



(From left) Keith Bulen, head of Richard Lugar's mayoral campaign, Lugar and Jim Morris. Morris reflects, "It was a time when (Lugar) articulated a vision for Indianapolis that said we can be special, we can be a great community for our children. ... It makes no difference if you are Republican or Democrat; everybody is invited to be a part of rebuilding a remarkable city."

# FOUNDING FATHER



## Jim Morris Built a Legacy, Shaped a City

By Rebecca Patrick

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Second of a 2019 series on people and organizations that have made a dramatic impact on Indiana.*

Morris and Lugar have stayed close over the decades, including reuniting for Morris' swearing in last year as the U.S. representative on the UNICEF executive board. Joining them for the occasion: their wives, Jackie Morris (left) and Charlene Lugar.

Jim Morris is prone to bouts of great humility – and it suits him.

But others know the score and what he’s meant to his adopted hometown of Indianapolis for over half a century.

“He’s been involved in almost every important, good thing that’s happened to this city. And he continues to be so to this day. It’s a remarkable story,” offers Herb Simon, owner, chairman and CEO of Pacers Sports & Entertainment – and Morris’ current employer.

It all began when Morris, a Terre Haute native, was chief of staff for six years under then-mayor Richard Lugar. He had a hand in the formation of Unigov, the consolidated city-county government that is often credited with saving the Indianapolis economy and enabling the prosperity that has followed for decades.

Morris, 75, also helped usher in an identity for the city as a sports capital, as well as pushed for a university in the heart of the city – which came to fruition 50 years ago with Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI).

All are monumental feats, but above all else, Morris is known for his compassion and giving spirit, which have benefitted so many locally and around the globe.

### Coming together

On the mantle at the Morris home, it reads, “Thank God for faith, family, friends, community and vocation.”

Other than his relationships with his wife Jackie, whom he met at Indiana University, and family, Morris says his friendship and time with Lugar has had the most profound impact on his life.

“Dick Lugar had high expectations, high aspirations for our community. He wanted everybody to be a part of the success and wanted to use his opportunity to give a boost to those who were most at risk and vulnerable, and (he) had an incredible commitment to the well-being of young people. It was a great gift to work with him.”

Ironically, Lugar wasn’t Morris’ first choice in the 1967 mayoral campaign. Instead, he was involved with former mayor Alex Clark’s bid to return to office.



The Simon-Morris connection has come full circle – from Morris being part of a small group that convinced the brothers (Mel, left, and Herb) to buy the Pacers to now serving as a top executive for the team. “Scouting has always been an important part of my life,” Morris proudly states. Camping with scouts has remained a favorite activity.



## What Morris Loves

- His “wonderful family,” including eight grandchildren (five of whom live close by)
- His church
- Seeing young people take on leadership and responsibility
- His King Charles Cavaliers: Boomer, Brownie and Buster
- His charitable endeavors, with the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts holding a special fondness
- “On a nice sunny day, to drive out through the IUPUI campus and see thousands of students out milling about and going to class.”
- The continued success of all the professional sports teams, the Speedway and attracting sporting events
- His city: ... “I love standing either on the 47th floor of the Salesforce Tower or the Skyline Club (in the OneAmerica building) and looking out and seeing what this city has become. It’s exciting!”

That fact still amuses Lugar.

"When I won the nomination, Jim came to me very directly – prepared to drive my car and anything else possible to help. He really wanted to be a part of the leadership of Indianapolis, to be a player in terms of what he saw right ahead, and he had his own ideas about this," the longtime U.S. senator recalls.

"But he also knew he needed to have strength with the elected leadership. It was a surprising entry of Jim into my life, coming from the (primary) campaign that we had just been through and yet one that has been absolutely delightful."

### All what you make of it

For someone who "didn't have a plan" and says "one thing led to another" in his career, Morris is the epitome of seizing – and creating – your chances and working hard.

"My own view is that whoever you are, wherever you are, that if you continue to peel the layers of the onion back, you will see more opportunity and enormous opportunities to do things. You can define your life narrowly or you can define it broadly," he explains. "There is more transformative opportunity in most jobs, in most places than most people realize."

He harkens back to his tenure with Lugar.

"Just think about the gift of being able to build a great public university, and then think about the number of lives that are affected in a positive way over time. It's terrific.

"I remember the rainy day the ground was broken for IUPUI. They had to acquire 14,000 parcels of real estate to build the campus," he notes.

"It's still the most exciting educational experiment going on in our country today with two great universities – Indiana and Purdue –

coming together with their unique strengths in the state capital in the heart of downtown."

WNBA legend Tamika Catchings, who is now the director of player programs and franchise development for Pacers Sports & Entertainment, views Morris as a mentor for her Catch the Stars Foundation. She knows firsthand that "his mind is always forward thinking and big picture.

"It's, 'Don't think about what you need right now. Think about if you team up with this organization and how many more kids you could impact and more lives you can change.' I really respect that about him, his vision."

### Synonymous with sports

The Colts coming. The Pacers staying. NCAA headquarters. Olympic trials and national championships. The Pan American Games. Super Bowl XLVI.

Morris had a hand in all – either directly or from the fruits of his labor.

Building Market Square Arena, a three-year project completed in 1974, was the initial attraction.

"We had this dynamic ABA franchise in the Pacers that had won lots of championships and it killed Dick Lugar not to have the state high school basketball championship in the state capital (due to lack of a large enough facility)," Morris offers.

"Most of the community assets we have, we have had the discipline to place them downtown, in the heart of the city and where they belong to everyone north, south, east or west. Market Square was the beginning of this.

"It led to our ability to host the (men's basketball) Final Four in 1980, and it's just snowballed since then."

The Indiana Sports Corp. was founded the year prior as the nation's

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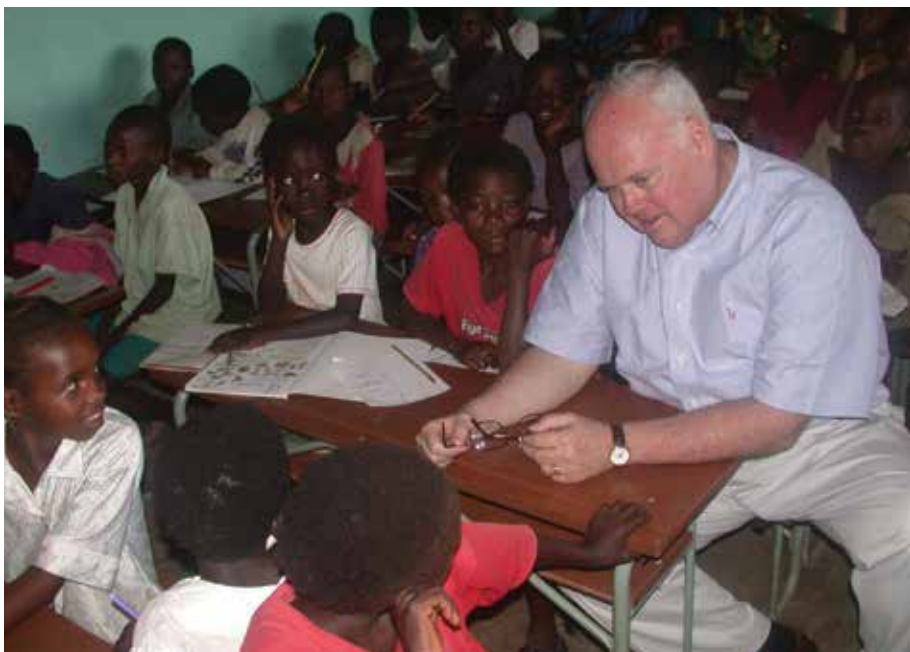
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Pacers owner Herb Simon calls Morris “the most decent, giving person that I know.” Morris applied those traits globally when he spent five years working for the United Nations World Food Programme.



first sports commission. Morris was there to help it get off the ground.

“The notion was that we ought to build on our strengths. We had been headquarters of the AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) until Congress came along and said you can no longer have one body managing all the sports.

“Forming the Sports Corp. was to bring sporting events to our city and bring trade shows and conventions and headquarters. Then, to be sure that young people, children who lived here – no matter where they lived in the city – had the same equal opportunity to participate in sports,” he shares.

“That we would build facilities that would be world class, but also if you wanted to go swim at the IU Natatorium at 7 o’clock,

it was open to you. ... The facilities were built for everyone.”

Indianapolis netted “hundreds and hundreds of championships and billions of dollars of economic impact.”

It’s also about things you can’t put a price tag on.

“When we did the Pan American Games (in 1987), we had 40,000 volunteers. It was a sporting event, but it was also a community development event. It brought people from every part of the city and background together,” Morris says. “There are thousands of people who have the most wonderful memories of being a part of that.”

He was working at the Lilly Endowment when the possibility of luring the Colts

became excitingly real. The matter literally had Morris pacing.

He had just returned from a trip to the 1981 National Sports Festival in Syracuse (Indianapolis would host the following year) and saw the new Carrier Dome at Syracuse University.

“I went down to the (Indiana) Convention Center and with my own two legs, paced off the distance between the south side of the Convention Center and the railroad tracks to see if there was enough space to put the Hoosier Dome in there,” Morris tells.

The Lilly Endowment ultimately invested \$25 million in the Colts first home.

### Spreading his wings

For five years, beginning in April 2002, Morris embarked on perhaps his greatest adventure.

He relocated to Rome, Italy, and served as the executive director of the United Nations (UN) World Food Programme, which is the largest humanitarian agency in the world. Its mandate is to eliminate hunger and to be responsive to crises and emergencies in difficult circumstances where there may not be food available.

Morris calls the job – for which Lugar had recommended him – both rewarding and eye opening.

“We fed 115 million people in 2005. For a couple years, we fed the entire population of Iraq ... a third of the population of North Korea. Just mind boggling,” he utters.

“It made me very proud to be an American – the United States is the largest contributor and supporter of the World Food Programme. A good nutritious diet is at the heart of anybody being healthy and successful. If you hadn’t



Morris, shown visiting Pope John Paul II, says, "I like what I'm doing, so there's no reason to stop. My job is to encourage young people and to help young people who work here, but also broader, to enjoy these same things, to be effective and to work hard and to be a part of things. To be a part of a community is a great gift."

had anything to eat for six weeks, you couldn't do much of anything. "On the one hand, we did make progress in reducing the number of hungry people in the world," he contemplates. "But then on the other hand, there are still hundreds of millions of people who are poorly nourished in the world."

During the same time frame, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Morris as his special envoy for the humanitarian crisis in southern Africa.

"It was a time of great drought and exploding HIV. It was just devastating on civil society, on communities. I spent an awful lot of time those five years trying to figure out how the UN community and others could work together to address all the issues that were relevant to reducing HIV, reducing hunger and/or improving education for young girls. It was an incredible experience."

Morris depicts how hunger compounded the HIV devastation in Africa.

"When you would go to a village there that had a very high prevalence of HIV, the first thing they would ask for is food and water. Because all the medicine in the world put to use in a body as poorly nourished as (that) won't work. Hunger and good nutrition are at the core of making progress on the toughest of issues."

Lugar applauds Morris for his "ability to look ahead and to see great possibilities and to do so on behalf of others."

"In his service in the World Food Programme and now with UNICEF (where President Trump appointed Morris the U.S. representative to the executive board), it is based upon humanitarian feelings about people all over the world. He has seen enormous suffering and he has tried his very best to alleviate that through constructive programs and leadership."

## Returning home

Morris had been involved with the Pacers on and off over the years – including being one of the people responsible for the Simon brothers buying the franchise. So, when he was returning from his stint with the World Food Programme, it wasn't a surprise Herb Simon wanted him in the fold, officially. But Morris wasn't sold on the idea at first. He even asked the Pacers owner, "Why would I do that?"

Undeterred, Simon inquired what was it that Morris cared about.

"I told him, 'I care about reducing adversarial relationships, antagonism. How you help people to get along, to like each other. I care about the well-being of kids who are struggling, who need a

boost. I care about my city and its reputation and its economic competitiveness,' Morris recounts.

After listening, "Herb said, 'There's an opportunity here to work on each of the things you care most about.'"

And there has been.

"We bring people together. It's the busiest building in the state of Indiana. Everyone wants the Pacers and the Fever to do well. If our athletes do their job properly, they inspire young people. This is a place of community," Morris maintains.

"When you look at athletes like Reggie (Miller), Tamika and Victor (Oladipo), the impact they have on kids is out of sight. They're for real. We work hard to see that kids from every corner of the city and area get to come here. Market Square Arena was the beginning. This building is extraordinary. It's as fine a facility as there is in the NBA."

For his part, Simon knew all along Morris – who serves as vice chairman – would be "the perfect fit for our organization ... I give him all the credit for how community spirited the Pacers are."

## Relationship goals

Morris, an only child raised by his mother, has turned his vast network into his extended family.

"From the early days of working with Dick Lugar and then beyond, I've had the chance of working with thousands of people and getting to know them as friends. You have to work at relationships and if you do, without an ulterior motive, you end up with the most wonderful cadre of folks," Morris remarks.

"I've been at it for over 50 years. There are hundreds of people I could call today and say, 'Hey, would you help me do this or that,' and they could call me and say 'Jim, would you help out?' When you have a relationship that has nurtured itself over a long period of time, you can find colleagues and partners to do almost anything."

Count Lugar among them. Together with their spouses, they enjoyed getting together in Italy. Lugar also sits with Morris at Pacer games when he visits.

"Jim is able to make people feel very comfortable and to bring them together. As a consensus builder, he really is a model," Lugar reflects.

Catchings, who calls Morris "the connector" of people and groups, says she's leaned on him heavily. "He's been someone that I've

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## Jim Morris

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had constant communication with as far as just trying to figure out life. I really consider him part of my family. It's awesome to have a leader like that within your family and reach."

A story from Simon illustrates the essence of Morris.

"The first time I met Jim was at the Foundation (Lilly Endowment). I was asked by the Jewish Community Center to try to get a \$50,000 grant," he offers.

"He was so kind and so quickly agreeing to the grant of \$50,000 that as I walked out, I scratched my head and said, 'Why didn't I ask for \$100,000!' ... because he was so easy to work with. That impression has always stayed with me.

"I realized what a kind, considerate and decent person he was, even with that one meeting."

Morris outlines his own standards for engagement. "I put a very high premium on working with friends and colleagues who are unselfish and aren't in it to make money, but are in it to build a great community, to build a great state – to make life better for those who are sad, lonely, vulnerable, at risk. To make a difference."

### 'Piece of the burlap'

When asked if there is anything he might want to relive again in his celebrated career, Morris, without hesitation, declares, "I've enjoyed being a part of successful campaigns."

For a split second, I thought his appreciation for politics was stronger than I realized. But then he elaborates – and it makes all the sense in the world.

"I've enjoyed being a part of ... the Gleaners campaign, the Wheeler Mission campaign, the United Way. Campaigns for the Boy Scouts, for IUPUI or Indiana University (where he's a current trustee). I was chairman of the campaign for healthy babies a few years ago.

"I've really enjoyed fundraising over the years, and I understand for a city of ours to do extraordinary things, that means everyone has got to have a piece of the burlap. Everyone's got to help," he stresses.

For certain, Morris has done his share and then some.

"We are thrilled that we finally get to talk about what Jim Morris has done for our community and for scouting in central Indiana. Jim is the type of volunteer any organization would be blessed to call a friend," praises Joseph E. Wiltrout, Scouts executive and CEO of the Boy Scouts of America, Crossroads of America Council.

"He has an amazing heart, especially for making sure scouting is available to all youth, including raising funds to send many at-risk local youth to attend summer camp. ... He is often touting others' achievements, while making it clear he needs no recognition."

Morris is simply doing what he sees as his purpose.

"Maybe it sounds corny, but I think we were put here to find ways to work together, to lift up everyone and to do extraordinary things that are inclusive and everyone benefits from," he notes. "It's fun to work together to see a downtown transformed or to see a great children's choir emerge in Indianapolis or to see the rest of the world say nice things about our city.

"To see lots of important institutions prosper and grow, it's been a real gift to me to be able to be a part of this for a long, long time."

"I work to have a personal relationship with my students. I tell them that I'll work as hard as they will. So, if they want help every day, I will be there for them."

# Shaping Role Models

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