

Mourning a Legend

DEAN GEORGE RALSTON
PASSES AWAY AT 89



Dean Ralston's affiliation with Wilkes spanned 61 years.
PHOTO BY MICHAEL P. TOUEY

The Wilkes University community mourns the loss of George Ralston, 89, the “Father of Wilkes Athletics,” who passed away March 2, 2007.

“George Ralston will always be remembered as the man who best embodies the essence of the mentoring spirit at Wilkes University,” says Tim Gilmour, Wilkes president. “George knew and remembered virtually every student who attended Wilkes during his tenure, and he is an irreplaceable treasure for our institution. On behalf of the university, I extend my deepest sympathies to his wife, Helen, his family and to all those Dean Ralston taught and mentored.”

“I don’t have enough superlatives in my vocabulary to describe the profound impact ‘The Dean’ has had on me, Wilkes, his community, and the many charitable and social service organizations with which he was affiliated,” adds Paul Adams, vice president of student affairs. “He was a blessing to all who knew him. His capacity to care for others is unmatched in anyone I have ever known. With the exception of my father, no other person has had such a formative impact on how I’ve lived my life.”

Ralston lived in Wilkes-Barre, was a native of Harrisonburg, Va., and graduated from Susquehanna Township (Pa.) High School and the University of North Carolina, where he was a member of the Tar Heels football and baseball teams. An Army veteran of World War II, Maj. Ralston served in Africa and the South Pacific and was awarded two Purple Hearts. When he returned home to Forty Fort, Pa., he accepted the position of counselor to veterans returning to Bucknell University Junior College, precursor to Wilkes College and Wilkes University.

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Ralston was dubbed the “Father of Wilkes Athletics” after beginning the athletics program in 1946. He coached the Wilkes football team for 10 seasons, from 1946 to 1954, and again in 1957, and registered a record of 41 wins, 32 losses and 4 ties. Ralston also spent 10 seasons as basketball coach at Wilkes and five years as head baseball coach. He served a stint as director of athletics. Ralston has been associated with Wilkes for the past 61 years.

In September 2003, the Ancestral Colonels, a group of former student-athletes who attended Wilkes between 1946 and 1960, honored Ralston with a plaque displayed at the football field that bears Ralston’s name.

Ralston also has served in several other capacities throughout his Wilkes career. He spent 10 years as the dean of men and enjoyed time as the dean of students. Ralston, dean emeritus of student affairs, continued to serve as special assistant to the Alumni Relations Office up until his recent illness.

“Dean Ralston will be deeply missed by all of us who were inspired by his humility, his level of service to others and his passion for Wilkes athletics,” comments Addy Malatesta, Wilkes director of athletics. “He will be remembered as a kind and caring gentleman who taught life lessons and valued students.”

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Helen; sons David, John, Thomas and James; and five grandchildren. Memorial donations may be made to the University’s George F. and Helen B. Ralston Scholarship Fund.

Ralston’s life and service to the university will be celebrated during homecoming festivities on Saturday, Oct. 6. Watch The Colonel Connection and the next issue of *Wilkes* magazine for details and a more comprehensive commemoration of his contributions to Wilkes.

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– Paul Adams