookfield Education Foundation (RBEF).

Have been married for 29 years to my amazing wife, Brenda, (a former science teacher who is now a junior high reading specialist) and we have a son who graduated from RB in 2017 and a daughter who graduated in 2019, along with our own zoo of rescued animals (two dogs, two cats, and a chinchilla).

In 2016-17, I also served as the Instructional Coach for the Applied Arts and Fine Arts departments, as well as the CTE (Career and Technical Education) Grant Facilitator for RB.

FUN FACTS:

Can play numerous instruments (violin, cello, piano, guitar, bass guitar); vocalist and songwriter (have performed several times for RB including Telethons, Talent Shows, and the Spring Music Concert), and screenplay writer. Avid bicyclist, birdwatcher, naturalist, reader, and movie buff. Have a band called Surly Dave & The Wallabies and released a debut album titled “Unbreakable” in October 2015. Released a follow-up LP titled “Resilient” in December 2020. Currently working slowly on an interconnected 5 song EP. Lastly, after nine years of saving, fulfilled a life-long dream of traveling to Australia and New Zealand in July 2015. Was a three week zoology field trip including great white sharks, kangaroos, koalas, echidnas, Tasmanian devils, salt water crocodiles, and more!!!

Finally, have been a guitar pick collector since 1980 and had part of my collection shown nationally on the VH1 show “Rock Collectors” in 1999. Have made friends with pick collectors from all over the world (some of whom I’ve met) and have also become friends with many famous and award-winning musicians over the years, along with their managers and crew as well.

Eric Bazilian of The Hooters/Joan Osborne
July 2017
(he played on my debut CD!)

Steve Lukather of Toto
June 2017
(long time family friend!)

