

THE BUFFALO NEWS

George A. Johengen, 89, principal of Lake Shore Central High School



By Dale Anderson (http://buffalonews.com/author/dale_anderson/) | Published February 14, 2018

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George A. Johengen was only a boy when he earned an entry in “Ripley’s Believe It or Not.”

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 “When their school burned down, he and his brother happened to attend class in the same room where they were born,” his son Michael said.

This attracted the attention of that collector of unusual events, Robert Ripley, who included the boys in his syndicated newspaper cartoon. Elementary school classes had been moved temporarily into their house after fire destroyed the North Collins school on April 1, 1935.

Mr. Johengen, who went on to serve as principal of Lake Shore Central High School for 20 years, died last Thursday under hospice care in Fredonia Place, Fredonia, where he had been a resident. He was 89.


The son of the owner of the town’s hardware store, he was a graduate of North Collins High School, where he was a three-sport athlete – baseball, basketball and soccer. Later he was inducted into the North Collins Sports Hall of Fame as a charter member.

A standout left-handed pitcher, he attended Michigan State University on a baseball scholarship and played with the Welland Stokes, who won the Ontario Baseball Association Senior A Championship in 1949.

During his senior year at Michigan State in 1949, he was drafted by the New York Yankees and assigned to a farm team, the Amsterdam Rugmakers in the Canadian-American League. In Georgia in 1950, he compiled a 9-3 record with a 2.66 earned run average with the champion LaGrange Troupers in the Georgia-Alabama

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League. The next summer found him in Idaho pitching for the Twin Falls Cowboys in the Pioneer League.

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A member of the Army ROTC at Michigan State, he was ordered to report for active duty in the middle of his season in Twin Falls.



(<https://s3.amazonaws.com/bncore/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/George-Johengen-32.jpg>)

He was attached to special services in the Fourth Infantry Division and was sent to Frankfurt, Germany, where he was officer in charge of the Fourth Infantry Division athletic program. As a player-manager, he led his team to the U.S. Army European Baseball Championship.

Returning from service, he played briefly with the Binghamton Triplets in the Eastern League.

“When he returned, he hurt his arm and gave up baseball,” his son said. “Then he went to become an educator.”

He joined the North Collins High School faculty in 1954 and earned a master's degree in guidance and personnel at the University of Buffalo. A guidance counselor and health teacher, he also coached the baseball, basketball and soccer teams.

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He left in 1960 to become guidance counselor at Frontier Central High School in Hamburg. In 1966, he was appointed principal of Lake Shore Central High School, a post he held until he retired in 1985.

He was president of the Lake Shore Central Association of School Administrators and Supervisors and president of the Erie County Principals' Association. He was the Erie County Principals' representative to the Section VI Athletic Council.

He also helped organize the Lake Shore Federal Credit Union and served as its first president.

A longtime member of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in North Collins, he was a former president of the Holy Name Society.

He also was commander of North Collins Post 1640, American Legion; president of the Eden-North Collins Rotary Club and served on the board of directors of Boy Scout Troop 429.

Associated with Hilbert College for more than 30 years, he served many terms on its board of trustees and was named a trustee emeritus in 2003.

The Town of Brant honored him by proclaiming George Johengen Day when he was inducted into the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame in 2011.

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His wife of 59 years, the former Matilda “Tillie” Gier, was a registered nurse who was director of nursing at the former Tri-County Memorial Hospital in Gowanda. She died in 2009.

Survivors include a daughter, Diane; four sons, Michael, Daniel, Eric and Dr. Thomas; and nine grandchildren.

A Mass of Christian Burial was offered Tuesday in Holy Spirit Church, 2017 Halley Road, North Collins.

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