

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown heroes who have made a difference.

Don Jennings



An esteemed educator and coach, Donald Paul Jennings may be best remembered for guiding the Terre Haute North baseball team to the 1974 Indiana high school title.

The son of Thomas A. and Stella K. (Bowen) Jennings, Don was born in Farmersburg on Oct. 13, 1935, exactly 70 years ago. When he was a teen, the family moved to 2510 North 13-1/2 St. At Garfield High School, Jennings excelled in track and baseball. A sprinter, he lettered four years in track and, during his junior year in 1953, was undefeated in dual meet competition in the 220-yard dash, advancing to the IHSAA Finals in that event and the 440-yard relay. A three-year letterman in baseball, Jennings fractured an ankle during summer competition,

slightly affecting his speed during his senior year. Matriculating to Indiana State, he played baseball for Coach Wally Marks and, upon graduating in 1958, wed his high school sweetheart, Lou Anne Sullivan. Jennings earned a master's degree from Indiana State in 1963.

Jennings began his distinguished 40-year career in education in 1960, teaching physical education at elementary schools throughout the city while serving as head baseball coach, head cross country coach and assistant basketball coach at his high school alma mater. He remained at Garfield as assistant basketball coach and head baseball coach, winning two Western Indiana Conference titles, until the school closed in 1971. After consolidation, Jennings became the North baseball coach. By the time he retired from coaching in 1986, he had compiled a 370-149 career record, winning 11 sectionals (1972-78, 1980-83), eight regionals (1972, 1974-75, 1977-78, 1980, 1982-83) and two Semi-States. His 1974 state championship team assembled a 25-2 mark. Jennings' Patriots also were 1983 state runners-up, losing to Fort Wayne Northrup in the title game. North was ranked No. 1 in Indiana throughout most of the 1977 season, amassing a 27-1 record before losing in the Semi-State finale to Bedford-North Lawrence.

The success did not go unnoticed. In 1980-81 Jennings was elected by his peers as president of the Indiana High School Baseball Coaches Association and served several years as a director of the organization. Named 1986 Indiana High School Baseball Coach of the Year, he also was honored as Region Four (Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin and Indiana) Coach of the Year by the National High School Athletic Association during ceremonies at the Superdome. In 1983 Elks Lodge No. 86 presented Don with its Order of the Cannon for outstanding leadership of youth. Three times he was chosen to coach in the North-South All-Star series. In 1988 he was inducted into the Indiana Baseball Hall of Fame and recognized by the Breakfast Optimist Club. Jennings was recipient of the coveted Dick Martin Coaches Award in 1996 and the Vigo County Education Foundation's Excellence in Education Award in 1997. During his career, he taught at 35 different Vigo County elementary schools.

Don and Lou Anne raised two children, Dr. Greg Jennings, a dentist who played short-stop on his father's 1977 team, and Gina Lou. In retirement, Don and Lou Anne devote considerable time to their grandchildren: James, Natasha, Alexandra, Jordan and John, all currently residing in Terre Haute.



First Financial Bank

Always Close to Home

238-6000 • MEMBER FDIC



Sign up now for **FREE*** online banking at
www.first-online.com

 EQUAL HOUSING LENDER • MEMBER FDIC

*One-time sign-up fee is \$5.95

