

# "HALL OF FAME X2"

## LADY MAGIC AND PRIME TIME

By Nancy Lieberman



After finishing another week of basketball camp, I headed home to pack and then off to the airport to catch a 5:45 pm flight to Canton, Ohio to the Pro Football Hall of Fame 2011 Enshrinement.

The NFL Network had this incredible feature on my friend Deion Sanders. It just really makes you remember the greatness of his career and the impact he had. I really dig Hall of Famers, because Hall of Famers do things that nobody else has ever done. Just think of all of the athletes in their respective sports that play the game at a high level, at a great level. Hall of Famers play it at an iconic level. That's why there are so few of them in sports, which makes it even more impressive. They did at such a high level for a long period of time, they were game changers. Deion Sanders was that game changer. He did things that nobody else had ever done. He had 19 defensive and return touchdowns. He made defense an offense. He did it with style, he did it with flare, he did it with bringing the crowds to their feet. Love him, don't love him, Prime Time means that everybody's watching. He did it when the brightest lights were on.

I am going to get on this plane in a few minutes, get my itinerary all together for this amazing weekend including the Deion Sanders/Marshall Faulk post party. So the Pro Football Hall of Fame Enshrinement 2011 is ON!!!!!!!!!!!!

### Canton, Ohio

Just got to the Marriott in Canton it's about 11:45 almost midnight as our flight was delayed connecting through Chicago, but that's okay because I AM HERE! It's kind of cool there are people in the lobby that have their own like garbage cans of beer. I just walked in and there are some childhood friends of Shannon Sharpe and this guy turns around and said " Oh my gosh, what's Nancy Lieberman, doing here?" I told him that I am a family friend of Deion Sanders. The guy then says, "a basketball Hall of Famer at the Football Hall of Fame?". I said yes I am. I'm here to see what is on the other side of the fence.

### Hall of Fame Tour

What a delicious day!! I had so much fun. The tour was absolutely breathtaking. To be surrounded by the history of such amazing athletes

was an absolute pleasure.

So the day at the HOF began like this; there was a woman at the HOF office and I told her I was trying to figure out the best way to go about touring the Hall. The woman looked at me and said "Oh my gosh, you're Nancy Lieberman, I'm a huge fan, I used to be a basketball coach myself and I can't believe you are here". A young lady in the office by the name of Alexis Harkins, who attends Mount Vernon Nazarene Univeristy in Mount Vernon, Ohio recognizes me and also knows my assistant coach from The Texas Legends, Coach Scott Flemming. Alexis plays basketball there and Scott was her coach at one time. Small world! Everyone wants to take pictures with me and of course I did that.

Then it was time to tour the Hall of Fame. As I was walking around I was just looking at the football helmets from the 1900's. I myself go

back to the mid 60's with football and seeing the busts of such players as Paul Hornung (Green Bay Packers player 1957-66) and Bart Starr (Packers player 1956-71 and head coach 1975-83) was fantastic. There's the Kansas City Chiefs, the Jets, just so much to see. It was really spectacular to be in the Hall with all the busts of all of the icons of football.

I took a picture of Michael Irvin's bust and tweeted, " I can't believe Michiael Irvin's bust is nicer than mine, LOL". Definately for the Hall of Fame, the busts they do of the players are a lot nicer than the ones we have in the basketball Hall of Fame. We need to contact their sculptures!

I went into the gift shop and just bought a slew of Deion Sanders items to commemorate his Enshrinement and this special day! From there I ran into Skip Cheatham and his wife Tiffany, Nate and Michelle

Newton and Broderick Thomas and his family. After we all toured the Hall they asked me join them and we all went to IHOP for about a 3 hour lunch. Senator Royce West and his wife met us there as did David Wells and his wife Linda. David is working with Dez Bryant and mentoring him currently. All of the stories that were told by Nate, Broderick, myself; we were saying it could have been a reality show. Good times. Then back to the hotel to get ready for the Enshrinement as we are all ready and excited to hear Prime's speech.

### Hall of Fame Enshrinement Class of 2011

Walking into the stadium there were all sorts of NFL players and fellow Hall of Famers. Deion brought the kids from his TRUTH football league. I got out my flip camera out to film that for him because it was so cool to see and I wanted him to be

able to see all of that.

I was seated about 5 rows back from center stage along with Deion's family. In front of me were Ice Cube and Snoop Dogg!! The last to arrive was Pilar Sanders and she was on crutches. What a trooper, she was first team on Hall of Fame. Apparently at the hotel she was opening the door or something with the curtains, I'm not exactly sure, and she somehow cut her leg so badly she had to get a ton of stitches. It was so severe they even called in a plastic surgeon. But, she still looked absolutely gorgeous, all of the Sanders' kids were there. Deion played for 5 NFL Teams and so each of his kids (he has 5) wore a different jersey to represent each team. It was great!!

While everyone's speeches were great, Shannon Sharpe absolutely just hit it out of the park with his. His tribute to his grandmother just got me. What a fantastic story. I was whelled up with tears in my eyes listening to Shannon. It was just crazy, just nuts, just wonderful.

You know, they kept the best for last; Deion "Prime Time" Sanders is just an amazing speaker. He gets to the heart of it with his confidence, his truth and his love of God. I have such love and respect for Deion and for what he does. I have said this for years; Prime Time built the house, but Deion Sanders is one heck of a man with His heart, his love of God and his love of his family. It's almost like Muhammad Ali's career. The people that hated Muhammed when he was boxing and loud and brash, those are the people who when he was done boxing loved and revered him for the man that he is. I believe Deion will

be the same way. There are some people that Deion mentioned in his speech, there are some haters and some people that might not like him. But I think that as Deion continues to evolve, that those people will fall in love with him when they realize what he has done for people consistently. What he has done for all of the children, for the homeless and



truly for everybody. I am just really proud of Deion and who he is.

The night went late, the speeches went long, but it was their night to say what they wanted to say. Everybody had a tent and a party after the ceremony. I had a chance to talk to Troy Aikman, Jerry Jones, Eric Dickerson, Bruce Smith, Warren Sapp, Kurt Warner and so many other greats. Nelly went on stage at about midnight, then Snoop Dogg and Ice Cube. I was so honored and it was so special to be part of such an

iconic night and event. Deion thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this AND giving me a shout out in your speech. Thank you for always showing so much kindness to me as your friend and as your sister. I honor you for that day and that night and thank you for the blessing that you are.

The more I think of Deion the more I think he should be revered for his standards of not accepting mediocracy in anything he has done in his life. So many people see Deion Sanders and think he is full of himself, he's this, he's that, but the greatest thing about Deion is that he is always pushing the limits of who he can be and what he can be. Sometimes

when people live in mediocracy, and most people do, it makes Deion look like he is full of himself, he's not. I love him, I am so proud of him he's like my brother. When he gave the speech about his Mom and people used to say he didn't want to hit people, he didn't want to tackle, then he gave that speech on tackling everything in his Mom's life and the

ills and what he did for her. What he did just shows that he understood responsibility more than the common person.

When you're an elite athlete like Deion or myself, or Shannon or anybody who is a hall of famer, you hide so much of your emotion of who you are. You have this aura of invincibility and it doesn't matter if you are a guy or a girl to compete at the highest levels and to be different. You don't show a lot of emotions and to see those guys at the ceremony open themselves up, to see those tears and to expose and surrender themselves to the audience, it's so special. It's an amazing feeling when the game says thank you to you for your excellence and for what you have given over time. But it's also, and I know this from my Hall of Fame speech in 1996, it gives you a chance to be real. To show your emotions. To say things to your fans, the media and press for so many years that you couldn't because you had blinders on could only give them your best.

I am so proud of Deion. As I was sitting on a delay in South Bend, Indiana coming home I got a text from Deion. It says "Fancy (he calls me Fancy) thank you for being there for me and you're the greatest ever!". That sums up my relationship with Deion and I love him too. I am so happy I could share that with him and I will take that to the Basketball Hall of Fame with me and share that with my peers.

**The T.R.U.T.H**  
Trust in God, Respect Myself and Others, Understand I have unlimited possibilities  
Try my best and never give up, Honor myself and the T.R.U.T.H Creed at all times

### **Basketball Hall of Fame**

My summer basketball camps for 2011 ended today. It was a full day for me with camp beginning at 8:30 a.m., the kids there and videos of camp, a special presentation for their parents and awards for them. It's always so cool. From there I hustled home to shower and change then headed to the airport again, this time with my son TJ. The last time he came along with me to the Basketball Hall of Fame was back in 2009 when Michael Jordan was inducted. It's always an honor and it's always a thrill.



*Nancy and her son TJ at the Basketball Hall of Fame Enshrinement*

On the flight up we were about an hour or so into the flight when a little boy came back and sat behind

my son TJ. You could tell he was uncomfortable and not feeling very

well. He had this mo-hawk which was blue. I mean it was electric blue. The boy was lying down in his Mom's lap. His Mom was all tatted up and was a pretty lady. In a moment the flight attendant made an announcement asking if there was a doctor on board. It was so neat to see people get up and two doctors responded and tried to work with him. They took his blood pressure and stuff and there was a little bit of chatter going on and the next thing we hear is that we were

making an emergency landing in Indianapolis. They called for medics on the ground and within fifteen minutes of them saying this is what we're going to do, boom, we were on the ground and medical staff was on the plane attending to the boy. They took him off the plane, the Mother and her other two children, two girls, went with him.

When we landed in Springfield, my son TJ pointed out the people from the Hall of Fame holding the signs, waiting to drive us. There was a sign that said Lieberman/Rodman. We just sort of looked at one another. I told the gentleman that there was a little boy that was taken off of our airplane and the guy said that was



Dennis Rodman's son, and asked not to say anything because the family needed to tell Dennis about this. It was so ironic you know. Dallas is where Dennis grew up.

We were scrambling because after the emergency landing in Indianapolis, which obviously was the most important thing, we didn't land in Springfield until 5. I had to be at a reception at 6:30 with David Thompson, he is class of '96 with me, as we were doing a fantasy basketball camp hosted by the NBA D League. We made it just in time.

I just dig the Basketball Hall of Fame, because there are two hotels downtown that the Hall of Famers stay. There's the Sheraton, where the event was taking place and the Marriott where I seem to always stay. So we get to the hotel and there are all of these autograph seekers, professionals. They're behind stanchions and every year I've been to the Hall of Fame I just go over to them and sign autographs, talk to them. I do appreciate them because these guys are out there and they are working hard. I really don't care if these guys are selling them because at least they do a decent job and work hard. Every year they are out there doing this and I always stop. They are so appreciative that I do take the time, because there are people that don't stop and don't take the time for any autographs.

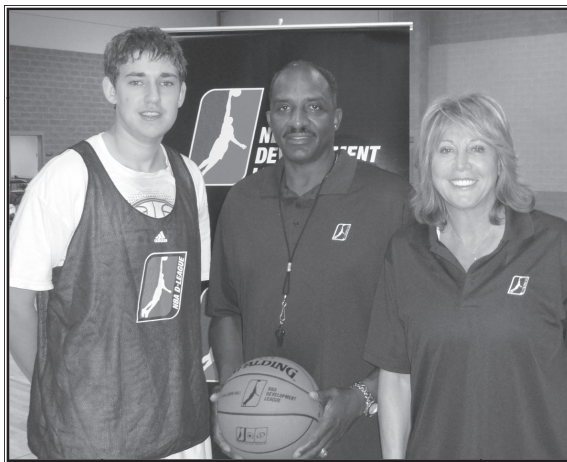
I ran up stairs, got changed, came down and signed more autographs, balls, books. It's really amazing all of the stuff they have on you. Across the street on the way to the reception, there was another group of autographs probably about thirty or forty, signed those and went on up to the reception. There I met up with Dee Brown, the D League coach for the Springfield Armor, David Thompson, Dan Reed (President of the NBA D League) and some support personnel were there. We have about thirty to thirty-five people participating in this fantasy basketball camp. There are two gyms, David Thompson and I have one of them and the next gym has another. We have Derek and Nick Raivio who play in the D League. Nick played at University of Portland and Derek at Gonzaga. Matter of fact Derek was telling me he had just come from working out at Gon-



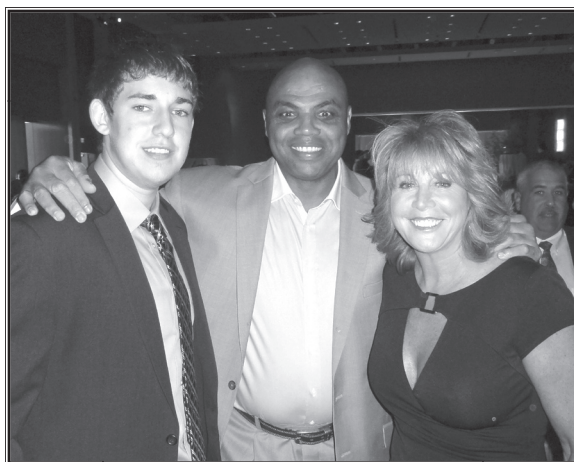
*Dennis Rodman (Class of 2011) and Nancy*

zaga with Hall of Famer John Stockton. John is of Michael Jordan's Class of 2009.

The overwhelming thing that we talked about when I was around the D Leaguers and the NBA people was that we talked about Donnie Nelson. Donnie Nelson, you know with his coolness, the fact he allowed me to be the Assistant GM this year of the Texas Legends,



*TJ, David Thompson (Class of '96) and Nancy*



*TJ, Charles Barkley and Nancy*

keeping me in the fold and with the league. The league was very happy and I was certainly very pleased. We are all Donnie Nelson fans.

We had a wonderful fantasy camp. My son TJ played. Dee Brown had the younger group. David Thompson and I had the older group. We had so many people, men and women, that paid a lot of money and took time to come to this camp and play with, meet and be around the Hall of Famers. Unfortunately we had a couple of people that got hurt, which wasn't good, but all in all it was a great camp.

It was a full day as we started around 8:30 a.m. David Thompson talked with them right before lunch, on the court. He really gave them an inspiring talk about his career and where he came from. Then after lunch I spoke about my life and my career. We were honored by having Bill Walton (class of '93) come in. And Bill has so many

with John Havlicek, Willis Reed, Bill Russell, Walt Frazier or David Thompson. Its one thing to be around the younger guys and my generation, but it's the guys that played in the 50's and 60's that really set the plate for everybody.

I saw Walt Bellamy and Sam Jones. Walt Bellamy, who played for the Detroit Pistons, played when I was growing up. I'd watch Walt go to battle against Willis Reed, Will Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Nate Thurman and Artis Gilmore, who was enshrined this weekend.

The evening started with a reception at the arena with a pre - Hall of Fame reception. All of the inductees for the evening were there. It was nice to just mix and mingle with everyone including past Hall of Famers like Charles Barkley and others like David Stern and Adam Silver.

Before we left the arena Dennis Rodman came in. Penny Marshall was filming a documentary on his life, so the cameras were rolling and she was there. Dennis and I had a chance to talk and catch up as we have been friends since he was growing up in Dallas, he and his sister, Deborah Rodman. She was a star and All American at Louisiana Tech. When she graduated we played against each other when I was at Old Dominion. Then she became my team mate when we played on the Dallas Diamonds. I just loved it. I loved having her as my team mate. Dennis used to come to our games and just hang out. Their Mom Shirley always came too. Dennis' son, who was taken off our flight on the way up was there and feeling a lot better.

Then over to the symphony hall, walking the red carpet on the way was so much fun. Taking pictures with all of the Hall of Famers and seeing so many was amazing. The speeches were wonderful. It was extra special as my friend Dennis Rodman was enshrined this year!

Congratulations to all of the Hall of Famers both Football and Basketball, Class of 2011!

wonderful stories. Just listening to him, how he handled his career was so powerful. He signed autographs and took pictures with everyone. It made it even more special having my son TJ there with me and to get to share all of this, what is such a huge part of my life with him.

After the fantasy camp we were walking back and I saw Tara VanDerVeer and her sister Heidi. I had a chance to congratulate her on her enshrinement this year. Having TJ with me gave a lot of people a chance to see him that hasn't since he was younger. It was really neat to be able to see all of that.

## **Basketball Hall of Fame Enshrinement**

I got a chance to see a lot of the Hall of Famers who otherwise you don't know when you will get a chance to see them again. I scratch my head sometimes you know and I think WOW, I'm hanging around

**Publisher's Note:** Story by Nancy Lieberman. Photos courtesy of Nancy Lieberman and Deion Sanders.