



Robert "Bob" Spencer

September 10, 1932 - August 30, 2020

Robert "Bob" Spencer, age 87, of Des Moines, passed away on Sunday, August 30, 2020, at his home in Des Moines, IA.

Bob was born on September 10, 1932, to John Earl and Wreatha (Pence) Spencer, in Albia, IA. He grew up attending school in Albia and graduated from the Albia High School with the Class of 1951. Following high school, Bob attended Parsons College where he was a successful athlete, lettering in Football and Track and Field. In 1953, Bob volunteered for the United States Army during the Korean War where he served as athletic non-commissioned officer in Bordeaux, France. While he was in Europe, he organized and coached, as well as played on, Football, Boxing, Volleyball, Softball, and Track and Field teams. Upon his return from the Army, Bob returned to Parson College where he served as the Senior Class President and graduated in 1957.

Bob went to work at the Carlisle High School where he taught and was very active in the athletic programs. He coached Girls Basketball for 8 years, as well as Boys and Girls Track and Field and Cross Country. Bob started the Carlisle "Wildcat Relays." During his career there, Bob also earned his Master's Degree from Northern Colorado University.

In 1965, Bob was hired as Professor, Director of Men's Athletics, and the

Dean of Students at John F. Kennedy College, where he initiated the first ever complete Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Program with full ride scholarships. Bob continued his passion for coaching with the Women's Basketball as well as Women's Cross Country Track & Field with several Final Four Tournament finishes.

On January 25, 1969, Bob was united in marriage to Pat Davis in Wahoo, NE. Bob and Pat shared 51 years of marriage prior to his passing.

In 1971, Bob went to work at Parson's College, his alma mater, where he was a Professor and the Associate Athletic Director. Here he started the Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Program, as well as continued to coach Women's Basketball and Cross Country Track and Field, where he led his teams to Conference and State Championships.

In 1973, Bob was hired at William Penn University as the Associate Athletic Director to start the first Women's Athletic Program there. He coached Women's Cross Country, Women's Basketball, and Women's Track and Field and is the winningest coach at William Penn. In 1981, they won a National Championship with a 43-3 record as was selected as National Coach of the Year. Bob was also a member of the original "Kodak All American (7 member) Selection Committee.

Following his very successful career at William Penn, Bob was hired in 1981, at Fresno State University in Fresno, CA, as a Professor and the Women's Basketball Coach. Bob was named Nor Pac Conference Coach of the Year and was also the winningest Women's Basketball coach at Fresno State. Bob remained employed there until 1993 and in 1995, he and Pat retired to Bella Vista, AK.

Bob was inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Albia High School, the Carlisle

High School, as well as at William Penn University. His amazing career earned him numerous different awards over the years. He was granted the “Lifetime Achievement Award” by the National Women’s Basketball Coaches Association, as well as “National Coach of the Year.” He led his teams to win a National Championship in Basketball, as well as runners-up, and 3rd place finishes in National Championships. He was the first NCAA Women’s Basketball Coach to win 500 games. In addition to coaching, Bob was a member of the selection committee for the first Women’s Olympic team and hosted the first “World University Games” tryouts. He was also a charter staff member of the original “Kodak and Converse National Coaches Clinics.

Bob is survived by his wife, Pat Spencer; a daughter, Lisa Spencer; and a sister, Carol (Jack) Maberry. Bob is also survived by several nieces, nephews, cousins, and good friends.

He is preceded in death by his parents, John and Wreatha; 2 sisters, Earlene Davis and Rosemary Thomas; and a brother, Richard “Dick” Spencer.

Visitation will be held from 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 5, 2020, at the Tharp Funeral Home in Albia with Bob’s family present to greet family and friends. According to the rules put in place by the Iowa Department of Public Health, proper social distancing and reasonable personal protective equipment is advised for attending a religious public event.

A memorial service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 5, 2020, at the Tharp Funeral Home in Albia. Burial with military rites provided by the American Legion of Albia, Melrose and Lovilia will follow services at Oak View Cemetery in Albia.

A memorial has been established to the Welcome Home Soldier Monument in

Albia.

Cemetery Details

Oak View Cemetery

Albia, IA 52531

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 5. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Tharp Funeral Home
116 Benton Ave.
Albia, IA 52531
(641) 932-3129
<https://www.tharpfh.com/>

Memorial Service

SEP 5. 11:00 PM (CT)

Tharp Funeral Home
116 Benton Ave.
Albia, IA 52531
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Tribute Wall



“ Robert "Bob" Spencer

January 30, 2023 at 05:06 AM



“ Robert "Bob" Spencer

January 30, 2023 at 02:53 AM



“ I came across this Obituary about Coach Spencer recently while looking up people who made an impact on my life's work in Coaching. I attended Penn back in the 70s and graduated in 1982. Coach Spencer was acting Athletic Director at the time I began the Wm Penn College Wrestling Camp. We helped me to do all the behind the scenes work and guided me into the organizational processes. His work in Coaching made a huge impact on my views of being a coach. I remember in his classes he always started by writing a quote of the day on the board. He will forever be in my memories.
Ken Colao
Penn '82

ken Colao - March 22, 2021 at 09:41 PM



“ Steph Bingham DeVos lit a candle in memory of Robert "Bob" Spencer



Steph Bingham DeVos - September 17, 2020 at 09:43 PM

JC

“ Thank you for the great experiences I had playing for you during the William Penn 1989-81 basketball season. The things you taught me have provided guidance through out my life. Hugs to Pat! I will keep you in my prayers!

jill (Papke) Christman - September 14, 2020 at 01:33 PM

SP

“ I only played for Coach Spencer & Mrs Pat for 1 year at Fresno State (1982-83), but the impact they made has lasted a lifetime. Many words of wisdom & life lessons passed along, though at the time none of us realized that (especially at those 5am workouts when Coach walked around whistling & giving us “frayshmen” grief. My favorite memory is when he ate the top of the ice cream off of a cone of a total stranger at the airport!! Rest In Peace Coach, sending prayers for comfort for Mrs Pat & family.

Susan Proctor - September 13, 2020 at 10:53 AM

LS

“ Dad, I will never forget you and all the great times we had spending time and traveling together. Love you Forever your daughter Lisa.

Lisa Spencer - September 10, 2020 at 07:08 AM

MM

“ This man was, indeed, the real deal; a coach of national, if not, international acclaim, an academic dean of students, husband, father and a friend to thousands over the years. Bob and I have been pals for 55 years and the pleasure of that friendship has been all mine. I am pleased that we were able to communicate frequently and personally visit from time to time. Those memories will be forever catalogued. One of my favorite remembrances is when the JFK women's basketball team went to Texas for a tournament. I arranged for the coach and team to stay the night in my hometown in Oklahoma. The team even worked out in the local high school gym the following morning as my mother made arrangements with the school officials. Bob sent my mom a note of thanks and gratitude. She never forgot that and spoke of it many times. I told Bob how much she liked it and in his modest manner suggested that she should get all of the credit. She recalled that until her death last year at age 96. My sincere condolences to Pat, his daughter and family, his former athletes, and countless friends. My apologies for the length of this post but I wanted to express my feelings for a man of his renaissance stature.

Michael McMurry - September 06, 2020 at 04:01 PM

RW

“ My sincere condolences to the family of Coach Spencer. Coach was a really good man and mentor. He was very helpful to me during my college career and I learned many things from him that I used my whole career. Proud also to share a home town. Rest in peace Coach. Ray Woodard Albia HS 1965 John F. Kennedy College 1969.

Ray Woodard - September 04, 2020 at 09:08 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



September 04, 2020 at 04:07 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



September 03, 2020 at 08:04 PM

RS

“ so sorry to hear about bob's passing, not many days go by that i don't think about coaching with bob and some of the more unique observations he would make. i remember when we drove down to my home in missouri, we went by the small school i attended for 12 years,, there was a regular long bus and 1 short bus parked outside the school, and he asked me where our bus barn was?,,, i told him why would be need a bus barn,, only had those two busses,,, he must have laughed for 10 minutes and often brought that point up to me as the years went on.

my mom at 99 years old said to let you know she would be thinking of bob's family, she really enjoyed visiting with bob when ever she and dad got the chance.

working at the summer girls basketball camp with bob and the whole basketball family at penn was an experience that i will never forget. bob and pat both were always ready to help me out with any decisions that i was struggling with and i blessed to have known and worked with them both.

my prayers and thoughts are with you. god bless you and thank you for being a part of my life.

ron seifert - September 03, 2020 at 06:48 PM



“ I am just one of thousands of women who were inspired by Coach Spencer at the Wm. Penn Girls Basketball Camp. He was an amazing coach, but he taught more than basketball drills...he taught you how to prioritize what is important in life, the importance of team, the love of sport/competition, the value of hard work and how to lead a life of dignity. His legacy lives on in all the ponytail young girls whose lives were forever changed by his wisdom. My sincere sympathies to his family. Carla (Ferguson) Eysink

Carla Eysink - September 03, 2020 at 01:39 PM

BB

“ Dear Pat: So sorry to hear about Coach Spencer's passing. I was thinking about all the great lessons he taught me: how to win, how to prepare to win and how to be gracious when we did win-which was often! Many life lessons came from my involvement with the William Penn College National Championship team (43-3 girls!!!!) that I still hold dear today...thanks for allowing me to be a part of his legacy.

Brenda Beckwith

Class of 1981

Brenda M Beckwith - September 03, 2020 at 10:33 AM

MH

“ Coach Spencer is one of my best memories at Carlisle High School. He was new to teaching and related so well to the students. Through the years he always made it a point to stay in touch and it was with great joy that I followed his very successful career. What a guy.

Marvel Toney Hansen - September 03, 2020 at 10:25 AM

NW

“ Pat, I was so sad to hear of Bob's passing. Jerry and I loved you both, we had great laughs reading his letters, and lots of fun with both of you. Hawaii will never be the same. My heart goes out to you, Jerry died six years ago so I can imagine how you must feel. It isn't fun being alone. Bob was a great guy, one of a kind (as was Jerry) I hope heaven can handle both of them being there.

Love you, Pat

Nancy Wyatt

Nancy Wyatt - September 02, 2020 at 10:39 PM

CB

“ Condolences to the family of Bob Spencer. I traveled many highway miles with the John F. Kennedy Women's AAU team either in the front seat with Bob's dad, or in the back seat of a station wagon facing the back. Great times traveling from Wahoo to Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Colorado, and Des Moines, Iowa.

Chris Morris Benedict - September 02, 2020 at 04:45 PM

PB

“ My deepest condolences go out to Mr. Spencers entire Family. Mr. Spencer was my guiding light (1965 -1969) while I attended John F. KENNEDY COLLEGE IN WAHOO NEBRASKA. MR SPENCER LET ME BE A PART OF THE GREAT ATHLETIC PROGRAM AT JFK. HE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE AND MANY MORE OTHER STUDENTS TOO. I RAN TRACK AND PLAYED BASEBALL AT JFK. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL MY SUCCESSES IN LIFE. MY YOU REST IN PEACE. 🙏



Peter Brandman - September 02, 2020 at 01:54 PM

LB

“ Both of our daughters, Dana and Jill, had the opportunity to attend the summer camps at Wm Penn. They gained basketball knowledge, but more importantly they learn team work together and how you care for others, thanks to Coach Spencer and the staff of athletes. Jill attended Wm Penn and followed her dad in the 1000 pt. Club and Hall of Fame in BB . Dana went on to play Big 8 VB at Iowa St.but the intramural GBB team composed of VB players in the off season won quite a few games. We are proud alumni of Wm. Penn and send our sincere sympathy to the Spencer family for a life of giving to the young people. Ted and Louise Binns Burson

Louise Burson - September 02, 2020 at 09:02 AM

J1

“ *Jon Black CHS Class of 1964 purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



Jon Black CHS Class of 1964 - September 02, 2020 at 12:16 AM

JL

“ *Bob was a great coach and leader. He was an even better human being that lifted everyone around him. He was a great practical joker and his memory brings a smile to my face for all the right reasons. His loss brings a tear to my eye. Jim Lindenmayer*

Jim Lindenmayer - September 01, 2020 at 05:04 PM



“ *Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



September 01, 2020 at 04:45 PM

RM

“ *Sending prayers and comforting hugs to Pat, the Spencer Family as well as the Wm. Penn Family and all of his basketball families. He certainly touched the lives of many in a very positive way. RIP Coach Spencer! Robin Madole*

Robin Madole - August 31, 2020 at 10:27 PM

VJ

“ During my freshman year at William Penn, I was playing both volleyball and basketball. Back in those days, we had a JV and Varsity basketball 🏀 team. My high school coach, Peggy Sisson, who played for Coach Spencer at Parsons, was flying from NYS to come visit me. There was a varsity tournament at Penn during the weekend she was coming, so Coach Spencer moved me to the varsity team for the weekend so she could see me play. What a wonderful gesture! RIP Coach.

vicki jensen - August 31, 2020 at 09:23 PM

NM

“ To the Spencer family: He was a great guy and i learned a lot from him. He helped me in many ways and for that I am thankful. Since when I was in school (high school) we didn't have women's sports per se (they did some years after I graduated high school) he gave me opportunities to work with the teams by being in the training room with Grandpa, having me help with practices by taking notes (missed shots, layups, etc. and a variety of other things) and even let me travel to some of the out of town games (Las Vegas --I remember the plane ride) and to another state. All of his family are in my thoughts and prayers. He will be missed by many.
Nancy (Stapp) McCurdy



Nancy Jane Stapp McCurdy - August 31, 2020 at 09:11 PM

JB

“ Coach Spencer was an awesome coach but more importantly an awesome man. He didn't care if you were an all star player or a benchwarmer, he treated you as part of his family. Love you Coach.

Jan Roudebush Bastian - August 31, 2020 at 06:42 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



August 31, 2020 at 06:22 PM



“ *I played for Coach Spencer and his family became my family. Every heart ache I have endured through the loss of my family the Spencer's were always at my side. I had a lot of fun and great experiences playing for coach. He taught me how to be the best coach and mentor I could be! Rest In Peace Coach. I love you*

Jan Irby Littlefield - August 31, 2020 at 06:11 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



August 31, 2020 at 06:06 PM



“ *Andy & Lea Davidson purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Robert "Bob" Spencer.*



Andy & Lea Davidson - August 31, 2020 at 06:02 PM

CB

“ I learned who Bob Spencer was when I was seven years old watching AAU basketball in my hometown. I had the privilege to be part of his family with Pat while attending William Penn. He entered the lives of us women at a crucial time period in history. While at Penn, one could not tell which women played for him or not because he and Pat gave us all the attention and consideration of their time. There were many lonely days on my overseas deployment when I would receive a hastily written note of encouragement from him. I still marvel how he knew what each of his players needed to bring out the best in their ability to play. I don't think we will ever know the exact number of the several thousand women and girls and those that we coached or managed after we left the Penn Campus that 'found ourselves' because he taught us to dream and to reach our own potential.

Cheryl Bolden - August 31, 2020 at 05:17 PM

JG

On behalf of the Carlisle class of 1960, I would like to express our sincere sadness to Pat and Bob's family for their loss. Bob was not only a great coach and teacher, he was a wonderful human being. We were lucky to have him as a role model and we not only remember his fairness, humor, and wit, but also his humility. We will miss him!

Jerry Gamble - September 03, 2020 at 12:35 PM

FB

My Name is Frank Baskerville. I attended Wm Penn from 1978-1982. i had nothing to do with the Womens Basketball Team, except to attend all their Home games in AWE. I never saw them lose at home while i attended Wm Penn. Once i found out that Coach Spencer was going into The Wm Penn Hall of Fame in 1994. I flew to Iowa to attend the Ceremony and Dinner, just to watch as a Bystander. I was so in AWE of his Mastery of his Sport. R.I.P. Coach Spencer

frank Baskerville - August 24, 2022 at 12:31 AM