

DALTON DRAYTON EPTING



Dalton Drayton Epting, 80, passed away on February 25, 2021. He was a native of Northeast Florida, born in Hilliard and residing in Jacksonville most of his adult life. He was an accomplished athlete, playing basketball with the Hilliard Flashes, followed by the Stetson Hatters and the Army Big Blue. He was quite a local celebrity in the late 50's/early 60's and was featured many times in the Florida Times Union and Jacksonville Journal as a pivotal player on the Hilliard team and as a North Florida All Star team player. As a Stetson Hatter (1958-1962), he earned the distinction of NAIA All American and still holds school records for the most free-throws attempted and made during his career. He achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant in the Army, serving in the Intelligence and Security Agency in Europe during the Vietnam War (1963-1965). During this time, he enjoyed playing with the Army Big Blue basketball team, providing a much-needed morale boost to the troops during a troubled time.

He also dedicated his career to excellence in education, serving the Duval County Public School System for over 40 years. His first assignment was at Wolfson High School the year it opened in 1965 as a mathematics teacher and basketball coach. At Wolfson, he had the pleasure of coaching a talented group of young people, many of whom went on to become leaders in the Jacksonville community. He held positions of Assistant Principal, Vice Principal and Principal at 6 local high schools including Terry Parker, Robert E. Lee, Paxon, Englewood, Fletcher and Mandarin. His proudest achievement was opening Mandarin High School as its first Principal. He retired from the Duval County Public School system in 1997 but was soon called back to teach advanced mathematics at Paxon School for Advanced Studies. He taught at Paxon through 2006, serving as the math department chair and being voted Teacher of the Year.

He loved the thrill of competition. He brought that passion to be the best to all of his endeavors: academics, basketball, track and field events, even recreational aspects of life. As a classroom teacher he wanted to excite his students about mathematics and the joy to be found in problem solving. As an administrator he sought to bring excitement and involvement to students and faculty alike to foster a positive atmosphere for all and of course have the "best high school" in Duval County.

Mr. Epting was preceded in death by his parents Robert and Zola Epting; brothers Buddy and Billy Epting; and sister Bobbie Karam.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Carolyn; son Billy (Pam) Epting; daughter Claudia (Keith) Portell; grandsons Kyle (Danielle) Epting, Eric (Rachel) Epting, Scott Epting, Andrew Portell and Aaron Portell; great-grandchildren Mackenzie and Roen Epting; and brother Richard (Jane) Epting.

A celebration of Dalton's life will be held Saturday, March 13 at 11 a.m. at Hardage-Giddens Oaklawn Legacy Lodge. Any who would like to share stories of Dalton will be encouraged to do so. We do ask that you please wear a mask.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that a donation in Dalton's honor be made to the Hospice of your choosing.