

Walton R. Wright Registry of Honor 2003

Walton R. Wright is a native of Winston County, Alabama and a 1929 graduate of Russellville High School where he lettered in football, baseball and basketball. He earned a B.S. degree in biology from Birmingham Southern College in 1933 and an M.S. degree in Education from George Peabody College in Nashville. He was a three-sport athlete at Southern receiving the Hugh W. Robertson medal for outstanding athletic ability. He served as Vice President of his Jr. and Sr. classes and was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha social fraternity and Kappa Phi Kappa honorary.

Wright began his coaching and teaching career at Madison County High School in Gurly, Alabama, followed by one year each at Falkville and Hackleburg High Schools. He accepted a position at Sheffield High School in 1937 where he taught algebra and geometry, and coached athletics.

After assuming his new position as head football coach in '37, Wright's teams won 29 of their first 36 games, establishing a pattern that continued throughout his career. During his 27 years at Sheffield, Wright's teams suffered only five losing seasons. From October 15, 1943 through October 5, 1946, his teams won 25 consecutive games. In addition to two undefeated and untied seasons, Wright had six seasons in which his teams lost only one game. During his career, SHS won seven Tri-Cities Championships. In 1948, he was selected one of the coaches for the first Alabama High School All-Star game at Tuscaloosa. Wright initiated a competitive basketball program at Sheffield and coached baseball for eleven years, compiling a record of 80 wins against 11 losses. He retired as a teacher and coach in 1965 and was named Director of the Sheffield Recreation Department, a position he held until 1973, at which time he began work as a volunteer at Helen Keller Memorial Hospital, contributing more than 2000 hours in volunteer service.

The communities he loved have generously recognized Coach Wright's distinguished and rewarding career. The SHS football stadium was named in his honor in 1972. He was inducted into the Birmingham Southern Sports Hall of Fame in 1983. A tribute in his honor in 1987 drew 300 of his former students. His city proclaimed "Coach Walton R. Wright Day" in 1987 for "50 years of shaping the lives of the youth of the City of Sheffield." Wright was inducted into the Alabama High School Sports Hall of Fame in 1994, and he was an inaugural inductee to the Franklin County Sports Hall of Fame in 1998, and the Colbert County Sports Hall of Fame in 2000.

Coach Wright was a member of First United Methodist Church of Sheffield for 54 years and he was married to the former Mildred Caldwell; they have three children. Coach Wright died January 16, 2001, at the age of ninety-one.