



Otto Schnellbacher, Sr.

April 15, 1923 - March 10, 2008

Otto Schnellbacher, Sr., 84, of Topeka, died of cancer Monday, March 10, 2008, at his home. Otto was born April 15, 1923 in Sublette KS, the son of John and Effie Willet Schnellbacher. He graduated from Sublette High in 1941 and then attended the University of Kansas until April 1943 when he entered the US Army Air Corps. In July 1945, Otto and Theresa Renner were married. In Dec. of 1945, he went back to KU, graduating in 1948 as senior class president, on the Dean's honor role, with a Bachelor of Science degree. While at KU, Otto was a member of both the football & basketball teams. He was co-captain of the 1948 Orange Bowl football team, named All Conference, All American and led the league in receptions as an end for two years. He was inducted into the KU Hall of Fame in 1972 and selected as a member of the KU All Time Football Team as an end. In KU basketball, Otto was named All Conference for four years, was second in the conference in scoring and was team captain in 1948 under Coach Phog Allen. In 1948, Otto began his professional sports career in the AAFC as a defensive end with the New York Yankees football team. He became a starter after four games and he averaged an interception per game for the next ten games. He was chosen to play in the All Star Game, but turned that down so he could report to the Providence Steamrollers basketball team in the NBA. He was traded to the St. Louis Bombers, where he became a starter. They were defeated in the second round of the play-offs by the Minneapolis Lakers. In 1949, he returned to the NY Yankees football team and started as a defensive back, where he

led the conference with twelve interceptions, was named All Pro and played in the All Star game in Houston. In both 1950 and '51, he played for the NY Giants in the NFL, was named All Pro as a defensive back, had eleven and ten interceptions, respectively, and played in the All Star game both years. He was chosen as a member of the All Time NY Giants Football Team. Following his professional sports career, Otto entered the life insurance business. He was a general agent for American United Life for 25 years, from 1952-77. He served as president of the Topeka Life Underwriters, Topeka Chapter CLU, Kansas State Assoc. of Life Underwriters and Kansas General Agents and Managers Assoc. He was Kansas Life Man of the Year in 1974 and a life member of the Million Dollar Round Table. Otto was very active in his church, the Topeka community and the University of Kansas. He was a member of Most Pure Heart of Mary Church where he was chairman of three fund drives and for 14 years volunteered as a coach at Most Pure Heart of Mary School. He served as president on the Most Pure Heart of Mary and Hayden High School boards and for 12 years on the Archdiocesan Call To Share board. He was the first president of Cornerstone and sat on the board of Let's Help. Otto was chairman of an ad hoc committee on race relations in the 1960s. He served 15 years on the Recreation Commission, four times as chairman. He served as president of the Topeka Jayhawk Club and the Cosmopolitan Club of Topeka. He was chairman of the fund drive to build the St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center at KU, was co-leader of the Phog Allen statue drive and was president of the Letterperson's "K" Club. He was the honoree of the Distinguished Service Award in 1999 for the KU Alumni Assoc. Otto was preceded in death by his wife of 45 years, Theresa Renner Schnellbacher, and his son-in-law, Nick L. Decker. On November 30, 1991, Otto and Jane Jung were married. She survives. He is also survived by his daughter, Mary T. Decker of Topeka; and two sons, Otto O. Schnellbacher, II and Brad T. Schnellbacher, both of Topeka; 11 grandchildren, Nickolas Decker, Traye Schnellbacher, Nicole Schnellbacher McCoy, Stacy Scott, Shannon Gomez, and Jessica, Jacqueline, Jonathon, Jocelyn, Jacob and Jeffrey Simmons; one

great-grandson, Parker Scott; four step-children, Steve Jung, Diane Purcell, Mary Tetuan and Ken Jung; 10 step-grandchildren; a brother and a sister; and nieces and nephews. Otto will lie in state and family will greet friends from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday at Most Pure Heart of Mary Church, 3601 SW 17th St, where a parish prayer service will be at 8 p.m. Mass of Resurrection will be celebrated at 2 p.m. Friday at the Church. Burial will follow at Mt. Calvary Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions are suggested to the Otto Schnellbacher, Sr. Scholarship Fund, Let's Help, Cornerstone and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church, sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Rd, Topeka KS 66614.

Tribute Wall



“ *Otto Schnellbacher, Sr.*

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ *This message is to Otto's son's, Otto II and Brad. I have accidentally discovered a statistic about your dad from NFL records that I would almost guarantee none of your family, or anybody else knows. It is a tremendous feat and worthy of his sons and daughter knowing. This is the only place I could find to contact you. I was researching a stat about my lifelong friend who played in the NFL and made this discovery. It is something I feel sure you and your family would cherish knowing. If interested, please email me. I did not want to put this information on the website. I just want to get it into your hands. I know I would appreciate knowing something like this about my dad.*

My sincere condolences to your family for your loss of such a great individual.

*Bill Evans
Garland, TX*

Bill Evans - November 11, 2012 at 08:46 PM

LP

“ Jane, Mary T, Nick and family: What an honor it has been knowing Otto as we have over the years. I loved spending time with him listening to him tell stories and just talking about "stuff". I learned a lot from him. I really enjoyed listening to him and Dad talking KU football (well any kind of football), KU basketball etc. It was great that Dad finally met someone that loved football as much as him and was equally as knowledgeable. Many of the notes that I have read mention what a Gentleman Otto was, well I agree, he certainly was a gentleman but in my eyes he was a Gentle Giant among men. Sean always looked up to him with such admiration, just like he did with his Grandpa! He loved to talk to Otto about sports! I loved him and will miss him, but he will always remain in my heart until we meet again. I just know Dad was standing at the Pearly Gates with glass in hand to welcome his good friend Otto.
With love to you all, Linda, John & Sean Donnelly

Linda Power-Donnelly - March 20, 2008 at 10:31 PM

JD

“ The Dishman Family wishes to send our thoughts and prayers to Otto's family during this difficult time. It would be very difficult to express in words what Otto meant to so many people in so many different ways. A true gentleman in every sense of the word, who gave of himself with the utmost integrity. Not only has the University of Kansas and the state lost a great ambassador but the world will miss this fine man. "Rock Chalk" Otto! You now have the best seat in the house!!!

Jeff, Tammy and Caleb Dishman - March 14, 2008 at 10:59 AM

SC

“*Mary T., You've been in my thoughts and prayers since I heard about your father's death. I know this is a very difficult time for you and your family. You will hear many stories from friends and family about the great person your father was, and the impact he had on so many lives. May these memories of your Dad bring a smile to your hear, and help to keep his memory alive.*

Susie and Brad Neeley, Centennial, CO - March 13, 2008 at 07:13 PM

JM

“*Dear Jane and all the family,
John and I want you to know that all of you are in our thoughts and prayers and also for Otto. May you continue to know God's presence as the days pass.
God Bless You,
Doris and John Moore*

JOHN AND DORIS MOORE - March 13, 2008 at 06:32 PM

BH

“*What a great guy. He made us all very proud to be KU fans, and he made us all very proud of Topeka and Kansas. I came to Kansas from Illinois to attend KU Law School, and my wife came here from Utah. We are very glad to have met Otto and his wife Jane. We salute his entire family. May Otto rest in peace. Rock Chalk, Jay Hawk....KU!*

Bob and Patty Hiller - March 13, 2008 at 04:46 PM

DA

“*Sadly enough, we didn't have the privilege to meet Otto. But we are good friends with Don Fambrough, and he cannot say enough about what an amazing man Otto was. We have such high regard for Don that any dear friend of his must be a very special person. We're so sorry for your (and all of the Jayhawk family's) loss.*

David and Linda Aikins - March 13, 2008 at 03:46 PM

RM

“*Otto II and Mrs Schnellbacher. I wish you my condolences. In 1966 I was a freshman at Hayden and was picked along with Otto II and Mike Shamburg to do stats for the Jr Varsity and Varsity Basketball games. On the away games Mr. Schnellbacher loaded us up and took us on what was for me great trips. I actually got to ride and talk with an All American. For a 14 year old that was such a great experience. On the way home we always were given a replay and if the Hayden boys had not played so well we surely were told that also. But most I found out that Mr Schnellbacher was not just an All American but a real person who I could aspire to be like. I will cherish those trips always.*

Rick Meier - March 13, 2008 at 02:51 PM

SS

“*To the Schnellbacher family, my condolences on your loss, you are all in my thoughts and prayers. I will miss Senior's smiling face, the hugs and the kind words...those memories will be with me forever. He was truly an honorable, Gentle Man. I will miss seeing him at watch parties, at Forbes, welcoming the teams home, win or lose....watching him sign autographs for kids, and taking the time to make them feel special. He is so loved and will be missed by many.....we all share in your loss.*

Somehow, I know he's got the angels chanting Rock Chalk.....

Susan Swalwell - March 13, 2008 at 11:27 AM

CS

“ Dear Schnellbacher Family ~ We are so sorry to hear of Otto's passing. Please know you are in our thoughts, prayers, and in our hearts always. We have so many wonderful memories of Otto, and will cherish them always. We love you all very much. Chuck, Val, Nick, and Kelly Segerson

Chuck and Val Segerson - March 12, 2008 at 11:09 PM

MS

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with your family. Our neighborhood just won't be the same without Otto. He was so kind and loved by so many people. We thought often about his legacy with the Jayhawks and were always in "awe" of his accomplishments. May God bless you all. From your neighbors, Morris and Vicki Speed.

morris and vicki speed - March 12, 2008 at 10:46 PM

PF

“ Otto was truly The Number One Jayhawk. I extend my condolences to his family. I met Otto at a TJC event not long after I first joined, and I was so impressed that he was so open, friendly and approachable. I can't attend the funeral, but I think it would be lovely to know the Rock Chalk chant and Alma Mater would be a part of it somehow.....we all will miss Otto.

Pam, Jayhawk fan - March 12, 2008 at 08:37 PM

DP

“ Our thoughts and Prayers are with you at these troubled times.

David & Louise Pierce - March 12, 2008 at 06:23 PM

LM

“ To the Schnellbacher family: It was a privilege and honor to know and love Otto all of these years. He was a man of integrity, who cared enough to make a difference in the lives of so many people. Honest, compassionate, fair, strived for equality & justice, left the world a better place, all of these words describe "Big Otto". He will truly be missed but always remembered fondly. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

Love,
Linda & Lauren Martin

Linda Martin - March 12, 2008 at 09:14 AM

DS

“ Jane and family - So sorry to learn of Otto's death. Our prayers and thoughts are with you at this time. Love, Don & Betty Seitz

Don & Betty Seutz - March 11, 2008 at 11:09 PM

CB

“ My prayers go out to the Schnellbacher family during this difficult time. When I read the article in the newspaper a lump formed in my throat and tears were in my eyes thinking about the marvelous life Otto has lived. It makes me proud to be a KU fan and TJC member. I believe that his legacy will live on in his children and grandchildren. May wonderful memories of your lives with him comfort you and bring you peace.

God Bless You All! ROCK CHALK JAYHAWK!! GO KU!!
Rest in peace Otto!

Cheryl Burkhart - March 11, 2008 at 10:38 PM

DM

“ *My sincere condolences to the family of this outstanding fraternity brother.*

*E. DUANE MEYER, Hobart '58
Regent, Region VII
The Delta Chi Fraternity*

Dr. . Duane Meyer - March 11, 2008 at 09:40 PM

T'

“ *Mary T, Please find comfort knowing that your father is now in the presence of Our Lord. He truly was a good and honorable man and has left a legacy second to none. May the memories you and your son have bring peace to your hearts.*

Tish Padilla Alcalá-class of '76 - March 11, 2008 at 08:45 PM

LH

“ *Jane, Otto, Brad, Mary T. & all of Otto's family & friends, Jane & I are truly sad to see Otto's death but as he said to me 2 weeks ago "he led a charmed life". He truly was a giving man and lived his life as he many times quoted his coach & idol, Phog Allen, "what you give, you keep and what you keep, you lose" Otto truly achieved what many of us desire and that is to have people remember us as a good & fair person in all our lives. God bless your soul my friend and may your reward as a great servant be lofty. Larry Hesse*

Larry & Jane Hesse - March 11, 2008 at 07:38 PM

SM

“ I will carry so many wonderful memories of Big Otto throughout the rest of my life. I am so incredibly sorry to hear that he passed, but his life was remarkable, he was loved so dearly and that his wonderful family was with him. My heart goes out to all of you and I send you all my love and big hugs!

Stacy Magerkurth - March 11, 2008 at 04:56 PM



“ Otto Schnellbacher, Sr.

March 11, 2008 at 04:48 PM

JM

“ Mary T, Our hearts go out to you at this difficult time. We hope that you can draw strength from your family and friends and know how much we care. Surely the Rock Chalk chant is already being heard in heaven. Jeff & Kathy McKee

Jeff & Kathy McKee - March 11, 2008 at 03:11 PM

GC

“ Mary T. and family: I wanted to pass on my condolences. While I haven't spoken to you for 20+ years please know that my thoughts and prayers are with you. Gail C.

gail carpenter - March 11, 2008 at 02:45 PM

JF

“ Otto Jr., Brad and Mary T. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Your Dad, Mother and entire family had a great impact on my life. I will never forget all the fantastic memories of growing up in Topeka along with the wonderful times in Alexandria, Minn. He will surely be missed.

John B. Finucane
Kansas City, MO

John B. Finucane - March 11, 2008 at 02:18 PM

JN

“ Probably few people knew Otto better than I, Jane(Dick),except for family, He lived up to the highest standards of his beloved Coach, Phog Allen. Having the privilege of being his business partner for quite a few years, I knew him as one of the most admirable persons one could ever hope to meet or know in a lifetime! Our sincere condolences to Jane and the family!

Jane & Helen Newman (Topeka, KS)

Jane & Heln Newman - March 11, 2008 at 11:24 AM

DP

“ Our thoughts are with you in your time of sadness. Dr.Robert Durst,Michael Morgan,Wanda Winans, Jennifer Hupe,Susan Gudenkauf,Carrie Swanson.

Dermatology P.A. - March 11, 2008 at 10:07 AM

LP

“ Jane and family:

We were quite saddened to hear of Otto's passing and wish to send you our most sincere condolences.

We have so many fond memories of Otto. All the TJC functions. Otto "whipping" everyone in to shape for the St. Paddy's Day parade. I remember Otto holding the TJC banner in the parade with pride overflowing the large stature GENTLEman that we were so fond of. What a wonderful man Otto was.

Know that Mom and Dad (Norma and Dallas Power) are sending prayers your way. I'm sure Dad is there just waiting to see Otto again. They'll discuss football first - We know that.

We love you Jane and may the peace of our Lord give you strength during this most difficult time.

Randy, Lori, Ashley and Noah Harris...

Lori Power-Harris - March 10, 2008 at 07:15 PM