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Bob Shryock: Pitman mourning loss of Ed Campbell

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Ed Campbell

By [Bob Shryock | For NJ.com](#)

It's difficult to maintain a relatively low profile while achieving so much in life, but that was the case with Edward J. Campbell Jr., whose impressively crowded resume, topped by nearly a half-century as a much respected educator, tells only a fraction of Ed's rich legacy.

Campbell, 83, died Jan. 5 in Pitman after fighting cancer with a vengeance for 10 years.



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Campbell died at home, at his request, and was buried on a blustery January day with full military honors. Students he taught 50 years ago were there. So were members of the Wenonah Fire Company in his old hometown. Ed had many admirers and drew equal amounts of respect.

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Once called a “teacher’s teacher” by a Wenonah colleague, Campbell served his community and his county in countless ways including the presidency of the Pitman board of education and volunteer efforts for several service organizations.

“The entire borough is mourning the loss of Ed Campbell, a true servant of Pitman,” says Mayor Russell C. Johnson III. “He was a devoted volunteer who worked tirelessly to ensure Pitman remained the great community it is.

“Ed’s passion for his country and his town was evident every Memorial Day through the service he coordinated. This service has become a tradition in Pitman and will remain a tradition because of Ed’s hard work. Ed created a legacy that will live for eternity. His spirit will live on forever in Pitman.”

After graduating from Cape May High School in 1948, Campbell earned his undergraduate and master's degrees from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University).

Sgt. First Class Campbell was a proud veteran who was in two of the Korean War’s bloodiest battles, Inchon Landing and Chosin Reservoir, serving with the 32nd Infantry as an artillery fire control commander from 1950-51.

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After the military, he and his wife Georgia lived in Wenonah from 1957 until 1969, when they moved to Pitman. He became an enthusiastic volunteer as a fire company member.

He launched his formidable career in education as a classroom teacher in Cape May, then taught in Wenonah, Gateway and Washington Township prior to becoming an administrator in Pitman and West Deptford middle schools. He was superintendent of the Lower Township Elementary District when he retired in 1986 after logging a 50-year career.

He also taught at Gloucester County College and Rowan simultaneously as an adjunct professor. For good measure, Campbell served as vice president of the GCC board of trustees.

Former students who moved great distances from Gloucester County frequently contacted Ed to toss platitudes at him for his classroom impact on their lives, the ultimate mark of a much-loved teacher.

Ed's children emulated their dad's penchant for education, son Patrick as president of the Clearview school board, daughter Stacy DeClement as president of the Pitman school board, and daughter Heather Delia as a special education teacher.

Besides serving as school board president, Campbell's interests ran the gamut from Cub Scout leader to Sea Isle City Yacht Club Commodore, to county Library Commission, to Pitman Democrat Club chairman. When he died, he still was active with the library commission.

Campbell displayed his patriotism through his allegiance to the Pitman and county VFW organizations.

"Ed has always been supportive of our police department and my endeavors," says Bob Zimmerman, Pitman police chief and a close friend of Campbell's for 24 years. "He was involved in so many different things and was much loved."

Bob Harris, owner of Pitman Animal Hospital and one of the region's top vets, was a close friend. His signature story about Ed Campbell underscores Ed's uniqueness as an educator and the amazing impact he had on Bob's life.

"In second grade," says Harris, "I was going to be held back another year because I was unable to read at grade level. My mother heard about a Wenonah teacher who tutored kids in reading. For 18 months, I went to Ed's home once a week for an hour of reading lessons. By the end of the marking period, my reading skills improved greatly.

"Besides teaching me to read, Ed greatly helped my self-confidence. In later years, he told me he always believed in me.

“Once I began my practice, I was privileged to provide veterinary care for Ed’s family pets for 35 years. Without his help and encouragement, I’m certain I would never have obtained any measure of the success I’ve been blessed with in life.

“People talk about a ‘special bond’ with another.

“Ed and I had that kind of bond. I owe so much to him.”

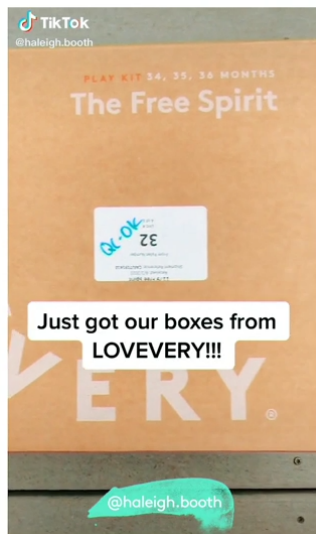
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