HALL OF FAME FOR FORMER TOWN AND COUNTRY RESIDENT AND THE INTERVIEW FROM 38 YEARS AGO OR THE REST OF THE STORY: Bob Costas was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame’s media section last weekend. He is the only baseball play by play announcer in the HOF who did not at sometime in his career work as a daily play by play man for a specific team. The fact that he did not surprised a lot of people in 1980.

At the time the Cardinals had a deal with then KSD-TV to broadcast at least 40 road games a year. KSD’s sports director Jay Randolph was in the TV booth for all nine innings. Mike Shannon would do the first three and the last three innings with Randolph and Jack Buck would do the middle three innings. (Ron Jacober, the number-two guy at KSD was a better play by play man but he was banned from the broadcast booth after he interviewed Harry Carey the day he was fired by the Cardinals at Busch’s Grove with Harry prominently holding a Schlitz Beer can during the interview. The Cardinals owned the rights to broadcasts and Gussie Busch was pissed.)
Back to 1979/1980; the TV arrangement left just one guy in the radio broadcast booth. So Bob Starr the play by play voice of the Football Cardinals would be in the radio booth for all nine innings when games were on TV. In 1979 Starr quit to take a play by play job with the Los Angeles Angels, in the country’s number 2 media market. That left the play by play job in the radio booth during 40-plus games a year open. We were all sure the job would go to Bob Costas, but it didn’t. It went to the Blues play by play man Dan Kelly.

Most people think (including some recent articles in the Post-Dispatch) that Costas’ network broadcasting had always been at NBC. But that was not the case. He started doing NFL football games on CBS in 1977 from the TV markets with the lowest amount of viewers (not counting Green Bay of course) just being broadcast to two cities. Bob would usually get stuck with a new former player trying out as a color commentator. In 1979 the top team at CBS was Pat Summerall on play by play and John Madden in his first years as an analyst. Bob was at or near the bottom. In 1980 he moved to NBC, things changed. He also did one year of Chicago Bulls basketball on WGN-TV.

The word around the media was that Jack Buck picked Dan Kelly because he wanted someone his own age to go out with for dinner and drinks after games and Costas was too young. At the time I was a cop and I was also writing feature articles for St. Louis Magazine under various pen names (Strode Wilder, Clayton Webster and Ed Wallace) hoping my second job would not be discovered. (It was)

Here is an interview I did with Costas at KMOX and O’Connell’s Pub that got edited down and appeared in the May 1980 issue.
Young Man Costas
By Ed Wallace

In October 1974 Robert Hyland, CBS regional vice president and general manager of KMOX radio, had just negotiated a contract to broadcast the games of the St. Louis Spirits. Should he hire an experienced play-by-play man or gamble and hire a young sportscaster with little experience who might turn into a major talent? The choice was between Neil Funk, an experienced pro basketball announcer, and Bob Costas, a recent Syracuse University graduate with no big league background. Hyland decided to gamble and signed the 22-year-old Costas to a one-year contract for $11,000. If Costas didn't work out little harm was done.

St. Louis basketball diehards, who had lived and died on every word of Buddy Blanner, Jerry Gross and Skip Carey during the Hawks era, were pleased that Costas was able to make a no-count ABA game played before 1,200 people sound like the seventh game of an NBA playoff. Costas began to climb when he became a regular on the Jack Carney Show. Later he hosted KMOX's Sports Open Line and in 1976 began doing NFL Football games for CBS Television.

In December 1979 Bob Starr, the second man in the baseball Cardinal's play-by-play team behind Jack Buck, announced that he was leaving KMOX to broadcast baseball and football in Los Angeles. With Costas' popularity at an all-time high, most local sports fans believed that he would replace Starr. Insiders at KMOX claimed that Costas had Hyland's backing for the baseball job, but the ultimate decision rested with the Cardinal hierarchy. In February it was disclosed that Dan Kelly had been picked instead of Costas.

Shortly after Kelly's hiring, Jack Buck was quoted in the Globe-Democrat as having said that Costas may have seemed "too pushy" to the powers that be and that he might have "stepped on a few toes." Rumors then surfaced that Buck had been instrumental in Costas not getting the baseball job and had slowed Costas' fast-rising career.

Q: What do you think caused your almost immediate acceptance by listeners and fans?
A: I honestly don't know. I think they probably thought I did a pretty good job on the Spirits' play-by-play, but obviously the Spirits were not the hottest ticket in town and that didn't give me as much exposure as I'd wind up getting later on. I think that coming on the Jack Carney Show during my first year here and being presented in a very favorable light on that show was a big key and maybe my style was just a little bit different from what people had been used to and maybe they found the change interesting.

Q: Are people amazed at your almost total recall of sports data?
A: There's no secret. It's just that I've liked sports since I was five or six. I make no conscious effort to memorize, it just sticks there in my head. I can be pretty scatterbrained about things that don't interest me. I'm likely to forget what day the garbage goes out, but for some reason I remember who led the National League in doubles in 1948. The only time I make a conscious effort to memorize is before doing the play-by-play of a game.

Q: KMOX sportscasters have been accused of being pro-management and team cheerleaders. How do you respond to that?
A: I think that each person can only speak for himself. I don't think I fall into that category. Everybody has his own style and approach but my idea is that if somebody calls and asks you a legitimate question they deserve as direct and as honest a response as possible. I will never make a gratuitous critical statement about anybody. I don't enjoy being controversial and I don't think about myself as being a very controversial figure. But if I'm put on the spot and if I'm asked a direct question, then I'll give as honest an answer as I can. But I think that people should understand that there is a big difference between responding honestly to a direct question and just firing from the hip, taking potshots at people for no reason just because you feel like it. I don't enjoy criticizing anybody but sometimes you have to just to keep your credibility.

Q: What's your relationship with Joe Sullivan and Bill Bidwill?
A: Joe Sullivan I like very much. I find him a very personable and engaging guy and I think in terms of knowledge of the game he's a very good football man. He may have been hamstrung a bit by having to work within Bidwill's guidelines. My relationship with Bill Bidwill is no worse or better than that of a number of other sportswriters and sportscasters in this town. I'd guess that I'm not on a list of his favorites.

Q: Why's that?
A: Oh, I think that in the past, not because I wanted to but because it was unavoidable, I had to be critical of Bidwill and the football team on the air. I'm not at all reluctant to give them credit and I want to be as fair as I possibly can, but I guess in the past I was critical and maybe that's something they've resented.

Q: Why do you think you lost the play-by-play job with the Cardinals?
A: I really don't know. I was surprised by some of the
Without coming out directly about Jack Buck killing his chance to replace Bob Starr, I fished around the subject and asked several questions concerning Costas' relationship with Buck.

Costas went out of his way to be a good guy. A neighbor of mine on South Maple Avenue in Webster Groves was Andy High, who served in World War 1 and World War II in a combat unit with the Army Corps of Engineers. He was also an outfielder/first baseman for the Cardinals in the 1920s and after WW II was the chief scout for the Dodgers until 1963 (the era of the greatest Dodger teams ever). Andy was a widower with failing eyesight. After I did the interview with Costas I had the phone number to his Georgetown apartment in Shrewsbury. I called him and asked him if he could stop by and chat with Andy. He said sure. But before it happened Andy had a stroke. Bob was nice enough to call him at the hospital. Andy died a few months later at his son’s house in Ohio.
When Bob got married to Carole “Randy” Krumenacher in 1983 they eventually bought a house at 2739 Turnberry Park in Town and Country one block west of Clayton Road and Ballas. They divorced in 2001. She kept the house in the divorce, but sold it in 2015 and moved to Crystal Lake Park.

Costas moved back to New York after the divorce and remarried three years later.

Here is a link to the column by Dan Caesar of the Post-Dispatch from July 27 on Costas without the information about him not getting the Cardinal broadcast job.