



JUST LIKE THE ENERGIZER BUNNY, BOB GERHART KEEPS ON GOING

People in their 50s stand a little straighter as they enter the James M. Burk Stadium when they see Bob Gerhart is collecting tickets. Mr. Gerhart was their math teacher, they explain. He was known as a gruff, old-school teacher by his former students, and many of them are surprised to see him still working since he retired from teaching in 1989. They'll say, "He's still here! He taught me math." The much-beloved former teacher also served the district as a coach, transportation director, faculty manager, and athletic official.

"If it exists around here, I did it," Mr. Gerhart commented one late fall evening at the stadium as he collected tickets from patrons attending a soccer game.

According to athletic director Mike O'Brien, "Bob Gerhart is a living history of the district." He added, "He loves Fox Chapel, no doubt about that. His dedication to the school district is unmatched."

Although he's been retired for 27 years, Mr. Gerhart continues to work for the district as a faculty manager. "It gives me something to do," he said. He added, "It's not that hard." But that wasn't always the case.

Mr. Gerhart began his teaching career at Kerr School, even before the boroughs of Aspinwall, Blawnox, and Fox Chapel joined with Indiana and O'Hara townships (Sharpsburg would not join with the district until 1970) to become the Fox Chapel Area School District in 1958. Mr. Gerhart taught ninth and tenth graders mathematics in the school that then also included seventh and eighth grade students.

Photo Courtesy: Town and Country Studio



Mr. Gerhart with the first Fox Chapel Area High School boys' tennis team. He was the tennis coach for 20 years.

Bob Gerhart gets ready to sell tickets at a home athletic event.

Just months before the Fox Chapel Area High School opened in 1961, Supervising Principal John C. Cober, D.Ed., stopped to see Mr. Gerhart and asked him if he would take on a new job – planning and coordinating the school bus routes for the next school year – while continuing to teach five classes a day, of course. “I learned the district real fast, every street,” he said. Back then there were no computers, so the bus routes and schedules were all done by hand.

Gil Damico became the athletic director in 1968, and Mr. Gerhart worked as a coach and faculty manager under his direction. “He was a faculty manager but more like an assistant,” said Mr. Damico. He arranged to get people to sell tickets, counted the money, and even did the job of an athletic trainer since high schools did not have trainers at that time.

Mr. Damico also pointed out, “Bob coached the tennis team forever [20 years].” Additionally, he coached varsity soccer for six years, as well as the rifle team. Mr. Damico continued, “He probably has more wins than any other coach in Fox Chapel.” Mr. Gerhart also worked as a sports official over the years refereeing basketball, soccer, and volleyball, and even judging diving events.

When Mr. Damico was asked to take over district transportation in 1972, in addition to his duties as athletic director, he depended heavily on Mr. Gerhart. “He knew every street, every address.”

They worked together when the district made the decision to computerize the bus routes. The two of them drove through the district, preparing the information to be sent to the company that designed the computerized bus schedule.

According to Mr. Damico, “I couldn’t have done it all without him. He was so, so loyal. I knew I could count on him.”

Mr. Gerhart says that he retired in 1989, the year teachers were being trained to use computers in the classroom. He never learned to use a computer and does not have email. He has an early-model cell phone, but he only uses it if he needs to call his wife, or if he is waiting for a call from her. “I maybe charge it every six months.” He still says he has an old-style 19-inch television that he bought in 1982 for his O’Hara Township



Mr. Gerhart talks with a spectator who was entering a recent high school soccer game.

home where he has lived with his wife and raised their two sons. “It still works,” he shrugs, and says that his son bought him a new 32-inch flat screen over Labor Day because he didn’t like having to watch TV on the small screen when he would visit. Over the years, Mr. Gerhart says he has enjoyed hunting, fishing, and playing golf, although he stays closer to home these days. He points out that he moves a little slower now because of a bad hip, caused at least in part, he says, because of all the running up and down fields as a coach and sports official.

Most all of the staff he worked with have retired. “I know about a handful of the teachers now,” he says, specifically mentioning Ron Frank and former student and current high school teacher Jill Tabis.

Ms. Tabis, who had Mr. Gerhart for two math classes in high school, said she hopes to be like him when she’s in her 80s.

“Besides being active, more importantly, he truly, truly cares about people. He’ll take the time to stop and say hello, and if he doesn’t have the time, he’ll make the effort to come back later.” As a high school student Ms. Tabis often sought his help in math class and says he took the time to make sure she understood the concepts. “He was so patient with me.”

Already in the Fox Chapel Area Schools Sports Hall of Fame, inducted in 2010, Mr. Gerhart is still going. He tells a story about how last summer he and his wife were at a restaurant and couldn’t help but notice that two “elderly” couples at a table nearby kept looking over at them, especially one guy. Finally, the guy approached them and said, “Are you Bob Gerhart? You had all four of us at Kerr in 1955.”

“That’s how little people say I’ve changed over the years,” he commented.

Mr. Gerhart says he has no plans to retire from his work as a faculty manager and will continue to work the gate at athletic events “as long as I can get around.”



If you attend an athletic event at Fox Chapel Area High School, you’re likely to see Mr. Gerhart.

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