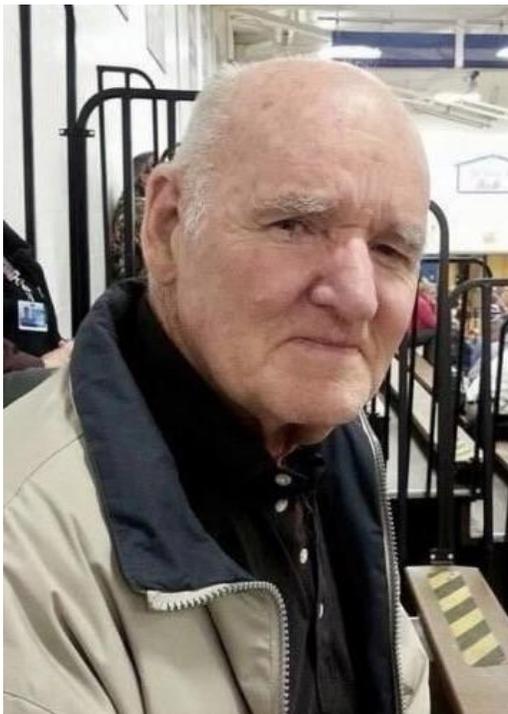


*(Editor's note: This article appeared in the March 22, 2022, edition of The Derrick and The News-Herald.)*

Friends, colleagues and former students turned out en masse over the weekend via social media to pay tribute to Duane “Pat” Patterson after learning about the death of the beloved former Oil City High School teacher



and football coach.

Patterson died March 18, 2022, after a period of declining health.

Fairly recently, he had sold his home on Fisher Avenue and moved to Severna Park, Maryland, to be near family.

He did return last July for “Pat Patterson Day,” an event held at the entrance of the OCHS football field that was organized by Bryan Schwab, one of those students who

held him in high esteem, and Ron Shoup, his former next door neighbor.

While he guided the Oilers to the Section 2 football title in 1975, it was his sayings — Patterson-isms if you will — that endeared him to those who walked the hallowed halls of Oil City High School.

Suzy Fontanazza, a current phys ed instructor at Oil City, showed me the girls locker room at the middle school the day Patterson was honored:

Patterson-isms all over the place.

Long-time basketball official Jim Hedglin, a Franklin High School alumnus, couldn't help but take notice of these words of wisdom when he saw them scattered about the dressing room.

He was so impressed, not only with the sayings, but the fact that Coach Pat dedicated his life to help youth, that he nominated Patterson – a 1953 graduate – to the Franklin High School Hall of Fame.

Patterson moved from Oil City to Utica and played right tackle for the then nicknamed Nurserymen in 1952. Following graduation from Slippery Rock, he was an assistant wrestling coach at Franklin.

He then taught and coached in the Harrisburg and Buffalo, New York, areas before returning to Oil City. He coached football from 1969-76, the highlight of which was 1975 when the Oilers, coming off a 1-8 campaign, surprised everyone but themselves and claimed the school's first Section 2 football title in 11 years.

Standout games included a 15-14 decision over previously unbeaten Warren in which a Chris Hale interception after a Gary Frantz tipped pass ended the game.

There was also the Section 2 finale at Franklin. The year before, the Knights rolled the Oilers 62-6, picking off five Mike Enos passes. The next year Enos completed 16 of 26 attempts for 205 yards and Frantz ran for 101 in a 30-7 Oil City payoff.

Patterson later was named Coach of the Year by his peers.

“A good man. Did a lot for me in high school. I will always be his ‘favorite hoodlum’,” John Brown, a tackle on that team, wrote on Facebook.

When Patterson stepped down as varsity coach, he didn’t give up football all together. He had started the Oil City Youth Football League (later to include Cranberry) in the early 1970s, and was “czar” for years.

“Coach Pat ran an entire youth football organization out of his garage. Once he learned your name, he never forgot it. We were also so lucky to have someone invest in our community and provide us the opportunity to play,” Matt McVay, former student/player-turned-educator said on Twitter.

And then there was physical fitness. Patterson established a rigorous series of tests that students had to pass at different levels to earn the privilege of wearing a gold, red or blue shirt in gym class. (One criteria, swimming continuously for an hour, seems to grab the attention of many people.) Those who couldn’t pass any of the tests wore white.

Speaking of swimming, former colleague Peg Sims had this to say on Facebook, “There are not enough words to describe Coach Pat. For me it started one summer at the pool at Wanango...when I was ...probably 8 or 9 and Pat was the lifeguard there and taught swimming lessons to me and my sisters. When I think where swimming took me all my life, I am thankful it started with Pat. Then to have him and (his wife) Gussie as my colleagues for a great portion of my career was a true blessing,” Sims wrote.

Patterson was an admirer of Byron Johnston’s Marine Corps physical fitness program at Cranberry in which the Berries would win national championships. Patterson set up the same program at Oil City.

And then there was his love of wrestling. Some people like to curl up with a great novel – and, well, according to his obituary, Patterson did, too. But he also liked to pore over the weekly District 10 wrestling rankings when Craig Phillips worked at The Derrick/The News-Herald.

Patterson continued to teach at Oil City until his retirement in the early 1990s. His physical education program was recognized statewide and he was a much sought after speaker.

Something creative former students are doing – actually “filming” – on Facebook to honor Patterson is the 22 pushups challenge – “Give Me 22.” Someone once asked him why 22 pushups. He famously answered, “21 is not enough and 23 is inhumane.”

Jim Womer, Bryan Schwab, Tim Reed, Dan Connelly, Ed McMullen and Bill Miller are among those who can be seen on Facebook doing those 22 pushups in memory of Pat Patterson.

“Loved that man,” wrote Mike Crose in another Facebook entry. “God broke the mold and made sure there will only be one Coach Pat. Semper Fidelis, sir, and may you forever rest in peace with your beloved Gussie.”

Coach Pat was also a topic of conversation around town Monday, including during lunch at McNerney’s where former Oilers football coach Dan Brown and former player Matt Sopher shared their memories. They talked for several minutes in particular about Patterson’s passion for motorcycles and his long rides across the country on his bike.

Patterson's family greeted friends at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 9, 2022, at Second Presbyterian Church in Oil City.