

JOHN F. CLEMENTS



CLEMENTS, JOHN F, on November 8, 2014, joined his beloved Beanie after a separation of 13 days. He was born in Baxley, GA on January 20, 1920 to Mack and Elizabeth Clements. In 1925 his father died and the family moved to Bunnell, FL. He attended school there until graduation, excelling in football and basketball. When he was 16 years old, he signed a baseball contract with the St. Louis Cardinals and was assigned to their farm club in Daytona Beach. He returned to school and played two more years of semi-pro ball with Ormond Beach and Georgia State Textile League, winning the Southeastern Semi-Pro Baseball Tournament and being named MVP. It was his prowess in football, however, that earned him a scholarship to the University of Tampa where he was a starter and standout player for the Spartans' football, basketball and baseball teams, where he was referred to as "ace hurler", "fireballer", and "big gun". He pitched right-handed and punted with his left foot in football. Later, he became the 17th person elected to the University's Hall of Fame. He joined dozens of pioneering former U

of T football players from the 1930s and early 1940s as a member of the Rathole Gang - so dubbed because of their dormitory in one of the famous minarets was frequented by river rats. John also was a member of Beta Chi fraternity while at the University of Tampa. [World War II](#) moved him to enlist in the [United States Marine Corps](#), serving 3 years and 9 months, mainly as classification officer in the F4U Fighter Squadron. After discharge from the military, he signed a baseball contract with the Philadelphia Phillies and after spring training was assigned for 2 years to Utica, NY and Wilmington, DE. After a serious injury to his pitching arm, he was traded to the Tampa Smokers baseball team. John moved his family to Zephyrhills, FL in 1948 for what he thought would be a temporary job. But they fell in love with the town and the people, and a 10-month contract at Zephyrhills High School stretched out to 35 years. During that time he became Athletic Director and coach, taught American History, Physical Education, and Driver Education. He served 20 years as Senior Class sponsor, 5 years as the Zephyrillsco yearbook sponsor, coached football, basketball, and baseball. In 1957 he was named Pasco County Teacher of the Year, and in 1984 was given the Concourse Award for contributions to the youth of Pasco County. He received an award in 1988 recognizing him as one of 5 U.S. baseball coaches with 418 victories. By far the most singular award received came shortly after retirement - the dedication of a brand new baseball field that carries his name. Always striving to enrich the lives of young people, in the summer he directed the school recreation program with 500 students, from beginners to survival swimming, and for 15 years operated, with wife Marvene (Beanie), the Zephyrhills municipal swimming pool. He organized Zephyrhills' first Little League baseball team, and coached the American League baseball team for 14 years. He was Past President and Treasurer of Zephyrhills Rotary, with 30 years of 100% attendance record and was the second member of the club to become a Paul Harris Fellow. He was a longtime member of the [V.F.W.](#) and the American Legion. After retiring in 1983, he spent many happy years returning to his farming roots, traveling with his family, and developing and relaxing at "The Lake" in South Carolina. John was predeceased by his parents and 2 of his siblings, Evelyn Purvis and Martha Lou Kirkland. His beloved wife, Marvene (Beanie) died Oct. 26, 2014. He is survived by son John, Jr. (Dee) of Zephyrhills, daughter Diane Capsas (Keith Sullivan) of Baton Rouge, LA, grandson John III (Maya) of Zephyrhills, granddaughter LT COL Kim McGavern (LT COL Aaron Roth) Colorado Springs, CO and Lawton, OK, great-grandson Brandon F. Clements of Zephyrhills and sister Louise Jackson of Panama City, FL. The family is grateful to Hospice for the excellent and dependable care and support they provided over the past several months. A private burial took place on Nov. 12, 2014 at Chapel Hill Gardens, Dade City. A memorial service and celebration of his life will be on Saturday, Nov. 22 beginning at 1:00 p.m., at First United Methodist Church, Zephyrhills. Guests are encouraged to share their stories and memories at the memorial service and afterwards at the Celebration of Life.

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