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Democrat and Chronicle

Bob Thompson of Henrietta remembered as key figure in Section V boys basketball

JOHN BOCCACINO • STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 26, 2008

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While Bob Thompson never coached a Section V boys basketball team, he was one of the behind-the-scenes giants who ensured the annual sectional tournament, held at the Blue Cross Arena at the Community War Memorial each March, ran smoothly.

As director of media and public relations, and coordinator of Section V's basketball handbook, Mr. Thompson played an integral role in the Section V hoops landscape.

As a committee member, Mr. Thompson, along with former tournament director Bill Farrell, helped resurrect the state tournament in 1978 after a 45-year absence. Rochester hosted the event from 1978-80.

On Friday, after spending much of his adult life helping youths enjoy the sport of basketball, Mr. Thompson, a Henrietta resident, died at the age of 67 from an apparent heart attack. Earlier this month, Mr. Thompson was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and he had completed his first day of chemotherapy Friday before collapsing, according to long-time friend Fred Hermansen Jr., who worked alongside Mr. Thompson as Section V's tournament statistician.

Mr. Thompson was a member of the Section V basketball Hall of Fame.

"Bob was Section V basketball," said Gene Johnson of Greece, the state chairman from 1985-90 and Section V chairman from 1981-90 who worked with Mr. Thompson and Farrell.

"Bill and myself were credited with a lot of the success, but the real key behind Section V basketball was Bob. He would do anything he could to help those kids. He spent countless hours developing the programs and was a great person."

Before Mr. Thompson's arrival in 1969, the basketball program resembled more of a pamphlet than its current 64-page form, which is chock-full of nuggets including previous sectional champions and statistics from the tournament's rich history.

The program contained photographs from the previous year's competition and rosters of the semifinalists, but Mr. Thompson took it upon himself to revitalize the handbook.

"There were more photos from last year's tournament, including the winning team's picture, and rosters from all the teams. Bobby decided to include the complete history of the tournament, with comprehensive statistics and a list of all the champions from 1922 on," said Glenn Harkins of Chili, who succeeded Mr. Thompson when he stepped down in 1991 after 22 years of service.

"When we traveled to Glens Falls (site of the state tournament starting in 1981), our handbook was the envy of the rest of the state."

Mr. Thompson is survived by his wife of 41 years, Tina; daughter Rebecca; son Jeffrey; brother Richard; and numerous grandchildren, nieces, nephews and cousins.

Prior to the tournament, Mr. Thompson organized the basketball banquet for the athletes and coaches. Four years ago, he led a campaign to honor his mentor, establishing the Bill Farrell Memorial Coaching award for each sectional-winning coach.

Mr. Thompson also coordinated media relations at the LPGA's annual Locust Hill tournament, served as assistant superintendent at Monroe BOCES-2 in Spencerport and was an interim superintendent for several area schools.

"Bobby took on the responsibility of an awful lot of things for the basketball committee and made sure it was handled

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well. He was so organized and always wanted to do a wonderful job for us and the kids," said Ted Woods, a current committee member and North Rose resident who served as Section V's executive director in 1991.

"He's not the kind of guy you replace, he's the kind you revere," added Harkins.

Calling hours are Wednesday from 4-8 p.m. at Miller Funeral Homes Inc., 3325 Winton Road South. Funeral services are Thursday at 10:30 a.m. at the Henrietta United Church of Christ, 1400 Lehigh Station Road. Donations can be made in Mr. Thompson's honor to the Rush-Henrietta Education Foundation or Monroe No. 2 Orleans Educational Foundation.

JBOCCACI@DemocratandChronicle.com

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