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James Davidson



Long time St. Albans resident, James Allen Davidson, better known as "Coach Al" Davidson, died on October 25, 2016, at home from complications of heart disease and cancer. He was 91 years old.

Al was a revered teacher and coach in St. Albans having accepted a job in 1948 at St. Albans High School which at the time was combined with the Junior High. When the schools separated, he remained at St. Albans Junior High. His 35 year coaching career in St. Albans included many winning teams and championships in multiple sports and in 1966, he was voted Coach of the Year in Kanawha County. And for over 25 years he officiated high school basketball and football. The St. Albans Junior High Gymnasium was named in his honor in 1983 and he was inducted into the St. Albans High School Hall of Fame in 1996.

Al Davidson was born in Northfork, West Virginia in 1924, the eldest son of Zelphia and Allen Crockett Davidson. His academic career at West Virginia Tech was interrupted by World War II and he served as a ball turret gunner on a B-17 with the Eighth Air Force based in Nutt Hampstead, England. Active in the West Virginia Eight Air Force Historical Society, he was elected president in 1996.

After the war, Coach returned to Tech and when he graduated, he had earned 11 athletic letters. He was second in the nation in punting in his senior year with a 43.3 yard average. In 1977, he was voted into the Tech Hall of Fame as an Outstanding Athlete.

After posting a 28-2 record as a pitcher for the Golden Bears, Al was offered a contract by the Brooklyn Dodgers, but when he was offered fifty dollars more a month to coach, he passed up the chance at professional baseball and moved to St. Albans. He never regretted that decision and was proud of having taught and coached 22,500 students. He later earned his Master's Degree in Education at West Virginia University.

After retiring in 1983, Coach served on the St. Albans City Council for four years and spent six years as a dedicated volunteer for St. Mark's Food Pantry. Coach was a congregant at First Presbyterian Church in St. Albans for over 30 years and served as an Elder and Trustee.

His wife of thirty two years, the former Lucille Chittum predeceased him; as well as his sister, Libby Lyon of San Antonio, Texas.

Coach is survived by his daughter, Diann Williams of St. Albans; son, James and wife, Debra of North Myrtle Beach, S.C.; son, Jerry and wife, Mary of New Providence, N.J.; five grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and his sister, Janet Barbour of Huntington.

Funeral service will held 2 p.m., Friday, October 28, at First Presbyterian Church, 201 Kanawha Terrace, St. Albans with Rev. Paul Romine officiating. Visitation will be held from 5 to 8 p.m., Thursday, at Bartlett-Chapman Funeral Home, St. Albans and one hour prior to the service Friday at the church. Entombment with military honors will follow in Cunningham Memorial Park, St. Albans, WV. You may visit his tribute page at ChapmanFuneralHomes.com to share memories with the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be directed to Alzheimer's Association, 1601 Second Avenue, Charleston, WV 25387.

Bartlett-Chapman Funeral Home, family-owned and located at 409 Sixth Avenue, St. Albans is honored to serve the Davidson family.