

David “Dave” Norman Carlson

June 25, 1927 – November 5, 2011

David "Dave" Norman Carlson, 84, of Meadow Bridge, West Virginia, passed away on November 5, 2011. An educator, coach, and community leader, Dave devoted many years to deaf students and organizations, including 17 years at the South Dakota School for the Deaf.

Dave was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on June 25, 1927, to Oscar and Mabel Woodbury Carlson. He graduated from the Wisconsin School for the Deaf and Gallaudet College, now Gallaudet University, in Washington, D.C. At Gallaudet, he was an accomplished wrestler, earning numerous championship medals in the unlimited weight class. Football, wrestling, and Scouting remained important interests throughout his life.

Following college, Dave spent two years at the West Virginia School for the Deaf as a teacher, dormitory supervisor, Scoutmaster, and assistant coach. He later worked as a printer for Whitmore Printing Company in Annapolis, Maryland, before accepting a position as graphic arts instructor at the South Dakota School for the Deaf in 1957.



During his years in South Dakota, Dave’s contributions extended well beyond the classroom. He was active in the South Dakota Association of the Deaf and the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, Division No. 74, serving as president of both organizations. He was also a charter member of the Sioux Empire Sertoma Chapter, which brought together deaf men, fathers, and male educators of deaf children.



At SDSD, Dave helped establish the Junior National Association of the Deaf chapter, supporting opportunities for students to participate in leadership and community life. He was also involved in the school’s Photo Club and served as a coach. His work connected vocational education, student activities, and service to South Dakota’s deaf community.

In 1974, Dave and his wife, Bettie, moved to Frederick, Maryland. He continued working with deaf students at the Maryland School for the Deaf as a dormitory counselor, Scoutmaster, and junior varsity coach, retiring after another 17 years.

Dave’s achievements earned him several Hall of Fame honors. He was inducted into the Gallaudet University Athletic Hall of Fame for wrestling in 1995 and the Wisconsin School for the Deaf Athletic Hall of Fame for football in 2000. On September 27, 2003, he was inducted into the South Dakota Association of the Deaf Hall of Fame in the education category, recognizing his contributions to the state’s deaf community.

Dave attended the Church of Christ in Springdale, West Virginia. He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Orville Carlson. At the time of his passing, survivors included his wife, Bettie Carlson; his sister, Greta Queen; his niece, Laurie Grabert; members of his wife’s family; and many former students and friends.



In accordance with his wishes, Dave was cremated, and no services were held. His years of teaching, leadership, and service hold a lasting place in the history of SDSD and South Dakota’s deaf community.