



John F. "Jack" Cross

November 17, 1933 - April 12, 2015

John F. "Jack" Cross, 81, a renowned Bluffton teacher, coach and school administrator, passed away unexpectedly Sunday, April 12, 2015 at his residence in Bluffton.

Born on November 17, 1933 in Rushville, Indiana to Tracy G. and Lena (Beley) Cross. Jack graduated from Rushville High School in 1951 and earned B.S. and Masters degrees in education from Ball State University.

Jack served in the U.S. Army from 1955 to 1957 and then began a career in education which spanned 40 years, including 34 years in the Bluffton-Harrison school district.

On August 4, 1956 in Delphi, Indiana, Jack married Judith Hamling, who preceded him in death on February 3, 2015.

After initial teaching and coaching stints at Pendleton High School and Dunkirk High School, Jack came to Bluffton in 1962 as a teacher and head basketball coach.

He was the head Tiger basketball coach for 10 years, becoming the winningest coach in school history and posting an overall record of 143 victories and 88 losses for a winning average of .618. His Tiger basketball teams won five sectional championships, five holiday tournament titles and a conference championship in 1969. Two of his sectional champion teams advanced to the regional finals. He also coached cross country and baseball.

Jack served as an assistant principal and guidance counselor in the B-H school system before assuming the role of athletic director in 1980, a position which he held until his retirement in 1996.

In addition to his exemplary capabilities as a teacher, coach and administrator, Jack was an outstanding all-around athlete in his younger days at Rushville and Ball State, participating in basketball, football and track and field.

In March of 2014 he was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame for his coaching and playing achievements. In February of 2011, Jack was inducted into the Bluffton Tiger Athletic Hall of Fame and in 1980, he was inducted into the Ball State Athletic Hall of Fame. He was a four-year member of the Ball State varsity basketball team and also played football for the Cardinals. Jack also was previously inducted into the Rushville High School Athletic Hall of Fame.

Jack was an avid golfer and had the rare distinction of scoring a hole-in-one on all of the par-three holes at Timber Ridge Golf Club.

He was a member of the Timber Ridge Golf Club and Bluffton Elks Lodge.

Surviving are a daughter, Terri Ann (Kevin) Bollman of Fort Wayne and a son, Tracy Cross of Fort Wayne, along with two grandchildren, Emily and Jacob Bollman. Also surviving is a sister Jeanne Greer of Grand Rapids, Michigan and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Chester and Carrie Cross.

A service to celebrate Jack's life will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, April 17 at the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton with Life Celebrant Jeff Lemler and Tony Garton officiating. Calling hours will be held from 12 noon to 8 p.m. on Thursday, April 16 and for one hour prior to the service on Friday.

Burial will take place at Elm Grove Cemetery. Preferred memorials are to the Bluffton Athletic Department through the funeral home. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the care of Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home. Friends can send online condolences to the family at www.thomarich.com

Cemetery Details

Elm Grove Cemetery

3500 East State Road 124
Bluffton, IN

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 16. 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home
308 West Washington Street
Bluffton, IN 46714
<http://www.thomarich.com>

Visitation

APR 17. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home
308 West Washington Street
Bluffton, IN 46714
<http://www.thomarich.com>

Service

APR 17. 11:00 AM (ET)

Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home
308 West Washington Street
Bluffton, IN 46714
<http://www.thomarich.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home - April 16, 2015 at 10:19 AM



“ *John F. "Jack" Cross*

September 08, 2022 at 08:26 PM



“ *Kit Beley&family lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



kit beley&family - April 26, 2015 at 08:33 PM

DD

“ Jack came to Bluffton my senior year and it didn't take long to realize this was a totally different deal playing basketball at BHS. We knew nothing of his star status at Ball State. The fact that he was at that time the 3rd all time leading scorer at Ball State was never mentioned. I still remember scrimmaging against Jack. We were used to playing against Hullinger.....We knew about him. He played at Tulane, he could drive and dunk. He was good, really good. But then their was this new coach. I still have a picture of my teammates; Brad Bounds, Dan Taylor and Jerry Murray, all beat red, sweat dripping to the floor, hunched over shaking their head and cussing and asking who the hell is this guy?
I didn't know until years later of his legendary career at Ball State when I went to a Ball State basketball and noticed a plaque with his name on it and his picture on the wall. In fact, I think Ball State only gave one scholarship a year and guess who had it? Jack Cross. He never mentioned any of it....
Everyone meets someone in their life who stands out above the crowd. For me, it was Jack Cross and I would bet my former teammates would say the same thing. He was the real deal.
Doug Durr

Doug Durr - April 17, 2015 at 10:59 AM

BH

“ I am so sorry for your Loss. I was a graduate of Bluffton High School in 1986. Your Father, Grandfather and Uncle was a great Athletic Director and influence to me during my time with the Tigers. He will be missed. May you be comforted during this difficult time with loving memories of Jack. You are in our thoughts and prayers.”

Sincerely,
Brenda (Cochran) Hoard

Brenda (Cochran) Hoard - April 16, 2015 at 10:24 PM

CD

“ Our most sincere condolences to the family. Jack was a rare person, straight forward, honest, fair but firm, a great teacher and coach. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten.
From Jerry Dillon

Cynthia Dillon - April 16, 2015 at 06:46 PM



“ Terri I just wanted to tell you how sorry I was to hear about your dad's passing. I know how hard it is to lose someone that you dearly love. I still miss my dad every day. You have a great family that will be a great comfort to you in the coming days. Treasure all your memories of your dad. They are something that will help you in the coming days. If you need anything, don't hesitate to call. Kathy Workman



Kathy Workman - April 16, 2015 at 07:38 AM



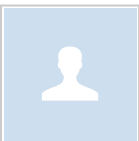
“ Jack was my driver education teacher in Dunkirk. We were all sorry for him to leave. Then I knew him from here when I came to Bluffton in 1964. Every time I ran into him which was often, he always asked about his Dunkirk players and kept in touch with some of them all these years. He never forgot to ask about Dunkirk and shared great memories from there. I will miss chatting with him.

Kathy Gardner - April 15, 2015 at 06:49 PM

FR

“ Coach Cross was one of the finest gentlemen I've ever known. While I was never an athlete of any repute he always treated me as if I were. Oh my goodness, when he had us play "bomb Berlin" in PE you always wanted to be on his side because if you weren't you would not want to be hit by one of the balls he threw. I think I still have bruises from when I was the recipient of one of his "smokers"!

Frederick Rupel - April 15, 2015 at 02:30 PM



“ Simply Lily was purchased for the family of John F. "Jack" Cross.



April 15, 2015 at 10:57 AM

DA

“ Jack and I shared our lives for more than 75 years. Beginning at Graham Annex Elementary school in Rushville until his passing. We played many basketball games in the alley behind Grandpa Cross's house across the street from Rushville High School where Jack excelled in sports. He carried on his love of competition at Ball State University and is in the BSU Athletic Hall of Fame. He loved his family, his career in education and coaching. We have shared many phone calls over the past several years and recently planned to get together this summer to share more good times. I know that there are many, many people whose lives were touched by Jack. We have all lost a great friend, coach and teacher. Keep Jack and his family in your prayers.
Dick and Sharlee Amick, Cambridge City IN.

Dr. Richard Amick - April 15, 2015 at 10:34 AM



“ 3 files added to the album LifeTributes



Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home - April 15, 2015 at 10:00 AM

SG

“ Steve Gagle lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Steve Gagle - April 15, 2015 at 08:26 AM

L'

“ There is no question that Jack Cross left his mark on all those who passed through the halls and hardwoods of BHS.

He was a true tiger.

Rest in peace Jack. Your memory lives on. Blessings to Tracy and Terri.



Lisa Fonacier, BHS '84 - April 14, 2015 at 08:50 PM



“ Marion Hakes lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Marion Hakes - April 14, 2015 at 07:25 PM

RS

“ Ron Strantz purchased the Blue & White Sympathy Floor Basket for the family of John F. "Jack" Cross.



Ron Strantz - April 14, 2015 at 03:40 PM

GC

“ George C. purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of John F. "Jack" Cross.



George C. - April 14, 2015 at 01:48 PM

RP

“ Randy & Lisa Peeper lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Randy & Lisa Peeper - April 14, 2015 at 12:56 PM



“ 91 files added to the album LifeTributes



Thoma/Rich,Lemler Funeral Home - April 14, 2015 at 12:55 PM

JC

“ Jack Cross was one of the most talented student-athletes to ever graduate from Rushville High School. He led the South Central Conference in scoring in both football and basketball his senior year. As a student-athlete at Ball State University he led the Indiana Collegiate Conference in scoring, again, in both football and basketball. But, the greatest quality of Jack Cross, was the person he was. A gentlemen, polite, and considerate. He is highly respected in Indiana high school communities. Growing up in Rushville, several years behind Jack, he was the idol of many aspiring student-athletes.

He remains a role model to us all.

Jim Callane, President
Indiana Basketball Hall Of Fame
RHS '60

Jim Callane - April 14, 2015 at 11:59 AM



“ Classic Fireside Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of John F. "Jack" Cross.



April 14, 2015 at 10:06 AM

PG

“ Hall of Fame Coach Cross was a classy gentleman. I'm proud to have participated in honoring him last year at Sassafrass Restaurant in Bluffton. He shared many thoughts and memories with me, in the past years, of our days at BHS and after.

He invited me (at Judy's service) 2 months ago - to join him in his "first (golf) Round of Spring 2015" (Front tees)...proud to have known and admired him - we'll postpone that round of golf until I get to that Great Course in the Heavens... Coach you've earned "Honors"! Phil Gagle

Phil & Cindy Gagle - April 14, 2015 at 10:06 AM

GR

“ 6 files added to the album Rushville High School



Greg Raike - April 14, 2015 at 09:43 AM



“ Garden Accent Stone - "Our Family Chain Is Broken" was purchased for the family of John F. "Jack" Cross.



April 14, 2015 at 09:41 AM

L1

“ THE face of Tiger basketball. RIP, Jack.

Leslie Miller BHS 1971 - April 14, 2015 at 08:42 AM

TS

“ Jack was an incredible man, always with a kind or encouraging word. And what a memory. After having been gone from Bluffton for over 35 years, I ran in to Jack and he remembered me instantly. We had a long conversation about golf and basketball. He told me he was still disappointed I didn't go out for the Basketball team in my sophomore year. I told him he had enough bench warmers. My condolences to the family. What a great man.

Terry Swartz - April 14, 2015 at 08:35 AM

SP

“ Susan (Stout) Palukaitis lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Susan (Stout) Palukaitis - April 14, 2015 at 08:00 AM

SP

What a wonderful man....so much more than a coach to so many young people. Red candle for the black and crimson that ran through his veins. He'll be truly missed.
Susan (Stout) Palukaitis - Class of '68

Susan (Stout) Palukaitis - April 14, 2015 at 08:02 AM

RK

“ Jack Cross was my Athletic Director when I coached at Bluffton High School. He was a wonderful mentor to me, and an individual that gave me great guidance not only as a coach, but overall as an educator. I know he will be dearly missed in the Bluffton and WellRands County community. Randy Kearby

Randy Kearby - April 14, 2015 at 07:23 AM

PS

“ Phil Stein lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Phil Stein - April 13, 2015 at 10:05 PM



“ *Peggy Brown lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



Peggy Brown - April 13, 2015 at 09:46 PM

RD

“ *Randy & Sandy Davis lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



Randy & Sandy Davis - April 13, 2015 at 09:39 PM

BS

“ *Becky Swartz lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



Becky Swartz - April 13, 2015 at 09:28 PM

BS

I chose to light the yellow candle because there was not a Black and Crimson candle. The yellow candle is as close as I could get to a Tiger. Great coach and true legend in BHS sports. Sending prayers to his family.

Becky Swartz - April 13, 2015 at 09:32 PM

RG

“ *Ray Gutshall lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



Ray Gutshall - April 13, 2015 at 09:17 PM

JD

“ From BB during summer rec, playing BB with him at Washington Park, to playing for him in high school, Jack was a man I loved. My first 3 years of Teaching was at Central Jr Hi where he was AD. He became one of my mentors at school. He became my friend; I scouted with him and we had many discussions. He was a great competitor when he coached. He paid the best compliment ever when he stated I was like him; a competitor who never quit, even in practice. We have all lost a friend, mentor, and a winner in all he ever did. God Bless his family; you are in my prayers.

John Daniels - April 13, 2015 at 09:01 PM

DS

“ Doug And Connie Sawyer lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Doug and Connie Sawyer - April 13, 2015 at 08:49 PM

FM

“ Jack was always encouraging and mentoring me as a coach and friend!

Fred Murray - April 13, 2015 at 08:29 PM

TO

“ Very sorry for your loss. Jack was a great guy.



Tonya Paxson Oechsle - April 13, 2015 at 07:57 PM

TF

“ Terry & Sandy Fiechter lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Terry & Sandy Fiechter - April 13, 2015 at 04:14 PM

MR

“ He was truly a class act. Love & prayers go out to Tracy, Terri, Kevin, Emily, & Jacob.



Mary McArdle Ramirez - April 13, 2015 at 03:15 PM

MP

“ Coach Cross was one of the most influential people in my coaching, teaching, and administrative life - which, translated into my personal life when interacting with my family and friends. Mr. Cross was organized, intense, self controlled, and expecting of a full effort and always conducting yourself as a gentlemen and as a sportsman. The motto in the Bluffton Gym, "When a great scorer comes to write against your name, he will not write if you won or lost but how you played the game." Mr. Cross was a model for this creed. However, let this not fool you in not believing that Coach Cross was a keen, keen competitor who loved winning. He may have been the best competitor and this showed not only in basketball, also on the golf course. And, Coach Cross was always a gentleman.

-Mr. Cross was one of my best advisors when I assumed the role as superintendent at Adams Central. Coach was one of my most valued people who encouraged me. I am fortunate that Coach Cross was part of my life.

Mike Pettibone - April 13, 2015 at 03:04 PM

DM

“ Doug Myers lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Doug Myers - April 13, 2015 at 02:35 PM

DM

Mr. Cross was a very effective coach and always motivated the team to reach much higher than their best to achieve the very best they could. He will be remembered for his kindness and caring nature.

Doug Myers - April 13, 2015 at 02:38 PM

RO

“ Terri and I were BFFs in high school and I think of you, Terri, and Tracy often. I am so saddened by this news. My heart goes out to you. Your dad was one of my favorite ~ Robin Record Sundstrom

Robin - April 13, 2015 at 02:16 PM

SS

“ Steve & Laura Sawyer lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Steve & Laura Sawyer - April 13, 2015 at 01:53 PM

MM

“ Michael & Kerrie Morris lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Michael & Kerrie Morris - April 13, 2015 at 12:07 PM

VJ

“ Valerie Wilson Jackson lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Valerie Wilson Jackson - April 13, 2015 at 11:58 AM

KF

“ Ken And Jeannie Flowers lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Ken and Jeannie Flowers - April 13, 2015 at 11:58 AM

JG

“ Jerry Garrett lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross



Jerry Garrett - April 13, 2015 at 07:58 AM

JG

Our thoughts & prayers go out to the Cross Family from the Jerry & Darlene Garrett family

Jerry Garrett - April 13, 2015 at 08:01 AM

LM

*"Jack" was a good guy and will be missed by many.
Ken & Louise Miller*

Louise Miiler - April 13, 2015 at 01:06 PM

JF

“ *Jill, Bret & Mitchell Fair lit a candle in memory of John F.
"Jack" Cross*



Jill, Bret & Mitchell Fair - April 12, 2015 at 10:24 PM

JT

“ *Julia Tobias lit a candle in memory of John F. "Jack" Cross*



Julia Tobias - April 12, 2015 at 08:43 PM

DB

“ *Dwight & Nancy Baker lit a candle in memory of John F.
"Jack" Cross*



Dwight & Nancy Baker - April 12, 2015 at 08:38 PM