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## Springfield, Clark County baseball hall of famer Flip Lucas dies at 86

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By David Jablonski

Staff Writer

**SPRINGFIELD** — Ralph "Flip" Lucas, who left a lasting legacy in local baseball and bowling, died Saturday at 86 in Springfield.

Lucas played six seasons of minor league baseball and was inducted into the Springfield/Clark County Baseball Hall of Fame in 1967. He coached the Kenton Ridge High School bowling team to the state championship in 2009, the first team state title in any sport for Kenton Ridge, and then coached the Cougars to a second straight state title in 2010.

"He took over our bowling program when it was initiated and just did a great job," Kenton Ridge Athletic Director Kris Spriggs said. "He did a great job working with our kids. He was highly respected. It's a tremendous loss."

Lucas was born in Springfield in 1928 and graduated from Springfield High School in 1947. He started his professional baseball career in 1947 with Oshkosh, Wis., a Class D team in the New York Giants organization. He hit .354 that season and .346 the next season at Class C level with Fort Smith, Ark.

According to Mark Miller, of the Springfield/Clark County Hall of Fame, Lucas accepted a demotion to Class D in Springfield the next year to be closer to his family after the birth of his daughter, Pam. Lucas hit .347 with Springfield in 1949.

Lucas played in Richmond, Va., and Knoxville, Tenn., in 1950 and 1951 and then was traded to the Cincinnati Reds. He played with Reds' farm teams in Burlington, Iowa, and Columbia, S.C., in 1952.

After his playing career, Lucas coached numerous local youth baseball teams and was also active in local softball. He worked as an umpire assigner in Springfield for many years.

"He was quite the amateur baseball and softball coach once his playing career wound down," Miller said.

According to his obituary, Lucas retired from SPECO Kelsey-Hayes in 1989 after 36 years of service.

Lucas' son Mark, who played in the Atlanta Braves organization from 1977-80, is also a member of the Springfield/Clark County Baseball Hall of Fame. In 2002, when Mark was inducted, the Lucases became the second father-son combination in the hall of fame after Harvey Haddix and Harvey Haddix Jr.

Flip found fame in a different sport later in life as the bowling coach at Kenton Ridge. After the first state championship in 2009, Lucas told the News-Sun it was "the greatest thrill of my lifetime."

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