

Local community sports advocate dies at 73

By Erika Neldner | Posted: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 12:00 am

He made a legacy for himself paving the way for more youth sports opportunities in Cherokee County. Richard “Hunkey” Mauldin, of Canton, died Dec. 8 peacefully at his home in the Sixes community. He was 73.

Mauldin, a former minor league baseball player, was a member of Canton’s first organized Little League baseball teams under the leadership of the late coach Herman Lawson. His history of coaching baseball, softball and basketball, as well as his love for the game, led him to be a champion of youth sports in Cherokee County.

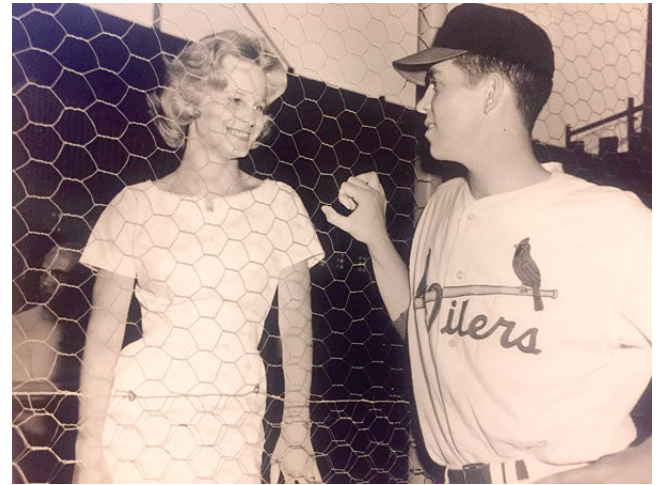
“Through sports and recreation, Hunkey impacted the lives of hundreds if not thousands of people,” his son-in-law Jay Baker said. “Either as a teammate when he was a young man or a coach as he grew older, Hunkey was involved in baseball, softball and basketball for over 50 years.”

Mauldin’s efforts and commitment to youth sports is anchored at the new ball fields on Univeter Road: the Richard “Hunkey” Mauldin Baseball Complex at Kenney Askew Park. The fields opened this past fall and an official dedication is planned for the start of the spring 2016 Canton Baseball season.

Mauldin was not looking for the fields to be named for him rather named for others in the community who played a large role in youth sports, but local leaders saw what Mauldin had done and decided to make it his namesake.

“Hunkey was humble, he never asked for himself, but he really wanted to see these guys remembered,” Cherokee County Recreation and Parks Director Bryan Reynolds said after the announcement of the complex name in 2013. “The advisory board felt he was worthy. He was always asking about other people ... but several people put his name out front.”

Reynolds said Mauldin played a large role in the building of Hobgood Park and was involved in getting the \$90 million parks bond passed in 2008, in addition to the new ball fields at Harmon and Kenney



Mauldin leaves behind wife of 53 years

Richard “Hunkey” Mauldin is pictured with his wife, Joyce, when he played for the Cardinals organization.

Askew parks. Mauldin was active in lobbying for new fields and parks for youth sports until recently when he fell ill with congestive heart failure.

Mauldin, who got his nickname after the ice cream of the same name that he loved, played for the Pony League in Cherokee County and then the Colt League. In 1960, at the age of 17, he signed with the Red Sox.

He first played in New York as a pitcher and later was transferred to the Cardinals organization. He played Eastern League Pacific AAA baseball in Portland, Oregon, and later in the Tulsa Texas League. One of the highlights of his baseball career was the no-hitter he pitched on Aug. 31, 1962. In a 2013 newspaper interview, Mauldin said he thought he would be pitching in the major league but an injury at age 20 changed his life course.

After his stint as a minor league baseball, Mauldin returned home and worked for Boyle Midway in Atlanta. He and his wife, Joyce, had three daughters: Joy Hester, Paige Baker and Mandy Miller, all Canton residents.

After raising his family, Mauldin and his wife continued to be active in the Canton sports community, raising funds for new parks and cheering on their grandchildren who play baseball, softball, basketball and football. Baker said Mauldin enjoyed spending time with all of his grandchildren, who range in age from 2 to 27 years old.

“My Pop was a beast at baseball, and when I grow up I want to be just like him,” his grandson, 12-year-old Max Baker, said.

Mauldin was the son of Philman Mauldin and Bessie Williams Mauldin. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Joyce Cantrell Mauldin; three daughters, Joy (Greg) Hester, Paige (Jay) Baker and Mandy (Ben) Miller; brother, Roy Mauldin; sister, Helen (Merle) King; and seven grandchildren, Matthew and Samantha Hester, Grayson, Max and Sophie Baker, and Graham and Rylee Miller. He was predeceased by his brother, Dusty Mauldin.

A funeral service was held Thursday at the chapel at South Canton Funeral Home.