



# Walter Whitaker

**Granite City | Wednesday, January 2 2019**

Walter L. Whitaker, 85, of Granite City, Illinois passed away at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 2, 2019 at Christian Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri.

He was born in Granite City on July 18, 1933, a son of the late Walter C. and Rose M. (Norden) Whitaker. He married Judith Jo (Georgeff) Whitaker on December 2, 1961 in Granite City and she survives.

He began his wrestling career at Granite City High School where he was a two-time sectional champ and state qualifier. After graduating from Granite City High School, he attended Arkansas State College, for two years, where he wrestled for Harold Nicholls who later went to Iowa State.



He joined the Air Force during the Korean War and served for four years. After being discharged he started school at SIU Carbondale, where he wrestled for the late Hall of Famer, Jim Wilkinson. He then finished his degree at SIU Edwardsville.

Walt began his wrestling coaching career at Cahokia in 1960. He had some good teams at Cahokia and had one state place winner, Marvin Jackson. In 1963, he became the assistant coach at Granite City High School under Bill Schmitt, a position he held for 10 years.

When Granite City North opened in 1973, Walt became their head coach for the next 10 years, until the high schools merged back together. During his time at North, his teams went 217-34-4, had 44 state qualifiers, six place winners, and one state champion, Khris Whelan. As a team, they won three regionals and one sectional.

He then continued his coaching career for two years at the collegiate level at Belleville Area College, which is now SWIC. During his time at BAC, he coached three All-Americans. Throughout his coaching career, Walt has worked with numerous teams and committees with the sport. In 1978, he helped coach the Freestyle National Team. He was also the NCAA Executive Committee Vice President for High Schools for four years.

During his time at Granite City, Walt was also involved in his community, working with the Granite City Park District and various other youth programs. For his achievements, he has received numerous awards on both the national and local levels. He has been awarded the 25-Year Membership Award by the NWCOA and has been named an Honorary Life Member of the National Wrestling Coaches Association.

In 1990, he was inducted into the Granite City Hall of Fame and in 1992, was inducted into the Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Hall of Fame. For his time at Granite City, he also has a JV tournament named in his honor. Walt retired as principal in the Granite City School District in 1993. He then served as a Granite City School board member for the next 20 years.

In addition to his beautiful wife, Judy, he is survived by his son, Mark Whitaker of Granite City; his daughter and son-in-law, Kristy J. and Paul Bassler of St. Jacob, Illinois; two grandchildren, Hunter and Samantha Bassler; brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Sam and Georganne Georgeff of Granite City; niece, Bethany Georgeff; nephew, Michael Georgeff; other extended family and many friends.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother, Leroy and a sister, Beverly.

In celebration of his life, visitation will be at Irwin Chapel, 3960 Maryville Road in Granite City on Saturday, January 5, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. until time of funeral service at 1:00 p.m. with Father Jeff Holtman officiating.

Burial with military honors will follow at Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Edwardsville.

Memorials may be made to Partners for Pets in Troy or to Shriner's Hospital for Children in St. Louis and may be accepted at the funeral home. [www.irwinchapel.com](http://www.irwinchapel.com)