http://www.KSCBNews.net/news/index.cfm?nk=12351

Take Five - by Tracy Utz

They need to name something after the Old Ball Coach. They really do. I don't care if it's a building, the gym, a locker room, a classroom, a restroom, or even a closet, the name Dale Reed should be displayed on some tribute plaque at Seward County Community College, a place he's called home for over thirty years.

In 1969 Coach, then a skinny player from Little River, was a member of the first team coached by the schools first basketball coach, Virgil Akins. As I learned years later, like Reed, Akins was a character coaching the game in the first seat of the bench, then the third, the end, and maybe even from the third roll of the bleachers. I remember watching some of those early games while a young tot from Plains. They weren't that bad considering it was a brand new program. I remember a guy named Greg Laker. He was really good. I must admit I don't remember much about a player named Dale Reed. That's not to say he wasn't any good because he always told me he was. I just don't remember him.

In 1971, Coach, along with other members of his class including Mike Riney, became the schools first graduates. Rumor has it that Coach came up with the name "Saints" after winning a mascot naming contest. I've always had my doubts about this since the Coach I've known all these years is the furtherest thing from a Saint. I think, though, it really is true.

Coach went on and played college basketball in Texas, graduated, coached high school basketball, was an assistant at Barton County before coming back in 1983-84 to become the 5th basketball coach in Saint history. Somewhere along the way he met and married Maggie, undoubtedly the best thing he ever did.

I **first met Coach during that first year,** also my first year at KSCB. Paul Maldanado did the play by play for the games while I provided color commentary. I talked with Coach a little bit that first year but didn't become a close friend until that next year when I was doing play by play during that Region 6 championship season. Watching him coach, I knew he was a good one. I still didn't remember him as a Saints player years earlier.

Now, the number one reason why something should be named after the Old Ball Coach.

Coach would be the head guy for 13 years winning 224 games, a pair of region six championships and one 8th place finish in the national tournament. His '95 region champion team was ranked number 1 in the country for several weeks, a first for any Saints sports team. He was named the regions best coach twice.

A lot of things went on during that 13 year career. Coach's teams had their ups and downs. Plenty more ups than downs, though. He was on my phone at my house talking to the college president when he had to fire his assistant coach Roger Robinson. I was at his house when he offered the job to Dave Brown. I think he knew that some day soon he would hand the keys over to Brownie. He did several years later.

Coach always boasted that he built it (Saints basketball)and now I'll tell why he probably did.

From '69 until 1983 four coaches won 143 games. Reeds win total of 224 (second all time) took only 13 years. Dave Brown in '96 took over and won 253 in 11 years while current mentor Brian Zollinger has won 137 in five short years for a total of of 390 victories in the last 16 years. Reed's teams caught the eyes of national pollsters which caught the eyes of potential recruits that made Seward a great place to hone their basketball talents. Because of the foundation set by Reed, Seward is now an easy sell to great recruits who have come in each year from all over the country.

Coach resigned his position in 1996 hoping to latch on as an assistant to Randy Smithson, the newly hired coach at Wichita State. Things didn't work out as politics were involved, and Coach found himself without a job and out of the basketball game for the first time in decades.

It would be over a plate of eggs, bacon, hash browns, and toast at Mr. Breakfast that Coach and I pondered his future. Thankfully, the unemployment was short and the Old Ball Coach found himself dressing up and going back to work at Seward.

Coach began his second career in 1996 when he was hired by SCCC to help run its Business and Industry department, whatever that might be. For years he worked this job with the same vigor and enthusiasm that had made him so successful on the sidelines. He also continued teaching speech classes, a job he thoroughly enjoyed. He even threw his **Old Ball Cap** into the political ring winning a seat on the city commission and eventually becoming **The Mayor**. Unlike his playing days, which I don't remember, I do remember he was a darn good mayor.

As the years went and as his waistline grew so did his title and responsibilities. He became the head of Business and Industry and then the Dean of Something, the position he'll leave at the end of the school year. I really don't know what he is the dean of, but I know whatever it is, he is good at it and the school and the kids will miss him and so will I.

So here's reason number two why something needs to be named after the Old Ball Coach. Not many have walked the

hallways longer and achieved the success that he has had, and trust me, not many will in the future either. Like I said before it can be a building, the gym, a locker room, a classroom, a restroom, or even a closet. He was Seward County in the very beginning and 43 years later, he still is.

The SCCC Sports Hall of Fame inducted their first class a few weeks ago and those enshrined were all deserving and all were quite humbled, as you might expect. The Old Ball Coach belongs in the Hall, as well. Probably should have been in the first class but wasn't. His time will come. He knows it. I know it. It would be a sham if he isn't inducted next year.

Coach and Maggie begin a most deserved retirement within weeks beginning what I hope is a long third beginning. Coach actually began a new chapter in his life several months ago and I am so proud of him for that.

I Love Coach and Maggie and wish them only the best as they embark on this fresh new beginning traveling and visiting kids, grandkids, former players, and friends along the way. It's a grand vacation they both have earned for jobs well done.

Coach will tell anybody that wants to listen, that he "built it". You know after thinking back, I think he did. He really did.

Coach, as I and many others have called him through the years, was honored with a retirement party last week at SCCC. I heard it was nice (I forgot), but a single party is not enough. Especially for a guy that has meant so much to the college and this community. And here's why. But first a little history.

The Liberal Light