

## Robert W. Albertson

May 22, 1926 - September 3, 2018

Bob Albertson, a local legend affectionately known as “Coach Bob” to thousands of Florida High School students for more than 4 decades, died September 3 at age 92. For 43 years Coach Bob was a teacher at Florida High School in Tallahassee until he retired in 1998. Bob loved interacting with his students, and once said he viewed his coaching as the “dessert” to his teaching.

Albertson was the Varsity Basketball Coach at Florida High from 1955 to 1992. Bob led his team to win Florida High’s only State Basketball Championship title in 1963. Albertson was twice selected as the Big Bend Basketball Coach of the Year, and was the winner of the Big Bend Basketball Association Sportsmanship award 4 times.

When he retired from coaching, Albertson was Florida’s winningest active basketball coach with 520 wins and 431 losses, and is ranked 6th in all time wins among High School basketball coaches in Florida. He also coached football and track in the 1950’s, and served as Athletic Director at Florida High for many years. By an act of the Florida Legislature, the Florida High School Gym was named the “Bob Albertson Gym” in 1992.

Perhaps Coach Bob’s most enduring legacy was breaking the racial color barrier in sports. Bob Albertson was the first High School Basketball Coach in North Florida to have an African American player at an all white school in 1965. This decision did not sit well with many at the time, including the Ku Klux Klan, whose grand wizard and state Headquarters were both located in

Madison, FL. Albertson received numerous threatening calls, death threats, and warnings that there would be riots on campus if he continued allowing African Americans to play basketball. There were many hair raising experiences, fights, and near race riots during these memorable games against segregated schools across North Florida in the tumultuous sixties. Coach Bob was preceded in death by his wife of more than 60 years, Elaine Albertson. He is survived by his 5 children and their spouses, Roy Albertson, Nancy Albertson, Carolyn and Bill Barnes, Diane and Jason Lum, and Richard and Elizabeth Albertson, along with 14 Grand Children, and 7 Great Grandchildren.

As a World War II veteran in the U.S. Navy, Albertson served as a gunnery mate aboard an LST (Landing Ship Tank). He was in Pearl Harbor training for the invasion of Japan when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Albertson believed this fateful decision by President Truman probably saved his life, given the staggering number of casualties that were estimated for this planned invasion.

When Bob's LST arrived in San Francisco bay after the war on Christmas Eve in 1945, the typical excitement of mail call aboard ship was dampened when he opened a letter from his mother with tragic news. His father had recently passed away. Bob was 19 years old. Bob's father Roy Wallace Albertson was a world class athlete who held the world record in the Pole Vault for exactly one day circa 1900. Later Roy was the Track Coach at Northwestern for 3 years. Roy encouraged his son in sports, especially membership at the local YMCA in Chicago.

Under the GI Bill Bob was able to graduate from FSU with a degree in Physical Education, and went on to receive a Masters Degree from Springfield College. He played basketball while he was a student at Florida State University.

Coach Bob was also a football official for 58 years, served as President of the Big Bend Football Official Association, and refereed 2 state championships and 31 state playoff games. He was the head Score Keeper for Florida State

men's Basketball for 44 years, serving under 6 FSU head coaches. He also kept the game clock at FSU football home games for 17 years, and later became the "most hated man on the football field," the TV timeout referee at FSU home games, for many years.

Bob was a Charter member at Covenant Presbyterian Church, where he served as both Deacon and Elder. He loved salt water fishing and taking his kids and grandkids scalloping in the Gulf of Mexico, and took his family on many memorable camping trips out west to visit family in California.

Another Tallahassee legend, beloved Sports Editor Bill McGrotha, described Albertson this way in one of his editorials in the Tallahassee Democrat: "He's much in the pattern of thousands of other unsung heroes who coach our kids for the joy of it, or something close. People who so very often give to our own the things we want them to have – things many of us, for dozens of no-good reasons, do not give."

The Family Visitation will be on September 11 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2221 Old Bainbridge Road in Tallahassee, and the Funeral will be on September 12 at 11:00 am at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Florida High Athletics through the FSU Foundation, which will go directly to Florida High Athletic program, or to Big Bend Hospice. <http://one.fsu.edu/albertson> or Send check to: Attn: FSU Foundation F08582, 325 West College Ave., Tallahassee, FL 32301 or Big Bend Hospice, 1723 Mahan Center Blvd. Tallahassee, FL 32308, <https://bigbendhospice.charityproud.org/Donate>

Todd Wahlquist with Bevis Funeral Home, (850-385-2193, [www.bevisfh.com](http://www.bevisfh.com)) is assisting the family with their arrangements.

# Previous Events

## The family will receive friends

SEP **11.** 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Covenant Presbyterian  
2121 Old Bainbridge Rd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32303

## Celebration of Life

SEP **12.** 11:00 AM (ET)

Covenant Presbyterian  
2121 Old Bainbridge Rd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32303

# Tribute Wall

KM

“ Dear Diane and family,

*We are so sad to hear about your wonderful, kind, funny and dedicated Dad. Like everyone who went to Florida High, I have so many lovely memories of his friendly chats, kind words of support and endless energy spent making Florida High and all of our lives, stronger and better. We are all much better people for having been inspired by him. I send my love to you and your entire family and please know that we are grieving with you. And also remembering him with gratitude.*

*Big hugs!*

*Karen Mesterton-Gibbons  
850-385-1064*

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**Karen Mesterton-Gibbons** - September 20, 2018 at 03:45 PM

ML

“ As a student at Florida High School in the 60's and 70's we knew , "Coach" Albertson. He cared about all of us whether or not you played sports and supported us in every aspect of our lives. My thoughts and prayers are with the family and I hope when you think of Bob, you do it with a smile. *Melissa Eubanks Lamb*

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**Melissa E. Lamb** - September 08, 2018 at 06:36 PM

HM

“ We shared forty years of teaching - all wonderful times. What great memories of Coach Bob, his wife as treasurer of the music boosters and all the Albertson kids in class. Florida High was blessed by his devotion. Mr. Florida High will be missed. With warmest regards and desiring God's comfort in your lives, Harry Martinez

Harry Martinez - September 06, 2018 at 08:06 PM

EB

“ To: The Albertson's Family  
From: Estina. Barnes & Family

Just a few words of comfort. I met Mr. Roy Albertson in the year of 2000, I was one of his tenants (Lake Mary Street-deer sausages).

Family, hold your heads high! Because your father played the hand that he was given (called life) and he played it well. He really left his mark around this town.

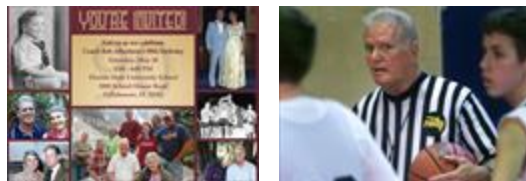
May God bless you all and continue to hold you in the palms of his hands.

Estina Barnes - September 05, 2018 at 05:25 PM



PA

“ 2 files added to the album New Album Name



Peggy Adair - September 05, 2018 at 11:54 AM