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TOP STORY

Innerviews: 95-year-old referee reflects on long career

By Sandy Wells Staff writer 6 hrs ago



In the bedroom of his East End home, 95-year-old Kenneth Legg reflects on his long career as a sports official. He holds one of the many plaques he received honoring his contributions.

CRAIG HUDSON | Gazette-Mail

Editor's Note

Niece and caretaker Linda Legg Shafer (lindasl221@yahoo.com) is spearheading the project to honor him. Tributes can be sent to sponsors Gordie McClanahan and Pat O'Reilly at oreillywv@suddenlink.net.

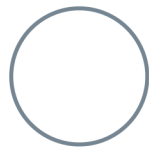
State sports fans of a certain age know the name: Ken Legg. They've probably yelled at him a time or two. He was one of those people you love to hate. The referee.

He officiated for 55 years. That's 10,140 assignments. Counting meetings and testing and other obligations, that's 15,210 events, a commendable contribution to student athletes and the State Secondary Schools Activities Commission.

He's 95 now, confined to bed with round-the-clock care.

To recognize his lifelong dedication to school sports, cohorts are soliciting anecdotes and tributes for a Memory Book to enhance his bid for legendary status in the Hall of Fame at the Tex Williams Sports Museum in Artie.

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Replay

The Ken Legg Project also features plans to beef up recruitment and retention of sports officials. Safety issues and expanded sports activities are other priorities.

He excelled in three sports at Oak Hill High School where Coach Russ Parsons nicknamed him "Horse."

He was a 440-yard state champion and Hall of Famer at Tech.

A high school principal in Fayette County, he moved on to coaching. He endured two years at Pax High School before the pressure got to him. In 1954, his second year, he won the state title. Didn't matter. Coaching just wasn't his thing.

Credentials include stints in the House of Delegates.

"I was a coal miner's son. We started out in a place called Whipple in Fayette County, a mining camp. We moved to Oak Hill and I spent most of my life there.

"They called me 'Horse' in school. My coach took me to the county basketball tournament and I was a freshman. The coach didn't know my first name, so he just put 'Horse' in the program.

"I never gave much thought to what I wanted to be. Then I had the opportunity to go to college on a scholarship at West Virginia Tech.

"I got a degree in education administration. I was going to teach and coach. I played all sports, basketball, football, baseball, golf and track.

"I taught in elementary school the first year, then I was a teacher and coach at Pax High School. I didn't like being a coach, but they said I couldn't have a job unless I coached.

"The second year we won the state championship. I quit because I didn't just like it, all the pressure. You had to be everything, a doctor, a lawyer, peacemaker, magician, on and on.

"Later, I got a master's from Vanderbilt. It was Peabody then.

"After Tech, I played on a summer barnstorming team that took him around the country. We ended up in Canada.

"In 1943, I went in the Navy Seabees and spent 35 months in the South Pacific and Guadalcanal.

"The happiest day of my life was getting out. Afraid? All the time. The Japanese chased me all over the South Pacific trying to kill me. But I outran them.

"So I went to work for the West Virginia Education Association for 12 years and started an association for non-teaching personnel, the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association.

"We did a lot for the teachers and school workers. Pay, mainly. Now they make decent wages.

"I started officiating right out of college in 1950. It was a hobby. I was making \$7.50. When I quit, it was \$60. We used one official in basketball and three in football. When I quit, we had three for basketball and six for football.

"I did it for 55 years, until I was 80. I worked until I was 80, too.

"I figure I officiated for about 10,000 games. I quit when it got so I couldn't beat the fans to the parking lot after the game. Humor goes with officiating. They call you names, but you just have to ignore it.

"I sang in this quartet, the Happy Valley Boys. We sang at church and other occasions.

"I accept the fact that I'm 95 and have my limitations.

"I'm grateful to the Lord for a good, healthy life. I've never been seriously ill in my life. And I've enjoyed living a Christian life."

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