



Kenneth H. Park

OCT 17, 1917 - NOV 6, 2015



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Decatur – Kenneth H. Park, 98, passed away peacefully on November 6, 2015, after a career that spanned almost 50 years in the fields of recreation and athletics.

Ken was born to Lesley and Maud (Gepford) Park on October 17, 1917, near Bearsdale, IL. He was a lifelong resident of Macon County except for four years of service in the US Navy during World War II.

Ken graduated from Decatur High School in 1937 where he played on the 1936 state championship basketball team and the 1937 squad that finished as runner-up for the state title. Ken created a stir in the state tournaments those two years by being the first high school player in the state to shoot a one-handed free throw. Ken graduated from Millikin University in 1945 playing on two championship basketball teams.

Ken was a highly successful football and track coach at Mt Zion. His football teams compiled a 108-50-14 record in 19 seasons, winning four Cenois Conference championships and two Soya Conference titles. The 1959 and 1966 teams were undefeated. His track and field squad won numerous Macon County and conference championships including a string of eight straight county championships.

Associated with the Naval Reserve for 30 years, he was activated in 1972 which forced him to leave coaching at Mt Zion. Upon his return, he was lured back by the basketball opening at St Teresa High School.

St Teresa basketball teams compiled a 107-71 record in their seven seasons under Ken, including 80-27 in his last four years, and a “Sweet Sixteen” berth in 1979. He was the Herald & Review “Coach of the Year” in both 1979 and 1981.

Ken retired again in 1982 from area high schools, but continued teaching and coaching the tumbling and gymnastics that he had loved for over 50 years. From North Side Park in 1940 until his final retirement in 2005, he taught classes at the YWCA, Studio B, and coached the Power Tumblers.



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Ken was inducted into the Decatur Athletic Council Hall of Fame on June 26, 1994. Surviving is his wife, Ella (Cruthis) who Ken married in Decatur on October 16, 1977; his step-children Janet (Bill) Brawn and Greg Cruthis, and his sister Jane (Maurice) Reed.

The family wishes to thank Dr. Fritz for his excellent care.

Services to celebrate Ken's life will be 11 a.m. Wednesday, November 11, 2015 at Graceland/Fairlawn Funeral Home. Visitation will be at 10:00am, also at the funeral home. Entombment will follow in the Star Of Hope Mausoleum at Graceland Cemetery.

The family of Kenneth H Park is being served by Graceland/Fairlawn Funeral Home and Cremation Services, 2091 N. Oakland Ave., Decatur, IL. Memories and condolences may be shared at www.gracelandfairlawn.com.

Video Tribute for Kenneth H. Park:

<https://www.tributeslides.com/tributes/show/7C5GJBPNK5QBDHZ5>



Tribute Wall

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JC

Jodi Clark posted:

I TOOK TUMBLING FROM KEN IN LATE 80S FOR CHEERLEADING AND THEN IN THE 90S HE TAUGHT MY DAUGHTER TUMBLING; SHE DID POWER TUMBLING WITH HIM FOR A FEW YEARS; I ALSO COACHED TUMBLING WITH HIM AT THE YWCA; WHAT AN INCREDIBLE MAN AND AN INCREDIBLE PRIVILEGE TO WORK SIDE BY SIDE WITH HIM!!!! HE WAS A GREAT MAN AND WILL BE MISSEDMY PRAYERS ARE WITH HIS FAMILY

November 12 at 10:50 AM

RR

Rosie Ragan posted:

There are many that have lost a dear friend and leader with the passing of Coach Park. He influenced so many young lives and impacted everyone he met with his kind, caring way and good work ethic. He always told me I could do anything and to this day I can still hear him telling me that. My husband played football for Coach that left him with drive and determination to taken on the world. On this Veteran's Day, we can honor this kind, gentle, man that touched each of us in his own special way. Thanks Coach for being what each one of us needed and still benefit from today. Your tireless effort in helping to mold our lives is appreciated more than you know. The Navy will lay to rest a great Chief and mentor. Rest in peace dear friend.Jim and Rosie Ragan

November 11 at 2:02 PM

MH

Mary V Hamilton posted:

Lit a candle in memory of Kenneth H. Park

November 11 at 10:51 AM

WS

William L. Steenblock posted:

Great teacher, great coach, great friend – Bill Steenblock

November 10 at 5:25 PM

JF

Julie Fritz posted:

I have fond memories of learning to do back-flips with Mr. Park's instruction and always loved going to his classes. He had a real positive and fun way of teaching and was a natural at showing kids how to push themselves. What a wonderful man he was! Julie Fritz

November 10 at 3:04 PM



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RJ

Russ Jackson posted:

Was manager for Ken and you. Appreciated the great mentors in my life.

November 10 at 10:48 AM

LH

Larry Henry posted:

It was halftime of a football game my junior year at Mt. Zion. We were getting beaten. Coach Ken Park gathered the players in a hallway to deliver his speech. In two years of playing varsity football, I never once heard Coach raise his voice to try to motivate his players. He didn't have to. He made his point by being quietly subtle. Coach knew that he had two or three players in his offensive line who were in the school band. Said he on that night 50 some years ago, "Fellas, if we can get our horn tooters to block we can win this game." Message delivered. The horn tooters blocked, the Braves won the game. Coach was not only a great leader and teacher, he was a great man. A winner. And a class act. Larry Henry-Snohomish, Wash.

November 10 at 4:50 AM

BE

Bev posted:

Mr. Park was one of the kindest persons I have had the privilege to know. He taught my daughter tumbling for many years at the Y. He was such an inspiration and had a very good rapport with all of the children and young adults that he worked with. It was a blessing to know him. He was a very special person. The world could use a lot more people like Mr. Park. Warm thoughts and Prayers

November 10 at 4:27 AM

AL

Allen Lee posted:

During the early 1970's I was stationed with Ken at the Decatur Naval Reserve Center. Ken was a great shipmate to work with. Always a can do attitude and willing to help anyone with any problem. Our loss of a great man who touched so many lives is certainly Heaven's gain. Rest in Peace Ken. "Fair Winds and Following Seas." Allen Lee Senior Chief, USNR Retired

November 10 at 3:44 AM



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MP

Michelle Price posted:

Ken was such a caring and respected man and I'm so happy that Allen and I got to know him, we really loved being your neighbor and friend. My deepest sympathy to you Ella. Love Michelle and Allen Price

November 9 at 2:49 PM

MR

Mike Ratts posted:

Sent a gift in memory of Kenneth H. Park

November 9 at 2:39 PM

DP

Dorothy Price posted:

Ella and family, My deepest sympathy for your loss. You used to set beside us at Grace Methodist Church until we moved back to Branson, Mo. I lost Lyle in 2011. I am back in Decatur now. Keeping you and family in thought and prayers at this difficult time. Dorothy Price

November 9 at 2:17 PM

ST

Sharon (Hood) Taylor posted:

A wonderful man, respected by all, just left this life. All of his previous students liked him so much, whether you had a class with him, was coached by him, or just passed him in the halls. He was soft spoken (except when he needed to make his sports team hear him). He treated everyone fairly and had a smile for the same. They don't make "teachers" like Mr. Park these days!! My sympathy to the family. Know that not only you loved him, so many of us loved him too. He will never, ever be forgotten!!!! Sharon (Hood) Taylor Mt. Zion Class of 1960

November 9 at 1:36 PM

RR

Ronald Reeker posted:

we are so sorry for your loss. coach parks was an outstanding coach at mt. zion and will be missed by many. he was an inspiration to all of us who know him. our prayers and thoughts are to his family and friends for this sad day. ron reeker class of 1965

November 9 at 1:14 PM



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SS

Sean-Paulo Sa posted:

Mr. Park was my tumbling coach during my teenage years. He was a patient and benevolent man with us rowdy teenagers at the Naval Armory. I am glad to read that he had such a long and productive life since I last saw him about 35 years ago.

November 9 at 11:48 AM

VB

Virgil De Boer posted:

I assisted coach park in football and he taught me more than he did the kids. way ahead of his time in coaching. what a man.

November 9 at 11:44 AM

HT

Heather Logan-Toenniges posted:

Mr Park was the best gymnastics coach I ever had. He called me George! He'd say "Come on George you can do this." Then we'd run down the mats at the Navel Reserve Center, and high five when I completed my run. Much love and prayers to his family, he was a sweet, loving, and caring man, who helped me become a cheerleader from sixth grade to my senior year of highscool.?

November 9 at 11:16 AM

SS

Susan Stollard posted:

Our sincere sympathy to the Park family on their loss. This community has lost a great man and a tireless mentor. Coach Park's influence has touched so many students and their families and spanned decades. I chose the career path I have today as a result of Coach's direction, and I've never forgotten how his influence continues to guide my priorities today...faith, family, work. Coach Park leaves a legacy unparalleled and he will be greatly missed. It was an honor and a privilege to have been one of his students, and to have called him a friend. Brad and Susan (Miller) Stollard, MTZ Class of 1971.

November 9 at 4:38 AM



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PC

Paul Coverdale posted:

I was stationed with Chief Park at the Naval Reserve Center in the early 70's. A finer gentleman you will never find. It was an honor to be called his friend. He lived a full life and one can only imagine the number of people he touched with his kindness. Rest in Peace my friend. "Fair Winds and Following Seas."Your Navy Buddy,Paul Coverdale

November 9 at 4:17 AM

CE

Connie Eyre posted:

I was the cheerleading coach at SDHS for 12 years in the 80's and sent all of my squads to Ken for tumbling instruction. They won a national championship because of him. What a gentleman, what a teacher, what a role model—he was the best of the best. I am so sorry to hear of his passing and send my prayers and condolences to his family. You should be so very proud of the man he was—he will surely be missed by so many. ~~Connie Eyre

November 8 at 2:38 PM

CM

Christine Jones Marriott posted:

I had him for tumbling. I have never had coordination, grace or timing yet he was a good enough coach and person to give me credit for giving what I could. I dreaded tumbling and he made it alright. I am grateful for the kind adult he was.

November 8 at 2:35 PM

SS

Susan Schumacher posted:

I knew Ken briefly in the mid 1980s when he helped the Mt. Zion High School Cheerleaders with their tumbling (I was the coach). I remember him as a very kind and gentle man. What a blessing he was to so many young people. Susan (York) Schumacher- Belvidere, IL

November 8 at 2:09 PM

MK

Mardell Klasen posted:

Always liked and respected Coach Park, he was a good role model to us all. I was a student at Mt. Zion High 1954-58. We need more like him. Mardell (Sidwell) Klasen.

November 8 at 1:52 PM



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KP

Kris Edgett Petty posted:

My sincere sympathy to your family. What a great man Ken was to our family. He worked with my father Marvin B. Edget, help my oldest brother with track and field, cross country for MF. Back in 70,s We stayed in touch for year's my parents are now in Michigan. We lost Richard at young age of 21. But we know first hand how special Ken is with his kids .Best there is.

November 8 at 1:27 PM

KG

Karen And Ed Gulley posted:

I have known Coach Park for decades...I graduated in 1972..and I always knew that he had all of our backs....but he was firm...the world is a less place without him in it. Karen (Wangrow) and Ed Gulley

November 8 at 1:06 PM

CM

Charles 'Chip' Morris posted:

Coach Park encouraged and gave me confidence in myself when I was awkward, overweight and of little value to his teams I got to be part of from '61 – 64. Great mentor and teacher who influenced hundreds, probably thousands of youth!

November 8 at 12:04 PM

SJ

Sharon Sullivan-Jenkins posted:

He was a fine man. I was in high school, didn't have him as a teacher, but had a study hall with him....good memories. Sharon Sullivan, now Jenkins

November 8 at 11:28 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Kenneth by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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