

Famed Flashbacks

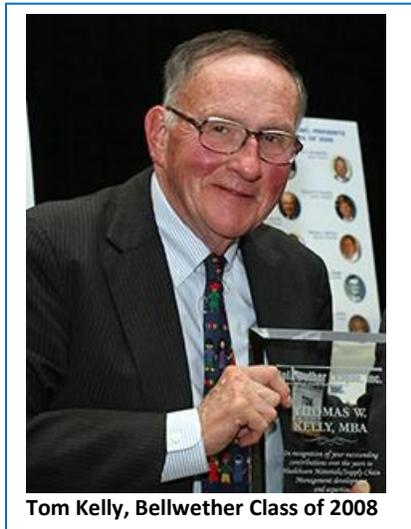
Personal gleanings from 3 Hall of Famers for professional growth

By Fred W. Crans

SCHAUMBURG, IL (February 27, 2026) – Bellwether Hall of Famers are where they are because of the impact they have had on the industry and those within it. I thought I would take the time to mention three who have impacted me.

Tom Kelly, Bellwether Class of 2008

I met Tom Kelly when he was working with Tom Hughes (Bellwether Class of 2012) at Concepts in Healthcare. They were doing a project with information technology at a system where I was the director of materials management. I had recently earned my MBA, and I may have been a little full of myself as well as a little frustrated with the chaotic situation I had inherited in trying to build a “system” out of two formerly competing facilities.



Tom Kelly, Bellwether Class of 2008

During the due diligence portion of the engagement, Tom Kelly scheduled an interview with me to “get the feel of the place” by soliciting input from IT’s customers. During our conversation, Tom asked me what I thought about the organization. Never having

been someone to choose propriety over brutal honesty, I told him what I thought of the place – insights that may have included that I thought I would do a better

job as vice president of support services than the current officeholder. Tom listened quietly, then said, “You don’t want to do that, Fred. That job is a generalist position. Those are a dime a dozen. That guy will probably be out of work in five years. You have a specialist position. You will always be in demand.”

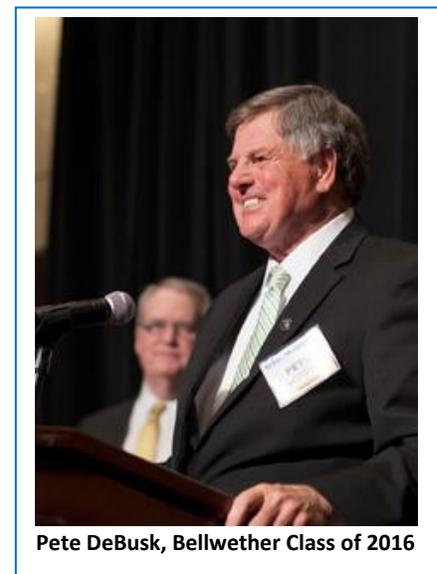
I took Tom’s advice and shaped a diverse, award-winning career out of it.

Autry O. V. “Pete” DeBusk, Bellwether Class of 2016

I never actually met Pete DeBusk, but I benefitted from his leadership and forward thinking.

DeBusk, the gifted sales rep who founded DeRoyal Industries, has always been a visionary thinker and inventor whose products have advanced orthopedic care and whose thirst for knowledge and performance optimization has led him to study and implement the principles of many of the 20th century’s leading thinkers into the workings of the modern healthcare supply chain.

In the early 1990s, DeBusk convened one of the earliest “think tanks” of materials management leaders (Supply Chain was not yet a term widely applied to healthcare providers nor accepted) in what was known as the DeRoyal Healthcare Materials Management Executive Forum. I, along with future fellow Hall of Famers Nick Gaich (Bellwether Class of 2013) and Peggy Styer (Bellwether Class of 2016), and other renowned industry influencers and leaders such as Frank Geiger and Lee Majewski and some young guy named Rick Dana Barlow (wearing a white tuxedo coat, no less), were chosen to participate in the original two-day event.



Pete DeBusk, Bellwether Class of 2016



The early Network of Networks team

While I can’t recall the formal output of the group, I do remember the impact being there had on me and also that it was actually a precursor of future think tanks that included the Network of Networks (co-founded by such industry stalwarts as Carl Manley (Bellwether Class of 2012), John Gaida (Bellwether

Class of 2018), and Hughes, along with Jane Pleasants (Bellwether Class of 2015), Gary Wagner (Bellwether Class of 2016), and others, that developed into the Strategic Market Initiative (SMI).

Personally, the fact that I was formally considered to be a “thought leader” in my chosen field was quite overwhelming. I had never looked at myself in that manner, and I must say, it gave me a boost and led me to believe that I might know something after all. Ultimately, I believe the boost it gave me led to my growth as a materials management/supply chain leader, a consultant for the most prestigious consultancies, a contributor to the industry through articles, conversations and mentorships and a career that has spanned more than 60 years.

Make no mistake, recognition fuels performance.

Thanks, Pete.

*[Editor’s Note: DeBusk’s book, “The Rabbit’s Got The Gun,” was highlighted in the “Bellwether Book Club” in BLF’s e-publication **Leaders & Luminaries**, Edition 3, February 2021, <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/ll/ll3/LL-issue-3.php#gsc.tab=0.>]*

Mark Van Sumeren, Bellwether Class of 2021

Finally, we come to my former colleague and forever friend, Mark Van Sumeren. I worked with Mark at Cap Gemini. Well, that statement is somewhat misleading. Mark and I both worked at Cap Gemini at the same time, but he was a big shot vice president and I was merely a not-as-big shot manager.

I didn’t know Mark well while we were both at CG. He swam in different waters than me. But in the ensuing years, I have gotten to know and appreciate Mark much better as a friend and as a fellow writer. Mark has had a career of excellence at the highest level, but the thing that impresses me most is that he has done something that I should have done, that I need to do and that I hope I can get off my butt to actually do.



Mark Van Sumeren, Bellwether Class of 2021

He has written a book – actually, two to be exact.

His most recent work (the second part of a three-part series) is titled, “A Return to Strategic Leadership: Judgment in the Age of AI.” It chronicles the challenges faced by a top consultancy that suddenly finds its very survival threatened by the seemingly quicker, cheaper and equally effective artificial intelligence tool known as Erebus.

Van Sumeren writes in a style that I would call “didactic storytelling,” which is actually quite ironic. After reading Mark’s book, I was reminded of a statement made by my 19th Century English Novel professor at the University of Miami, Dr. Ronald Newman, a Michigan alumnus, as is Mark, who said while grading my final exam, “Mr. Crans, the object of excellent writing is to educate and entertain, and this paper does both.”

So does Mark’s book.

*[Editor’s Note: Van Sumeren’s first book, “A ‘Trip’ to Strategic Leadership,” was highlighted in the “Bellwether Book Club” in BLF’s e-publication **Leaders & Luminaries**, Edition 3, February 2021, <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/ll/ll3/LL-issue-3.php#gsc.tab=0>.]*

What is the commonality of these three “gleanings”? Without knowing or without specific intent, each made an impact on someone else’s life and career. Keep that in mind, and if you have similar stories, let us know about them.

Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020, has roughly six 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/>.



Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020