

Remembering The Late Vance Furr

Lincoln Herald Staff

MOUNT HOLLY––The late Vance Furr is among those awarded this year by the Mount Holly Sports Hall of Fame.

Furr, who passed away 13 years ago at the age of 66, is the 2024 recipient of the Mount Holly Sports Hall of Fame Community Service Award. Furr was well known locally for believing in kids and helping them succeed; his work as a schoolteacher in Cabarrus County and as a coach in Mount Holly; his three decades as an agent for the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation; and his subsequent work as a private investigator. At six-seven and well more than 200 pounds, Furr was a big man who had a big heart for kids.

Herself also a veteran teacher, his widow, DeLina Furr, recently extolled her late husband. The two met at the old Mount Holly Junior High in 1976, as Mrs. Furr recalled.

“He came to give a drug talk,” she said. “And at that time, Quaaludes and marijuana were the big drugs. And my family knew the chief of police, and Vance asked a policeman who I was. We dated a few times, and I thought that was it; that I’d never see him again. We met again at a church retreat and committed to marriage.”

They wed in 1980. Their 31-year love story chronicles a man devoted to his Baptist faith, his wife, his SBI career and, entwined with all that, his devotion to the kids of Mount Holly. It was Coach Furr’s volunteer work––his ceaseless involvement with the Mount Holly Optimist Club, the town’s Field of Dreams project, the athletic building at Tuckasegee Park and a multitude of youth activities––that earned him this posthumous award.

“Vance was a pretty lively fellow,” Mrs. Furr observed, “and he got several awards throughout his life. But I think he would enjoy this the most, because he loved the youth of Mount Holly, and he wanted to work for his community. I’m sure if he were here to accept it, he’d have something witty to say. He might also have a tear or two, because this would mean so much. He got the Order of the Long Leaf Pine (North Carolina’s highest civilian honor), some coaching awards and some from the SBI. But he would say this means the most.”

She recalled her husband working long hours for the SBI, sometimes undercover.

“Mostly,” she said, “he’d work drugs, and the drug deals took place at night. In fact, I never learned to cook. When we got married, everybody gave me cookbooks, and I tried. But Vance would never show up for supper, so I told him, ‘You’ll have to get food where you can.’ So he got stuff out, and sometimes he’d bring stuff home.”

A real friend to his community

In addition to his law-enforcement work, Coach Furr was known for coaching youth leagues with the local Optimist Club on the weekends. He was a gentle friend and a mentor to children needing someone to listen.

“It was like having two jobs,” Mrs. Furr remarked. “You work with criminals, and you work with youth. And he loved both. I couldn’t keep up with Vance. By Friday (after a week of teaching), I was dead tired and spent the weekend trying to reconstitute myself. And he had so much energy.”

The Optimists concocted a haunted house each Halloween. Scott Pope, the president of the Mount Holly Sports Hall of Fame and himself the 2019 recipient of its Community Service Award, remembered Coach Furr’s contribution.

“We’d make about $5,000 or $6,000 a year on the haunted house,” said Pope, adding that Furr would dress up like “Jason Voorhees,” the villain from the *Friday the 13th* movie series, and then he’d walk round the parking lot, scaring attendees. “And I’d tell him, ‘Vance, let them get inside. Then scare them!’ He was a big guy with a kid’s heart; one of those people who stands out and has a deep voice. But he was a gentle giant.”

“To me,” Mrs. Furr said, “he was a handsome guy. He was so interesting. And faith meant a lot to him. He was a real Christian. He could come across as gruff sometimes, but he had a heart of gold. He was a really good man.”

A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Coach Furr was a big fan of Tarheel basketball and football. He was a member of Tuckasegee Baptist Church in Mount Holly. After retirement from the SBI, he formed Vance Furr Private Investigations. And he played softball with the Mount Holly Police Department.

Then came lymphoma. He fought it 16 years as it metastasized. For a while, he was in a medical facility.

“Then I brought him home and kept him home for three months,” said Mrs. Furr. “It was a choice of going to a home or being in *our* home.”

She added that her husband died Nov. 19, 2011.

“I called him my Renaissance man,” she said, “because he had so many interests. He looked on the bright side of everything, and the one thing he taught me was forgiveness. He would always forgive and forget and want to be friends again. He really believed in that.”