



By JACKSON SELLERS

February 20, 2007

On cable television this afternoon, I watched *Breaking Away*, a 1979 movie filmed entirely in Bloomington, Indiana, and on the Indiana University campus. I had seen the movie before but not for a long time. It was nostalgic for me on a couple of levels. I was an IU student from 1950 to 1954 and again in 1958 after I got out of the Navy. Thus, many scenes in the movie – campus buildings of brick and limestone, the water-filled abandoned quarries where we swam, the “old” Memorial Stadium where we watched football and track meets – all were familiar to me. Also, the movie’s plot centered around bicycle racing and climaxed with the annual “Little 500” bike race at Memorial Stadium, which in real life was torn down shortly after *Breaking Away* was filmed. This, too, was nostalgic. I raced in the university’s first two Little 500s in 1951 and 1952. I was captain of the North Hall Cavaliers team in 1952. After the movie ended today, I pulled out a crumbling scrapbook, seeking a fine 1951 photo showing a young Jack Sellers in

action on the stadium’s cinder track. Damn! It wasn’t there, just an 8x10 blank spot where it used to be. Then I remembered that an IU professor, two or three years ago, convinced me to donate my best photos to the Little 500 historical archives in Bloomington. Well, that left me with the 1952 firing-squad photo above. The shortest guy is Captain Jack. We did pretty well, finishing 13th among 33 teams. The campus newspaper reported the next day: “Jack Sellers, sophomore, captain of the North Hall Cavaliers, felt fine after riding twenty-six laps. He confided, ‘It seems like the boys are getting a little careless now – they cut turns too close and take the inside when they really don’t have the right.’” Those twenty-six laps were about half of what I eventually rode. The Little 500 is a 50-mile race requiring 200 laps on a quarter-mile track. The above photo could have been cropped a little tighter, if I had wanted to show only the four racers and the squatting team manager. But the photo contained a surprise for me when I looked at it for the first time in decades. The woman at extreme upper left is my mother. The man in the hat, leaning over the stadium railing, is my father.