

# Old coach gets one more visit with his boys

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As Bob Shuttleworth debated with his daughter, Bobbie, about what he wanted to do for his 80th birthday, the old Calhoun basketball coach kept saying, "Nothing."

But as she kept pressing him, she finally got an answer. Bobbie Shuttleworth, a reporter for WAFF-48, wasn't sure if her dad was thinking out loud or trying to say what he actually wanted, but he said, "I wish I could see all my boys again."

Bobbie took it from there. With the help of friends and some of her father's former co-workers at Calhoun, she put together a delightful reunion at Carlton Kelley Gymnasium on the school's campus Saturday afternoon.

About 75 to 100 former players attended, including several from his first team in 1966, which also was the first basketball team Calhoun had. He coached until 1995, won 421 games and earned a spot in the Alabama Junior and Community College Conference Hall of Fame.

The gathering took Shuttleworth by surprise. With almost all of the group enjoying the party in the gym's main lobby, Shuttleworth was led in through a side door by former fellow Calhoun coach, Bill Rudolph.

Shuttleworth looked stunned when he saw the group, which greeted him by singing "Happy Birthday." He said later that he thought he was there to search through old files for information on former Calhoun baseball coach Fred Fricke, who is entering the NJCAA Hall of Fame this summer.

Shuttleworth reached the edge of the lobby when he was stopped by several of his former players, who wanted a moment to visit. Everyone in the room gradually made his way to Shuttleworth, sometimes introducing wives and children.

It took more than an hour for Shuttleworth to greet everybody.

Shuttleworth said later that this was the first time he had visited with many of these players since they left campus. He had seen others at a 1996 reunion.

"I don't know how to describe this," Shuttleworth said later, taking a moment as his voice broke with emotion. "When they say things about coming to Calhoun and how much it meant to them and what part I played in that ... it just humbles you.

"It's good to see how they've gone on to live good lives."

Several of the players came from far enough away that they got to the reunion by airplane. That group included Ricardo Patton, who is head coach at Northern Illinois. He previously spent 11 seasons as head coach at Colorado.

Like almost everybody in the room who played for Shuttleworth, he spoke about his former coach's willingness to put discipline first.

"I remember my first year here, I was going home for Christmas, and before I left, I stopped by to see Coach," Patton said. "He said, 'Ric, if you don't come back with a better attitude, don't bother coming back.' It surprised me. I thought I had been doing well."

"It was those type of lessons that Coach gave. He cared about us and coached us with tough love."

Patton said Shuttleworth inspired him to coach.

John Douglas said Shuttleworth led him into coaching, too. After playing at Calhoun in the 1970s, he spent two years as a starter at Kansas and then more than a decade playing professionally for the NBA's Clippers and in Europe.

Douglas now is the head men's coach at Lawson State. He said he still speaks with Shuttleworth.

"We talk a lot about basketball," said Douglas, who also coached at Calhoun and led the Warhawks to the NJCAA championship game in 2000 before losing. "When things aren't going well, Coach always has the answers."

As much as the day was to honor Shuttleworth, his family also remembered his wife, Marie, who died in 2003. She attended every game and always sat courtside. Because of her bad back, she always sat in a lawn chair with a pillow.

Inside the empty gym Saturday, Bobbie Shuttleworth set up a lawn chair at courtside with a pillow. On top of the pillow was a rose and a picture of Marie Shuttleworth.

Seeing the display made Bob Shuttleworth recall one of his favorite stories about how she enjoyed shouting at the officials:

"Marie was vocal," he said with a grin. "Orman Brown of Gadsden, was there to officiate one of our games. He was a good official and had a sense of humor.

"He walked up to Marie before one game, handed her a whistle and said, 'Here, you call the game.' "