

# Longtime HCHS athletic leader dies

Memorial services were held today, Tuesday, July 31, for former HCHS athletic director and football coach, Harold E. "Swede" Johnson, 79, of Harlan. He died on Friday, July 27 at his home in Harlan.

Services were held Tuesday at the Harlan Community High School Auditorium at 10 a.m. with a private burial in the Harlan Cemetery.

A Masonic prayer service was held at 7 p.m. in the HCHS auditorium on Monday, July 30, with Pauley Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

Survivors include his wife, Marian "Gene" of Harlan; two daughters, Becky (Eldon) Rike, Corning; Amy Brown and her fiance, Ken Drew, Brookfield, WI; one brother, Wilbert (Pat) Johnson, Red Oak; and two sisters-in-law, June Johnson, Red Oak; and Delores (Dr. William) Harper, Hugoton, KS; and five grandchildren.

A native of Red Oak and a graduate of Red Oak High School, Johnson was hired as the industrial arts teacher at the Harlan High School in 1948 and was head football coach from 1950 to 1965.

He coached the first undefeated football team in Harlan's history in the fall of 1961 and also coached track. Johnson started the Vocational Programs, "T & I" (trade and industry) and "O.E." (office education), where several hundred students have been employed during their senior year. In addition, he was

also the athletic director for Harlan Community High School for 35 years retiring in 1985.

During his tenure, Johnson was awarded the State Athletic Director of the Year, Regional Athletic Director of the Year and was runner-up for the National Athletic Director of the Year.

He was named Harlan Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 1973 and received the Chamber Teacher Appreciation Award in 1985.

The track at Merrill Field in Harlan was named "Harold E. "Swede" Johnson Track" in his honor. Johnson also helped in construction of the present press box at Merrill Field several years ago and spearheaded the fund raising for a new replacement press box just this past year.

Following retirement, he continued to be active in the Masons, Shriners and the Harlan Chamber of Commerce. Johnson was a past president of the Harlan Golf and Country Club and served on the Harlan Community School Foundation. He also served on the board of directors of Iowa Western Community College.

Family requests memorials be made to the Press Box Fund at Merrill Field or the Swede Johnson Athletic Leadership Scholarship.



Harold "Swede" Johnson