

# O. "Dean" Ehlers

June 22, 1929 - February 19, 2017

O. "Dean" Ehlers, 87, of Harrisonburg, passed away on February 19, 2017, at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community.

He was born on June 22, 1929, in Campbell Hill, IL and was the son of the late Arnold Ehlers, Sr. and Elsie Vogt Ehlers.

He graduated from Campbell Hill Community High, Central College in MO., and received a Masters of Education from the University of Missouri.

On August 15, 1951, he married Joanne Mershon of Buckner, MO, who preceded him in death.

He was also preceded by a brother, Arnold Ehlers, Jr.; and sister, Midge O'Brien.

He is survived by his children, Debra Zwanzig and husband, Bill of Mt. Crawford, VA., David Ehlers and wife, Sarah of Philomath, OR, Doug Ehlers and wife, Julie of Richmond, VA.

and Don Ehlers and wife, Barbara of Luray, VA; ten grandchildren, Macy Zwanzig and husband, Peder Brakke, Adrian Zwanzig, Kelsy Zwanzig and husband, Brent Hill, Micah Zwanzig, Jessica Irwin and husband, Bryan Irwin, Emily Wakefield and husband, Joey Wakefield, Jacob Ehlers, Jodie Ehlers, Rosemary Ehlers and Eppie Ehlers; three great-grandchildren, Delphine Jo Zwanzig Brakke, Madelyn Irwin and Lucas Wakefield; sister, Mae Rieckenberg and husband, Leroy; in-laws, Carolyn Mershon, Louise Mershon, Barbara Querry, Ed and Pam Mershon, Richard and Sue Mershon, Tom and Janet Mershon, Jack and Priscilla Mershon, Linda and William Powell; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Dean was devoted to his family, his church, involvement in education and athletics.

He was honored as an All-State selection in basketball by the Illinois High School Basketball Coaches Assoc, All MCAU (Missouri College Athletic Union) four years and 2nd Team All American in basketball. He played professional baseball in the Brooklyn Dodgers organization and was on the Ft. Leonard Wood, MO, post teams in basketball and baseball during the Korean War.

Dean's professional career following baseball included teaching and coaching at Marshfield High School in Marshfield, WI, and Memphis State University.



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He was the first full-time Athletic Director for Memphis City Schools, and the first full-time Director of Athletics at James Madison University.

He served as President of the ECAC South Athletic Conference when the Colonial Athletic Association was formed. The CAA annually presents The Dean Ehlers Leadership Award to the CAA male and female basketball athlete who best "embody the highest standards of leadership, integrity and best sportsmanship through their academic and athletic achievements".

He also served as President of the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame.

Other honors include induction into the Illinois Sports Hall of Fame, Basketball Hall of Fame as a player, Central College Athletics Hall of Fame, James Madison University Athletic Hall of Fame, National Association of College Athletic Directors Hall of Fame and Virginia Sports Hall of Fame.

Dean was a member of Asbury United Methodist Church, and served in several leadership positions, and was a member of the Harrisonburg Rotary Club.

A memorial service will be held at 11:00 am, Saturday, March 25, 2017, at Asbury United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg. Visitation will follow the service at the church.

Interment will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Asbury United Methodist Church, 205 S. Main St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801 or JMU Duke Club, MSC 2301, Harrisonburg, VA 22807.