



1939 until 1957

Robb remembered as `true gentleman`

Retired teacher, coach and Washoe County schools administrator John E. Robb, was remembered by friends and colleagues Monday as a true gentleman who never spoke ill of others. Robb died Friday at Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center at the age of 90.

A northwest Reno street and the athletic field at McQueen High School were named in his honor, but Robb was a humble, unassuming man, said Dick Trachok, athletic director emeritus at the University of Nevada, Reno. He was a first-class guy who showed nothing but kindness to everybody he met, said Trachok, who was the football coach at Reno High School when Robb became his assistant coach in 1952.

When Ty Cobb, the late Reno Gazette-Journal editor and columnist, was in failing health and had trouble seeing, Robb would drive him to UNR basketball games, Trachok recalled. They were very good friends and Robb was considerate toward everyone, he said.

From 1939 until 1957, Robb taught and coached at Douglas County, Tonopah, Yerington, Sparks and Reno high schools. He became director of student activities for the Washoe County School District in 1957, retiring 24 years later.

Robb was an outstanding high school athlete in Los Angeles, enrolling in 1933 on a scholarship after being recruited by University of Nevada football coach Brick Mitchell. During the Great Depression, Robb got a job pounding railroad ties for Western Pacific Railroad while he waited six months for residency status to qualify for cheaper in-state tuition costs. During his years at the university, Robb lettered in football, basketball and track. In basketball, he was named to the all-Far Western Conference team three consecutive seasons, and was captain of the 1937-38 team that won the championship. He also was the recipient of the first Jack Hill Memorial Trophy as best Nevada athlete.

In 1992, Robb was inducted into the University of Nevada Wolf Pack Hall of Fame. To his friends, Robb was known by his nickname Ham, said Fausto Foe Mentaberry, retired Wooster High School athletic director and vice principal.

He was a family man and a very good golfer, Mentaberry said. He was a nice guy, very considerate of other people. I never heard anybody say a bad thing about him.” Amanda Robb, a script writer from New York City, said her husband, Andrew Chesler, once summed up her grandfather. My husband said he was the kind of man who made America great, she said.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked, my grandfather got his hernia fixed so he could join the Navy, Amanda Robb said. Her grandfather served in the Navy’s Armed Guard and Amphibious Force in the South Pacific and had been offered the rank of commander before he left the service after World War II ended in 1945. He devoted himself to public education rather than pursuing wealth, she said. He was humble, good and decent. The only time her grandfather ever raised his voice to her was one day while they were playing zoo, said Robb, daughter of Damonte Ranch High School Principal Serena Robb.

Her grandfather’s life was not without tragedy, she said. In 1970, John D. Robb, his son, died at the age of 27 of a kidney ailment. John D. Robb was Amanda Robb’s father and was Reno assistant city attorney at the time.

John is survived by his wife of 63 years, Bette Robb; his son Bruce Robb (Nancy), a Reno attorney; his older son's widow, Serena Robb (Jack Ritenhouse), principal of Damonte Ranch High School, four grandchildren Amanda Robb (Andrew Chesler), Jonna AuCoin (David), John Bruce Robb (Jeannie) and Tom Robb, step-grandchild Duke Ritenhouse (Kristin), and two great-grandchildren. His older son, John Douglas Robb, an assistant Reno City attorney, died in 1970.

John will be remembered for his kindness and gentle spirit. He loved Nevada, his family and friends. We will miss him.