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[60 sec interview](#)

[weather](#)



[daily news menu](#)

- [daily news home](#)
- [news](#)
- [sports](#)
- [columnists](#)
- [editorials](#)
- [obituaries](#)
- [poll](#)

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## News

### Dale Martin also managed for Pistons

By JOHN EBY / Dowagiac Daily News  
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Not only did City Manager Dale Martin work for the Detroit Pistons, it was during their "Bad Boys" NBA championship days.

As operations manager, Martin managed mall retail outlets which carried the basketball team's merchandise across metropolitan Detroit.

"This was the Bad Boy era, which made it exciting," he said Thursday night. "We had the Pistons players regularly into the stores. That was when Dennis Rodman was still a shy player from Oklahoma. It was a very exciting time to be affiliated with the team."

He was also Circuit City sales manager in Delaware, Virginia and Michigan and an executive management recruiter in Dearborn.

His military background as a U.S. Army infantry second lieutenant clinched his crucial first job as Lexington village manager in that Lake Huron community north of Port Huron.

Martin grew up in Warren, where he ran cross country and participated in track.

He obtained his bachelor's degree in 1985 in political science with an emphasis in foreign and military affairs from Alma College, a small liberal arts college an hour north of Lansing, and his master's degree in public administration from Oakland University in Rochester, a half hour north of Detroit.

In his first month on the job in Dowagiac, "I've already learned about the deep sense and fierce sense of pride and loyalty that all of you have for this region," Martin told Dowagiac firefighters at their annual banquet April 19 at Timberline Inn provided by Wolverine Mutual Insurance Co.

"I hope I can develop that same sense of pride and loyalty in this area that you have over the next few years."

Martin credited his interest in military affairs for his involvement in Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC).

In 1982, he attended Camp Challenge, which allowed him to experience six weeks of basic training with no obligation.

"I actually enjoyed it," he said, "but Alma did not have an ROTC program. I could have gone to Central Michigan University 20 miles to the north, but back then freshmen weren't allowed to have cars, so I had to pass on a formal commitment."

"For your information, political science majors are not in high demand," Martin continued, prompting him to "work a variety of jobs in retail and restaurants. Those jobs got old in a hurry, so I decided to return to school and get my master's degree. At that time, I still had no idea what I wanted to do. I'd never even heard of 'city manager' or what they did."

Military life still intrigued him, though. While Oakland, like Alma, lacked a ROTC program, it had an affiliation with the University of Detroit.

While juggling school and ROTC commitments, he also had "the most interesting retail job in my life with the Pistons."

Martin received his commission as a second lieutenant in the infantry in December 1989.

Since he was scheduled to earn his master's degree in the spring of 1990, Martin asked for delayed entry to active duty.

"I had to sign a 10-year contract with the Army," he recalled. "Two years as a cadet, four years of active duty and another four years of inactive reserve, when your name is on a list and you can be called to active duty."

Before his October departure, in August 1990 the United States invaded Kuwait to repel Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

"Uncle Sam graciously invited me to come down a month early," he said, "and that's kind of the invitation you can't say no to. I went down to Fort Benning, Ga., to train as an infantry officer with the anticipation that I would be going to the Gulf War to fight."

During the first few months, however, coalition forces built up and no ground fighting occurred.

"But the anticipation was that Kuwait City was going to have to be taken in a house-to-house style of fighting," Martin related, "which would require a huge investment of manpower. We trained seven days a week from September through January, through the holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas. As much as you think you're ready for it, I can still remember the feeling when (NBC anchor) Tom Brokaw announced we were at war."

The air war started in January 1991 as Martin's training continued another month.

"By the time the ground war started," he said, "it was over by the time they finished cutting our orders. Fortunately, I didn't have to go into combat. I stuck around Fort Benning and did some additional training as a paratrooper and classes on armored warfare."

Martin was assigned to a mechanized infantry unit in Germany.

"I served as a platoon leader for a mechanized Bradley platoon," he said. "I had four Bradleys and 40 men under my command. I did that for two years, then transitioned to a brigade intelligence officer. My primary responsibilities at that time were tracking the disintegration of Yugoslavia. That was our area of interest in central Europe - ethnic cleansing, the destruction of the cities. We were prepared to go there as a peacekeeping force if they had ever approved a peacekeeping plan, which they didn't."

Fortified by the Army's "best leadership and management training in the world," the idea of becoming a city manager started to coalesce, except after sending out 80 resumes, he still only had one interview to show for his trouble.

"It was no different in my interview with Dowagiac," said Martin, who was then Linden city manager. "The first question usually is, 'What's your budget experience?' If you don't have any, the interview pretty much goes downhill in a hurry."

His Lexington break came courtesy of a councilman who served in the infantry in World War II. He said, "I know what it takes to be an infantry officer and we owe this young man an interview."

His 11-year career started in Lexington in April 1996. After 2 1/2 years guiding the village of 800 people, he moved to Linden, a city half the size of Dowagiac, for 8 1/2 years.

Away from his desk, Martin is a board game fanatic with a collection of 300. "I'm looking for opponents," he grinned.

He also golfs, reads and watches sports - especially Red Wing hockey.

Of course, the demand on any Cass County newcomer is to reveal an allegiance among Michigan, Michigan State or Notre Dame.

"I'm a Michigan fan," Martin gave the politically correct response for a Wolverine audience.

"I didn't go to Michigan, but my father and grandfather did. We've had football season tickets since 1967," so he was born and raised a U of M fan, although "I don't live it and die it the way they used to."

Martin has three daughters, Emily, 13, and 8-year-old twins, Abigail and Meaghan, who live with his ex-wife, and a stepson, Andrew, 14. He remarried a high school sweetheart, Jeanette Fallon.

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