

# Famed Flashbacks

## Why it's important to sport The Right Trousers *Gromit knew that about Wallace back in 1993*

By Fred W. Crans

**SCHAUMBURG, IL (August 15, 2025)** – In the words of the immortal Neil Diamond, “Where it began, I can’t begin to knowin’, but then, I know it’s going strong. Was in the spring ...”

Forgive me, Red Sox fans, for cutting your seventh-inning anthem short, but it *was* in the spring – the Spring of 2014 to be exact. The place was Orlando, Florida, and the event was Bluegrass Business Media’s Spring IDN Summit.



2012 Hall of Famer Bob Simpson (left) reflecting the colorful fashion illumination of future Hall of Famer Fred Crans (2020).

There I am wearing “The U” pants standing next to the great Bob Simpson, Bellwether Class of 2012, looking all goofy and not knowing that a movement was about to be christened.

A few weeks earlier, I had been in Miami with my colleague Tom Sisk. We were visiting someone near Coral Gables, and I told Tom that I wanted to stop by the Campus Store at University of Miami (The U) and pick up some merch. While I was looking around, Tom came up to me with an excited, “Hey dude! Come over here! You’ve got to buy these!”

I walked over to where Tom was, and there they were – the most beautiful orange, white and green pants I had ever seen – with a big U on the front pocket. “They probably don’t have my size,” I lamented.

But they did. And they cost \$125.

So, of course I bought them.

Then Tom said, “You’ve got to wear them to the IDN Summit. And so it was that on April 8, 2014, “Da Pants” made their debut.

The response was immediate. People pointed at me, took pictures, and asked to have their picture taken with me.

Even Hall of Famer Bob Simpson expressed appreciation for true creativity and got into the act.

I thought it was a one-time occurrence, and I did not take the pants to the next meeting. But I was overwhelmed by folks asking, “Where are the pants?”

My career had just changed.

The next time I wore them, I got my picture taken with Jim Kelly, U grad, NFL Hall of Famer and noteworthy quarterback from the Buffalo Bills during their record four Super Bowl appearances. And it kept growing.

Looking to extend beyond a “one pants pony,” I began to diversify my wardrobe at \$125 a pop. But it was worth it. Inadvertently, I had created a personally professional brand. At one meeting, the guest speaker was Jim Morris, the person upon whose life the movie “The Rookie” was based. I attended that talk wearing my Cleveland Indians pants, and he called me out, asked me to stand and then proceeded to tell the crowd that he wished he could wear pants like that.

To say that the pants broke down barriers would be a gross understatement. I made friends with people I would never have met.

And I am so grateful.

If there is a downside, it is some of the remarks I have heard over the years. Someone once told me, “Those pants give you a shortcut. You get to meet all kinds of people that won’t even talk to the rest of us.”

That used to bother me until I recalled something that Walter Riley King once told me. I met Walter on a plane in Memphis. Walter was sitting next to me wearing a golf shirt with a B.B. King logo on it. I asked him if he was in the band, and we struck up a conversation.

Walter told me that he was B.B.’s nephew and that he played saxophone and flute and was the band leader. The man sitting in the middle seat said, “Being B.B.’s nephew gave you an inside track for getting into the band.”

Walter didn’t miss a beat (pun intended). He instantly replied, “Being B.B.’s nephew may have helped me get into the band, but if I couldn’t play, I wouldn’t still be here.”

And so it is with Da Pants. They may get folks’ attention, but you had better have something to say when they talk with you.

In the 11 years since that first meeting, I have accrued 35 pair of Lights Out brand pants, was inducted into Bellwether League Foundation’s Healthcare Supply Chain Leadership Hall of Fame, started a successful podcast, and built a strong following on LinkedIn. I have made hundreds of new friends, made many people laugh and caused a few overly uptight “professionals” to lighten up and release their pent-up energy.

All in all, to paraphrase Chico Escuela: “Da pants been berry, berry good to me.”

And remember: It’s not what’s on the outside, but what’s on the inside of Da Pants – and any pants – that counts.



2020 Hall of Famer Fred Crans celebrating with kindred spirit and 2020 Ammer Honoree Randy Bradley, Ph.D., at AHRMM 2025 recently in Denver.

That is why I recently created the FCPA – the Fred Crans Pants Award – to be given to those people who make the world a better place and do it with style. We need to know more about more of them in a profession that deserves recognition.

*Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020, has more than five decades of healthcare supply chain experience and service in a variety of executive leadership roles that spans military and private-sector communities as well as provider, supplier, group purchasing organization and consultant segments. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Bellwether League Foundation as Outreach Ambassador and as Healthcare Business Development Executive for St. Onge Co. For more, visit Bellwether League Foundation's web site at <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/>.*



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