



Mark Frank Cotton

September 30, 1930 – March 7, 2024

Mark F. Cotton, 93, of Portland, OR passed March 7, 2024, surrounded by loved ones, from complications of multiple myeloma.

Mark was a Northeast Portland icon. He moved to Portland in 1962, where he became a teacher and the head track and field and cross-country coach at US Grant High School. In his twenty-eight-year tenure, his teams won many PIL titles, and eight state championships. Five in boys track and field, two in boys' cross

country, and one in girls' cross country. Beyond these championships, Coach Cotton was known for his calm, caring demeanor. The life lessons taught every day are still remembered by the thousands of students and athletes he influenced. He was three times nominated for National High School Track and Field Coach of the Year.

He was born in Klamath Agency, OR to Reverend Earl B. Cotton and Ruth W. Cotton. As a son of a smalltown Methodist minister, Mark moved multiple times in his early years. As a fifth grader, his family settled in Fossil, OR for three years. For the next five years, Mark lived in the small Eastern Oregon town of Echo, where he graduated from Echo High School. He spent the summer months of high school and college working on many wheat ranches in the Echo area.

Mark attended Willamette University, majoring in physical education (with a minor in math), earning bachelor's and master's degrees. He played football and competed in track and field for the Bearcats. At Willamette, Mark met the love of his life, Jane Catherine Pinkerton. After graduation, the two married, celebrating their seventieth wedding anniversary this past summer.

Mark began his teaching and coaching career in 1953 at Grants Pass High School. After one year at Grants Pass, he fulfilled his two-year US Army commitment, stationed in Frankfurt, Germany where he coached the Northern Area Command track team. Here Mark and Jane welcomed their first son, Greg. After his military service, the new family returned to Grants Pass for one more year of teaching and coaching. In 1957, Mark moved to Hermiston High School where he was a teacher and the head track and field coach. While there, daughter Trina, and son Brad joined the family. In the summer of 1962, the family moved to the Grant community.

Since retirement in 1990, Mark and Jane have traveled extensively visiting dozens of countries and every continent except Antarctica. They took two or three major trips a year. When home they stayed active with the Fremont United Methodist Church where they were members for over sixty years. For a dozen years, local residents would find Coach Cotton selling Christmas trees at the church lot. He would surprise them when he greeted them by name.

During the spring, he often was found in the Grant Park Bowl, working on the field that bears his name. He volunteered his time when needed and was on the backstretch in his lawn chair

watching the meets. He has cheered on the Generals for over sixty years and was at a game in the Grant Gym just a couple of weeks ago.

Mark is survived by his wife Jane, son Greg Cotton (Nancy), daughter Trina Leschber (Allan), son Brad Cotton (Jakki), two grandsons Adam (Stephanie) and Eric Leschber (Carolyn), and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents Earl B. and Ruth W. Cotton, brother John W. Cotton, and sister Mary Lois Reese.

A Celebration of Life will be at 2:00 pm, Saturday, March 23, Fremont United Methodist Church, 2620 NE Fremont, Portland, OR 97212. In lieu of flowers please consider donating to the [US Grant High School Fletcher/Cotton Memorial Scholarship Fund](#) or Shriners Children's.

The service will also be zoomed. Link will be available on Fremont United Methodist Church website.