

6446 W. 85th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90045
July 18, 2005

Mayor Kevin Foy
19 Oakwood Drive
Chapel Hill, NC 27517

Dear Mr. Mayor:

The Chapel Hill/Carrboro area has a hero in their midst. The time has come to honor him.

Beginning in 1971, and for nearly twenty years thereafter, Sherman Riggsbee served the community as a youth sports coach and mentor. For many of those years he coached year round; baseball, football and basketball, then back to baseball without a break.

Some of the kids that Sherman coached were like me: sons of University faculty or staff. Many others were from far less privileged backgrounds and in some cases would not have had a chance to play on sports teams without Sherman's generosity. In several cases, some of my own teammates would not have been able to attend practices and games without Sherman taxiing them to the ballpark or gym and back home. I am also aware of Sherman having purchased sneakers for kids who otherwise would not have been able to play basketball.

Sherman's coaching style was very simple. He emphasized fundamentals and always made sure that kids tried their best, worked together as teammates and had fun. He never stressed winning, but more often than not winning was a natural byproduct of Sherman having prepared us for situations that would occur in games. His ability to blend skills and personalities of kids from diverse backgrounds was a key to his success as a coach.

But more importantly, the lessons we learned as players in the gym and on the ball fields of Chapel Hill have continued to reap benefits throughout our lives. Of the over 800 kids that Sherman coached throughout the years, I truly believe that there are many who, because of Sherman's influence, are not in jail, not on drugs, and deeply committed to their own spouses and children. He not only developed us on the court, he prepared us for life.

When I played for Sherman's Chapel Hill A's in the 1970s, his wife Jean and daughters Yolanda and Nikki were our regular cheerleaders. Sherman's volunteerism was a family event for the Riggsbees. It was only after Jean was stricken with Huntington's disease, which later took her life, that Sherman had to make the decision to give up coaching. His devotion to his ailing wife and caretaking of his children, which now includes son Tony, continue to serve as examples to everyone who know him, especially those of us with children of our own.

Chapel Hillians generally recognize Dean Smith as their greatest coach. His service was recognized with a beautiful facility named in his honor. In this same spirit, I would like to request from the Town of Chapel Hill that the baseball field at Umstead Park, be forever renamed Sherman L. Riggsbee, Sr. Field. With your help, this honor, which Sherman has truly earned, will become a reality. Sherman made a difference. Your community is a better place because of his service. I thank you for your consideration and attentiveness to this request. Please honor him.

Sincerely,



Steven N. Stover

Cc: Cam Hill, Dorothy Verkerk, Sally Greene, Mark Kleinschmidt, Jim Ward, Ed Harrison, Bill Strom, Edith M. Wiggins, Pamela Hemminger