

## Joe Hay Memorial (2/25/23)

When I was asked by Joe's wife and daughter to speak at his memorial service, I immediately agreed. I had known him since I was 13, first as one of his 8th-grade math students at Flour Bluff Junior High in the '71-'72 school year then as a colleague and friend. The minute I sat down to write, I knew that I would have to start with an apology to all in attendance because there is just no way to encapsulate a life like Joe's in a few minutes.

This is just a sampling of what some of his students had to say about him:

- "He was one of the few teachers I had that made a lasting impact on my life."
- "He had a way of engaging his students that appeared effortless."
- "He was truly one of a kind with his ability to 'game-ify' math."
- "Mr. Hay's dedication to his students was truly remarkable, giving so generously of his personal time so that we might learn new skills, what it means to work hard towards ambitious goals, and how to respond well to both successes and setbacks."
- "One of the best lessons he taught me was commitment. You had to commit to learning in order to succeed."
- "Mr. Hay was our "Stand and Deliver" teacher."
- "He inadvertently taught us so much about LIFE, including things I'm sure he didn't realize he was teaching us."
- "Mr. Hay taught kids how to think on their feet and have confidence in their work."
- "Mr. Hay could captivate an audience of students gathered around his desk to solve a problem on a blank sheet of paper all while cracking the same corny jokes and wild analogies to help us learn."
- "He was a relentless and rigorous coach, but it was also clear how much he cared about all of us."
- "A good teacher can help you understand math, a great teacher might even make math exciting. But someone who can help you understand math, make it exciting, convince you to compete in it AND make you feel cool doing it, I think that might take a magician."

Joe was one of THOSE teachers, an interpreter of sorts, one blessed by God with the ability to translate the language of math for those who could not understand it. I was one of them, and he knew it. Years later when we taught together at junior high, I went to his room to discuss a student we both had, something we did often. "He's not cut out for English," he said, "but he's smart and wants to play football. Just keep working with him, and he'll figure it out." Joe never gave up on a kid; he just knew that enough practice and hard work would result in improvement. I thanked him for his advice and told him I understood the kid's plight because – as he might recall – I was not a numbers person either. At that moment, I was moved to apologize for not being a better math student in his class so long ago. He was ***moved*** to get up from his chair, dig around in his closet, and hand me an old algebra book. "It's never too late," he said with that quick little smile of his. That was Joe. He did indeed see in others what they couldn't see in themselves.

Joe grew up in the fifties and was raised by a father who worked long hours as an independent businessman, first as a grocer and then as a door-to-door salesman peddling everything from encyclopedias to jewelry. He made a good living for his family and was able to leave a nice inheritance to them when he passed away in 1996. Joe's mom was a teacher, a gifted artist, a homemaker, and the mother of four children. He was the oldest of the kids – and the only boy – something he may have thought came with a few benefits, like the benefit of talking his sisters into cleaning his room. Maybe they did it because Joe had to work at the store with their dad or because he had to run errands or because he had a baseball game or because Mom said so, or maybe he was demonstrating even then that he could convince people to do what they didn't think they liked doing.

Anyone who knew Joe also knew that he thoroughly enjoyed a good competition. He was an avid sports fan with the Flour Bluff Hornets, Houston Astros, and Dallas Cowboys listed as his favorites. He loved his Cowboys and wouldn't tolerate anyone badmouthing them. According to his sister Rachel, Sundays with the Cowboys was a ritual and not one to be toyed with. Joe loved football, but he had a passion for baseball, one that started when he was a little boy playing little league. He didn't always have a ride to practice or games because his dad worked, and his mom never learned to drive, but that didn't stop him. His little league coaches would pick him up and take him home so that he wouldn't miss practice or a game, something Joe would later pay forward when he did this very thing for his Math Team kids. He and his wife Gay often fed the kids or paid the way for those whose parents couldn't afford the math competition trips. He just wanted every kid to have a shot. Helping remove the obstacles in their way just made sense, and he was blessed with a wife who supported him in doing that.

Rachel, Joe's younger sister by 7 years, credits her brother with instilling in her a love of sports. When he became the pitcher on his Pony League team, he wanted to start practicing right away, but he needed a catcher – or maybe just a target. So, he put a worn-out rather thin glove on Rachel's little hand and positioned her on the far side of the yard. Then, he proceeded to zing balls at her. Their mother would holler from the window things like "Stop that!" "You're going to hurt your sister." But he didn't stop. In fact, all that practice not only helped Joe, it also made Rachel a really good short stop, something that would serve her well later in life when she was playing serious softball. "You could throw anything at me, and I could catch it," she said, "and he's the one who made me that good." He loved watching her play and went to lots of her games. To Joe, practice could indeed make perfect if you were willing to work hard.

Joe also loved a good game of cards. He often practiced his card skills at the living room coffee table with his sister Becky when they were little. He would seat her on the floor across from where he sat on the couch, deal the cards, and jump into a game of Spades or Hearts. He taught her well, but he won every game. In the beginning, Becky attributed his string of successes to his incredible math mind and his ability to remember numbers and cards. Then one day she learned the true secret to his success; from his elevated position on the couch, he could see her cards! Joe was a problem-solver from way back!

After graduating Carroll High School in 1964, Joe attended Del Mar College. When he wasn't in class taking his basic courses, he was at Del Mar Billiards across the street where he learned to shoot pool. Then he got a job at a billiards room in Kingsville while attending Texas A&I University where he got good at the sport and became a bit of a hustler – which came with a few hazards. His sister La Jean, an artist like her mother, remembers a time when she used her talents to cover her brother's black eye with makeup so that their parents wouldn't know about his pool hall brawl. Most people who play pool well usually love the game; making a few bucks on the side was just icing on the cake. Joe was one of those. When I first learned that he was a bit of a Minnesota Fats or Fast Eddie Felson, I asked him if his great knowledge of math – you know all those angles and stuff – was what made him so good at pool. He shook his head and said, "Nah. I just practice a lot."

Joe was always hustling around finding new ways to make money while going to school. Aside from picking up a few pool games, he worked at the grain exchange and started what could be referred to as an "at-home" business. He ran a few poker "tournaments" in his apartment that proved to be lucrative from time to time. Rachel said he even took up playing Bridge on the bus to Kingsville when he was attending Texas A&I University. Bridge is not as popular now as it was then when it was **so** popular that *Sports Illustrated* carried a bridge column and regularly reported on major championship events. Practicing while riding a bus is something he did with his students all the time, and they loved it just as he did. You know your kids have latched on to your passion when they choose to work math problems instead of goofing around on the bus trips!

In 1970, E.J. Wranosky hired Joe to teach math at Flour Bluff. Mr. Wranosky asked his standard questions: Do you camp? and do you drive a bus? Joe did both, so he started his career teaching math and going to HEB

Camp. He truly enjoyed going to camp. He loved posing as a challenge for kids and playing a good joke on them at the same time. Taking them on a “snipe hunt” was one way he did that. He’d tell them all kinds of shocking, strange stories about a vicious wild animal called a “snipe.” Then he’d give them a bag and leave them by themselves, often at night, with instructions to hunt and catch the terrible snipe. The kids at camp or the kids in his family who went snipe hunting with him at Garner State Park learned that fear should not keep you from accomplishing your goal. It also taught them not to be so gullible!

Though Joe was hired to teach math, his degree – wait for it – was in **history**! Let that soak in for a minute. This man, who became one of the finest and most respected math teachers in the state and country, had a bachelor’s degree in a subject he didn’t get hired to teach. What does that say about his work ethic and his ability to learn at a very deep level on his own? What does that show the rest of us? Joe’s work ethic endeared him to Mr. Wranosky, a man who loved and supported those who worked hard. The image many of you in this room have of him is Mr. Hay sitting at his desk working problems on a yellow notepad – or any piece of paper he had - while kids stood around him hanging on every word that came out of his mouth and taking notes. He made his job look effortless, but he was always learning and honing his skills for the sake of his students. After Joe’s first stroke, the speech therapist had him work algebra problems to keep his mind sharp. We laughed about that; then I asked him who graded his work. He smiled that little smile and said, “I do.” It is my firm belief that Joe Hay could have taught anything and taught it well.

When Gay (Mrs. Hay to many of you) met Joe at the Yellow Rose in 1974, he was still in the early years as a math teacher at Flour Bluff Junior High. She was taken by his skills on the dance floor. He could dance the polka, the 2-step, the Schottische, and the waltz. Yep, Joe was a dancer, and it was something that he and Gay loved doing together. But that was just an initial attraction. She fell in love with this quiet man with a quick smile and a penchant for practical jokes because he was kind, fun, and loving and because he loved her daughter Jami. And, to make the picture even better, Joe’s mom, Reba had Jami in her class at Flour Bluff Elementary. To Gay, Joe just seemed to have what it took to be a great daddy and husband. On April 2, 1976, Joe and Gay married and started their life together – one that would take them on great road trips that included camping along the way, cooking out, and taking scenic “short cuts” that sometimes added five hours to the trip and weren’t always that scenic. Gay was the perfect partner for Joe to waltz through life with, and she danced with him up to the last minute of his earthly life. One day, they will be dancing together again.

Joe never stopped learning or looking for ways to make money for his family. When he met a fellow from Florida who told him about the money that could be made cutting letters from Styrofoam for signs, he saw the potential for making some extra cash. Gay joined in on this venture, and they created a very successful sign business. Many a building at Flour Bluff School has a little piece of Joe on it. His sister, La Jean, was commissioned to paint two large murals on the walls of the Whataburger on General Cavazos Boulevard in Kingsville. Whataburger had received the designation of a Texas Treasure Business, so she asked Joe to create a giant Texas Treasure Medallion out of Styrofoam to accompany her artwork. You can see it and the beautiful murals if you drop in today. Leaving a mark is not something a person sets out to do; it’s something that happens when that person does something well. If Joe took on a task, he gave it his all.

Joe was always teaching, even when he didn’t intend to do so. It was my second year of teaching, and I was still trying to figure out how to handle the sloths and the troublemakers. One morning, I was standing at the mailboxes in the junior high office when Joe came in fast and with a purpose. We only had one phone for teachers at that time, and it was situated where everyone in the office could hear what was being said. His conversation was short and sweet. It went something like this. “Yes, ma’am. Were you there? Well, I was, and he has detention.” Click. I just looked at him and said, “You can do that?” “Yep,” he said and walked out. That short one-sided conversation helped me tremendously as a young teacher. Sometimes Joe fixed behavior in a much more subtle way. One time, a boy fell asleep in his class after multiple warnings from Mr. Hay. The bell rang, and the kid

was still asleep. So, instead of assigning detention or giving him what for, Joe had the next class come in quietly so as not to wake the sleeper. He went on with teaching his class. Then, the sleeper woke up, lifted his head, and looked around. The kid must have thought he was in the Twilight Zone! I bet that kid thought twice before napping in math class again. Mr. Hay certainly knew the power of surprise!

Joe was always the best prankster at junior high, and he would not be outdone. Once I was in the middle of a research project with my students when Mr. Ganley came to me and asked, "You want to help play a joke on Joe?"

"Sure. What do I need to do?"

"I just need you to write a letter from the superintendent about the dad who keeps saying he is sure his kid belongs in the algebra class." I knew exactly who it was because Joe and I had discussed this student – and the dad – often.

"Okay, what do I need to write?" I was laughing to myself thinking about how we would finally best the best.

"Make it crazy stuff like taking his plan book and grade book to central office for a meeting. Really make it sound serious."

I agreed, but I didn't have time to get to it for several days. Finally, I got a break and typed up the letter. I gave it to Ganley and went about my way.

The next day, I was having lunch in the lounge with Karen Howden and a few others when our principal, Chuck Thompson, came in and plopped down in a chair. "Anybody know a good math teacher?"

I froze. "Why?" Karen asked. "Is somebody leaving?"

"Yeah, Joe Hay," he said.

My ears began to ring.

"What happened?" Karen asked.

"He said he's had it with that guy who won't quit harassing him. This time the Superintendent is calling Joe in at the guy's request. Let me know if you hear of anybody. Joe's quitting today."

The principal got up and walked out to go to the cafeteria. I just looked at Karen who shook her head and walked out, too.

I couldn't believe it! The letter I wrote as a joke had pushed my teacher, my colleague, and my friend to quit doing what he loved! I was devastated. I threw my food in the trash can and went in search of the principal. He stood at the door of the cafeteria. I approached him slowly and shamefully.

"Mr. Thompson, I don't know how to tell you this, but I wrote that letter to Joe. It was just a prank."

"A prank? Shirley, you have to go tell Joe! He's packing his room up right now."

The walk down the 800 hall was a blur – mainly because I was tearing up. As I neared Joe’s room, I took a deep breath and knocked on his door. As soon as he saw that I was crying, he said, “I’m sorry. I think I went too far this time.”

It took me a second to figure out why he was apologizing. Then I heard the laughter of my fellow teachers huddled in a doorway across the hall watching the outcome of one of Joe’s most elaborate pranks. The principal came up behind me laughing and talking about how they didn’t think I’d ever get around to writing the letter that set it all in motion. Once again, he proved himself to be the best. Later, as I considered what it took to pull that off, I realized that even in his impish pranks, he showed brilliance, patience, and calm reserve. I respected him even more!

Joe was indeed a legend in his own time, a GOAT, loved and revered by so many. He was a man of many gifts and talents that he used to make other people’s lives better. And isn’t that the most important lesson Joe taught all of us through the way he lived his life? Isn’t that what God calls each of us to do? Well-done, Joe Hay! You were a good and faithful servant.

Though dedicated to his students, let there be no mistake; he was a devoted family man, a great friend, and an all-around good guy.

Jami’s tribute:

“Our world has lost an incredible man. Joe Hay was a lot of things to a lot of people in our community, but to me, he was just “Dad.” He came into my life at 3 years old and modeled what a true man and loving father is supposed to look like:

- A devoted and fun husband,
- A loving, responsible supportive father,
- An involved and gentle grandfather,
- A super cool and protective brother, uncle, and son,
- A wise, fun, and impactful teacher to his students,

- A loyal and trusted friend and colleague,
- And a force to be reckoned with to his opponents of baseball, pool, poker, and his math teams.

There's never been a moment in my life when I felt I couldn't count on him. He lived a good, clean, and hardworking life. He taught me about camping and shoulder rides. He was my advocate when I couldn't be. He showed me how to make a fist and "land it" – just in case the little bullies went too far. He made sure we had everything we needed – always. He was patient through my rebellious teenage years. He showed up. He reminded me I was smart. He made sure we had lots of adventures. We shared a dry sense of humor, and he was unbelievably creative in playing pranks on kids and adults alike. He supported me in every idea I ever had. He believed in me. We bonded over poker – a poker lesson was never wasted on me, as I hung on to every word. (Can't say the same about the math lessons.) He dearly loved my children and never tired of holding them, spending quality time with them, or teaching them whatever he could.

I could not have asked for a better man to be my father or grandfather to my babies.

I love you, Dad. Hearts are broken, and you will be so missed by so many."

### Obituary

Joseph Paul Hay, age 75, passed away on Sunday, January 22, 2023, surrounded by his loved ones. He was born in Corpus Christi, Texas on August 27, 1947, to Joseph P. Sr. "JP" and Reba Hay. He is survived by his wife, Gaylyn Hay; their daughter, Jami (Mark) Rook; grandchildren, Madilyn, Blake, and Sydney; and his sisters, LaJean (Randy) Curtis, Rebecca Mar, and Rachel Hay (Brenda).

Joe graduated at the early age of 17 from Mary Carroll High School and received his Education Degree from Texas A&I. Mr. Hay - as he was known by his students - had an extraordinary 42-year career with Flour Bluff Junior High as their eighth-grade math teacher. He was highly revered in the community, impacting numerous lives of his students and colleagues. Joe even won multiple awards nationwide while coaching his math team where he and his team won 27 consecutive math competitions.

Joe was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He had an amazing dry sense of humor and loved to play a good prank on unsuspecting students, colleagues, friends, and family. He was a lifelong fan of Flour Bluff sports, the Houston Astros, and the Dallas Cowboys. He enjoyed applying his math skills in poker and playing pool.

Joe was loved by many and will be dearly missed.

The family would like to thank the ICU hospital staff at Bay Area Medical Center for their efforts and dedication to Joe and his family.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2 PM on Saturday, February 25, 2023, at Grace Community Church, located at 1514 Flour Bluff Dr, Corpus Christi, TX 78418.

From his students, their parents, and his colleagues:

"I was asked by the school district to share a little about Mr. Hay as I had the privilege of being mentored by him for 6 years. After thinking about it for a bit, I realized that it would have been very easy to mention the obvious things. He taught 41 years in the school district. He was the founder of the Flour Bluff Math Team; he won 27 consecutive state championships in TMSCA. He was the chapter champion in MATHCOUNTS for every year the program was in existence. He was the two-time coach of the Texas State MATHCOUNTS team. Heck he was even a fantastic pool player, and you didn't want to be the guy sitting next to him in a poker game. I could go on and on, but I thought it best to tell you about the man I came to know through the stories I witnessed personally.

"So, here's my story.... It all started for me when I got put in a portable for my first-year teaching in the Bluff in 2006. I was standing outside my room getting to know my portable partner Mr. Hay, and he casually mentions to me that he worked with our school's math team and if I would like to join him some time, I was welcomed. Me, being too old and overweight to play sports anymore was excited to do something competitive and agreed. Now Joe being Joe, failed to mention that at that time his team was the 21 years in a row TMSCA state Champion, 21 years in a row Chapter MATHCOUNTS champion, and was feared, revered, and most importantly respected in the competitive math community across Texas. He just casually said, "I work with a math team." You see, that was Joe, he didn't boast or try to talk himself up. He let his work ethic and accomplishments speak for themselves. He was quiet, humble, and unassuming, but fiercely competitive. I didn't know it that day in 2006, but him extending his hand out to me and graciously bringing me under his wing was going to profoundly change my life.

"Within weeks of starting to work with him and his team, I started to realize that this was a lot bigger than what I thought I was getting into. This wasn't "some math team" this was one of the best (if not the best) math programs in the state of Texas. I thought I knew a lot of math, but I quickly realized that I knew nothing compared to him. For whatever reason though, he decided to keep me around, and I began to learn. One day, near the end of the school year of 2008, I asked Joe if he could spend some time with me during the summer trying to get better. Without hesitation, he said, "Of course." And thus started two weeks over each of the next two summers, sitting at his kitchen table for 7 hours a day as he patiently taught me everything I needed to know. No matter how much I struggled, he was patient and encouraging. I didn't realize this at that time, but as I spent more time with him, his students, and meeting teachers around the state that asked him for advice, I came to realize that this man was very special. Every student that had him currently or in the past idolized him. He was hard on them, but make no mistake, his students knew that he loved them. He challenged students and those around them to try to become the best versions of themselves. Joe never bought into all the nonsense in education about the newest and

greatest way to teach, or as he said, "Whatever bandwagon was coming through town." All he did was stick to what he knew worked and poured his life into his students and community.

"I personally saw many times where without any accolades or "Atta boys" Joe quietly got deeply involved in his students lives. One story that comes to mind was about a student who came from a very poor family and was really struggling in school and life. There were many nights he went to bed hungry or without power. He was struggling in school and was the nemesis of many teachers in the district, but Joe saw him differently. He saw an incredibly bright student that just needed a chance. He was patient with him but firm. He pushed him to become a better version of himself. The only reasons he stayed in school was that he wanted to be on the team, and he wanted to please Mr. Hay. No one knew that Mr. Hay would drive out to his house at 6:30 a.m. many mornings to pick him up for school because he wasn't sure if he had electricity, and Joe wanted him to go to school. No one knew that Joe's wife bought him a coat that winter so he wouldn't be cold. No one saw that Joe would quietly ask him or other students that were struggling financially at home if they had money for dinner on a math team trip and then proceed to give them money out of his own pocket so they wouldn't be hungry. That same little kid that was the bane of many teachers went on to become the two-time state champion in a number sense. That is just one example of what I saw personally but imagine how many more times throughout his career he did this for kids. When you read through the post from former students and his impact on their lives, the common theme is he is on the list of a handful of people in their lives that made a profound difference.

"Joe believed in giving back to the community. It was quite amazing early on for me to see the respect and friendships that Joe had across the state of Texas with other coaches and teachers. When people didn't know how to do something, Joe was the person they asked. When a young coach just starting out needed help and advice, they called him. Everywhere we traveled people looked to him for advice. He was quiet about it, but countless coaches across the state teams became better because of the advice and mentoring Joe gave.

"Probably my favorite story about Joe was the one year we were at the MATHCOUNTS state championship standing outside in the foyer as the students took their tests. Joe was talking to another coach, that had become known as the coach of the best team in the state. Out of nowhere, along comes a young coach seeking advice. This young coach proceeds to ask the other coach if he had some time to sit down and give some advice on how to better her team. After a very brief conversation, the young coach walked off, and the coach that she had been bugging for weeks for advice just didn't make time for it. Well, that didn't sit well with Joe. He didn't get angry; he didn't yell; all he said quietly and matter-of-factly was, "Yeah, well we all need to pay it forward at some point." You see people didn't know that this coach, many years in the past, had been that young coach and had reached out to Joe for help starting his own team. Not only did Joe help, but he invited him to his house to stay with him for a week during the summer and learn. That one comment Joe made was enough for that coach to be embarrassed a bit and reminded him of what Joe had done for him. He walked off, and minutes later we saw him talking with that young coach. That was Joe to perfection. Willing to help, willing to go out of his way for those in need, but not afraid to call someone out if he didn't feel like they were doing the same.

"The Monday after I learned of Joe's passing, I was talking with my students about the impact he had on me, how I had the privilege to being mentored by the greatest teacher the Flour Bluff district has ever had. I also mentioned the sad fact that in life and education, a couple of years after you are gone, no one remembers your name. Schools move on; new students join the ranks; the only people that remember are the people that you impacted. I have this theory. When did Flour Bluff become known for academics? I've heard stories from Joe about the 1970's in the district; trust me it wasn't the 70's. Somewhere along the way in the late 80's the district's reputation changed. My theory is it started when Mr. Hay took his small group of hard-working Bluff Rats and turned them into state champions. It happened when Flour Bluff was mentioned in the Caller-Times countless times, or when people saw the picture in the paper of Mr. Hay shaking the hand of the governor congratulating Flour Bluff for their state championship in MATHCOUNTS. It happened when students and parents realized that



something special was happening in the Bluff, and they wanted their children to be a part of it. My theory is that the reputation of Flour Bluff changed when Mr. Hay started winning and making massive impacts on students' lives. Yes, people move on and forget the past, but make no mistake that losing Mr. Hay from our community is not just another sad day. We lost, in my opinion, the main reason that Flour Bluff is known throughout the city and state as a great school for academics. Mr. Hay personally driving the school bus around the State of Texas (to save money) to math contests - and winning - profoundly changed these students and the reputation of this district forever.

"So, when someone says to me, 'Did you hear about Joe passing away?', I make sure they understand that our community losing Mr. Hay is not just a day of mourning for a few close friends and family. This is a day that 1000's of students and 100's of teachers will reflect and grieve, knowing that they had the privilege crossing paths with one of the greatest teachers this district or state has ever had. You may not know him but make no mistake his mark is on countless students and teachers. His mark is on Flour Bluff, and his mark is on me. I am a better man and a better teacher today because of what he did. I have tried over the years to look out for my students and to mentor teachers and coaches that are looking to grow or needing guidance, just as he modeled to me. Because as Mr. Hay said, 'We all have to pay it forward at some point.'"

~Anthony Gillespey

"Mr. Hay was a once in a lifetime type of person to meet. The level of passion he had for his students is why a lot of them succeeded later in life. He was more than just my math teacher for 2 years. He was my coach, my mentor, and biggest fan. My favorite thing about Mr. Hay is he was great at identifying talent and giving the correct level of challenge to his students whether they be accelerated or behind. To be honest, I didn't think I was good enough to be on the MATHCOUNTS team my 8th grade year, but he saw what I was capable of and I am glad he pushed me to stick with it. I know I will hold his memory in my heart for the rest of my life and I know there are others who feel the same way. Rest in Peace Mr. Hay."

~Devin Baldwin

"Mr. Hay helped shape me into the person I am today. When I first started in his Academy Math and Algebra I classes, I was a brand new student to Flour Bluff and feeling very overwhelmed and lonely. I ended up in Academy Math because of schedule limitations - while I was good at math, the class certainly wasn't my first choice. Soon, though, I realized how much fun math team was. Math team is where I made friends and grew my confidence. The trips to math competitions were so much fun, and looking back as an adult I appreciate just how much time and energy he sacrificed to make those trips happen for a bunch of junior high kids. I also really enjoyed my Algebra and Geometry classes with Mr. Hay. To this day I remember playing the "5, 4, 3, 2, 1 game" in his class to review for a test. He would give us a problem and everyone would try to solve it as quickly as possible and then race up to his desk to show him the answer. The first to solve correctly would get 5 points, the second person 4 points, etc. In Mr. Hay's classes, I learned to truly enjoy math and problem-solving. Due in no small part to his influence, I went on to major in math in college and now work as an actuary. He was an incredible teacher and I am truly honored to have been his student."

~Allison Brune (Allison Clark, 2004-2006)

"Like many of my teachers I knew Joe Hay many years before he taught me. My mother worked with him at first, then he taught and coached my brother, and so when it finally became my turn to be his student, I was excited and thrilled. He had been a staple in my young life for as long as I could remember and everyone, I knew who had been taught by him loved him. I was no exception. He had a way of engaging his students that appeared effortless. I had always had a knack for numbers, and Joe... it feels so wrong to use his first name, even though I'm

almost forty now... Mr. Hay... that's more like it... saw that in me and brought it out in a big way. I had followed in my brother's footsteps joining the math team when I was in 5th grade, so by the time I got to Junior High and Mr. Hay's official team, I was well versed in the 10 minute Number Sense drills and the Calculator and General Math tests. I loved all of it, though I was always partial to Calculator and my HP 32 S2 scientific calculator, which I still have, by the way. Mr. Hay took my math skills to the next level teaching me every little trick he knew to improve my scores and I still use most of the mental math skills I learned from him in my everyday life today. I can't even tell you how many times the FOIL method of multiplying numbers has come in handy. And every time I use one of his little tricks, I remember. From a time in my life when I don't remember much anymore, I remember Mr. Hay, and I will continue to do so fondly. He was a magnificent teacher, and a wonderful man."

~Vicky Végh

"Mr. Hay was one of those rare, soft-spoken teachers, who had the utmost dedication and belief that his students could all excel and thrive. He was patient beyond measure, and never raised his voice once ever. I have many wonderful memories from many afternoons and weekends practicing for going on U.I.L. Math and Science competitions. Flour Bluff was \*legendary\* in UIL, and it is a great deal due to Joe Hay. We always swept the awards statewide. I am very saddened to hear of his passing. He was a kind soul and the epitome of a good person. Anyone who knew him was fortunate to do so. He will be missed by so many."

~Cade Peterson

"There are not many people in this world that change the path of those they come across for the rest of their lives. Not only was Joe Hay one of these people, but he was for over a thousand different individuals during his tenure as a teacher. Personally, he is likely the person who has had the single greatest influence on my life and who I have to thank the most for who I am today. I was a student of his in 7th and 8th grade back in 2003-2005. I was on the math team and spent 3-4 hours every day in his classroom whether for class or practicing. I also spent nearly every weekend with him traveling to some location across the state for a competition. He taught me to have a work ethic and to truly love math. Today, I am the engineering manager for a crane manufacturer in Colorado and it is truly all thanks to him. A few years ago, I flew down to Corpus Christi for Mr. Hay's retirement party. The number of people that came to that from all different eras and had all been students of his was truly a testament to not only how impactful he was on them, but also how much he was loved. The world has lost a truly great man and he will be missed more than I can put in words."

~Nathan Rubey

"Hearing of Mr. Hay's passing is completely heartbreaking. He was one of the few teachers I had that made a lasting impact on my life. From class to practice to math team trips, Mr. Hay had high expectations of us while still making it fun and memorable. I remember and still use many of the tips and tricks he taught us and can't wait to pass these on to my daughter as well. A deeper love of math was instilled in me because of him. I am grateful to carry on his legacy and will forever cherish the memories of amazing times we spent together."

~Ellie Gillum

"I guess the simplest way to say it is that Joe Hay was a teacher, mentor, coach, and friend. It seems like a popular thing these days for folks to look back on their relationship with math education and question "why did I learn this, when will I ever use this, etc. etc...." But in my chosen career, I can proudly say "almost every day" to at least one, if not several, of the things that I learned in Mr. Hay's classroom, either during class or after school in math club or mathcounts practice sessions. And I'm not just talking about mathematics, for that matter. In my brief stint as an educator, and now in my still relatively new role as a manager and technical director in an engineering

field, that passion and enthusiasm for teaching, and the kind approach and patience that Mr. Hay role modeled has definitely shaped how I tackle so many things on a day-to-day basis. Nearly all of my fond memories of Junior High are tied to math club in some way or another, and I was fortunate enough to go back and speak to his math team kids when I was finishing up my post doc, and was blown away and overjoyed by how large of a group of engaged matheletes he was coaching with that same enthusiasm I knew so well from my youth. He'll be greatly missed, and fondly remembered. For those of us who were fortunate enough to sit in one of his classrooms and learn from what he had to teach us, we can all find some joy in knowing that we take his legacy with us, always."

Joseph (Joe) J. Végh

Algebra I 1992-1993, Home Room 1993-1994

Junior High TMSA Math & Science Teams 1992-1994, Mathcounts 1992-1994

"I first met Joe Hay in the fall of 2005 when I began working as a math teacher in Flour Bluff. I walked into his classroom in the portable and saw a group of students gathered around a small table working math problems. They were kneeling around the table with Mr. Hay sitting amongst them. What struck me immediately is that nobody looked up or seemed to notice I was there. They were completely focused, engaging in challenging math problems. I thought immediately that Joe must have some magical powers.

"What I saw in the next years proved to me over and over that Mr. Hay did, in fact, have magic math teacher powers. I had the privilege of having two sons that went through his Math Academy program and participated in statewide competitions. The students had work over the summer, during Christmas break, in addition to four hours a day of practice. I would tell my friends and colleagues that it wasn't that Flour Bluff had the smartest kids in the city; they had a passionate, dedicated coach who inspired them to love mathematics, and love hard work. He knew how to build a team.

"I will never forget the Friday before Spring Break. My son and I were driving home from school. I for one was looking forward to my week off. My son informed me that Mr. Hay said that they would be meeting at 9:00 am to noon every day during the break. I didn't know if my son was messing with me, or Mr. Hay was messing with them. But, no! I dropped my son off on Monday morning and there was Mr. Hay. He mixed math with playing washers and a lot of Dairy Queen. To this day when we drive to San Antonio and are deciding where to stop, we call the Dairy Queen at exit 104, Mr. Hay's Dairy Queen. What a 13 year old would do for an ice cream. It wasn't really all about the ice cream. It was that they loved math, loved their team, and loved Mr. Hay. Students often drift away from their junior high friends. My son, who went on to be the Math Counts captain, state champion in Number Sense and General Math, and then graduated as a Statistics major from the University of Maryland, frequently tells me that he had his last great math teacher at Flour Bluff Junior high. There is no question that Mr. Hay impacted the trajectory of my son's life, and modeled for me how a humble man through sacrifice, commitment, and passion came to obtain magic math powers that would positively influence thousands of lives.

"Note: My son, who was champion in Number Sense and General Math, and then graduated as a Statistics major from the University of Maryland, frequently tells me that he had his last great math teacher at Flour Bluff Junior high. There is no question that Mr. Hay impacted the trajectory of my son's life and modeled for me how a humble man through sacrifice, commitment, and passion came to obtain magic math powers that would positively influence thousands of lives."

~Kimberly Moore, teacher

"Mr. Hay was an amazing teacher and mentor. He taught me to love math and influenced my career path. I spent so much time with him in intermediate and junior high that he was practically family. The world is a better place because he was in it. We are better people for knowing him. He will be greatly missed."

~Abby Henley Johnson

"A good teacher can help you understand math, a great teacher might even make math exciting. But someone who can help you understand math, make it exciting, convince you to compete in it AND make you feel cool doing it, I think that might take a magician. Between the countless hours Mr. Hay put in... before and after school math team, advanced class offerings, summer camp, and weekend travel all over Texas for competitions... I learned a ton of math. But I am most grateful for the little community of math nerds he created. He made a space for us to lean into being smart, to proudly pursue it, a place with tricky questions and satisfying answers, a place where I found most of my friends. I carry the confidence, pride, love of math (and ability to multiply 2 digit numbers quickly in my head) with me to this day. I have my HP 32SII calculator, now over twenty years old, sitting on my desk always- a reminder of how my life was changed by someone seeing my talents and cultivating them. He will be dearly missed by a generation of kids, but his impact lives on."

~Kaitlyn McClymont

"Mr. Hay was the first person I can remember who made me love math. He has a gift for sparking curiosity in students, teaching them, encouraging them, and building a community around the fun activities of doing math and competing in math and science competitions. Sometimes I wonder if I'd be where I am today without his influence. I now have a PhD in math from Dartmouth College, and I've been a math professor at Seattle University for nearly 15 years. I have taught thousands of my own students over the years and have shared with them the joy that thinking about math problems brings--the joy that Mr. Hay helped me discover. Each person's good deeds not only touch those they interact with directly, but they affect so many more people indirectly. By this measure, I'm certain Mr. Hay's positive impact on the world is massive."

~Allison Henrich

"He always wanted to see people succeed and would work hard to help students see their potential. I was in his Algebra class in 8th grade and always loved his dry sense of humor. I will never forget him, because of him I loved math! I showered him with my "crocodile tears" when I failed my first test, but the encouragement he gave to me made me stronger in Math. He will be greatly missed!"

~Lisa Rodriguez

"I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to meet and work with Mr. Hay. We transferred our kids to Flour Bluff Intermediate when they were in 6th grade because we wanted them to be part of the math team. They learned math from the best! He tirelessly worked to teach them math beyond their years. More importantly, he instilled in them skills that will be with them for the rest of their lives. The math team trips to San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, The Villages, UTSA, and more were legendary. The kids learned so much more than math from him. He taught them how to think on their feet and have confidence in their work. I am very grateful to him."

~Didi Byerly

"I entered Jr. High thinking I was "bad at math" and had no interest joining a math team. However, Mr. Hay recruited me to join, and to this day I credit my math skills to him! He was a rigorous coach and always expected the best from us. I remember learning new numbers sense tricks by gathering around his desk for him to show us how it worked. He was a relentless and rigorous coach but it was also clear how much he cared about all of us. So many of my junior high memories involve taking trips to other high schools in CC, San Antonio, and Houston for math competitions. We always won. I still have a full desk's worth of trophies from my mathlete days!! I even had the chance to travel to Washington, DC to watch the Texas team compete in Nationals. Mr. Hay was the coach that year, and one member of our team was on this team; so, he invited all of us to go. It was an eye-opening adventure for me as an 8th grader. Mr. Hay is one of those teachers that you encounter for such a short (and important) period of time who had a positive impact on your life forever. His students and the entire community are indebted to him for the many ways he made us all better. We love you Mr. Hay and hope to continue your legacy of sharing our passions with others and investing in people for the better."

~Lauren Niemeyer

"Mr. Hay was truly one of a kind and more than anyone could ever ask for in a teacher. At the core of a math teacher with a tough outer shell (signature mustache, thick-framed lenses, button-down flannel and all) was a true passion to help his students not only learn, but instill principles that would help them become successful for the rest of their lives in whatever path they chose. Principles of grit, perseverance, self-confidence, consistency, and integrity. He was patient, steadfast, and went above and beyond in taking the time to explain the why behind every question, problem, or equation.

"As someone who came in with a sheer animosity towards math, he somehow made it fun for me. He could captivate an audience of students gathered around his desk to solve a problem on a blank sheet of paper all while cracking the same corny jokes and wild analogies to help us learn.

"I'll always remember the movie that we'd watched dozens of times in his classroom called Stand and Deliver (If you were in his class, you know exactly what I'm talking about). It details the true story of Jaime Escalante, an inner-city high school teacher who accomplishes the near impossible task of helping his students pass the AP Calculus exam. When I look back at my time with Mr. Hay, I see so many parallels to the movie. Teaching middle schoolers to love math is a near impossible task, but it all started with encouraging his students to believe in themselves first. Once this has been accomplished, you can push them to unimaginable heights.

"While I'm deeply saddened to hear of Mr. Hay's passing, it's so reassuring to see the positive impact he's had on so many students like myself. He pursued a calling that was much bigger than himself and people like him encouraged me to have a positive impact on others in a similar way. Rest in Peace, Mr. Hay."

~Matthew Chen

"Mr. Hay was undoubtedly one of the most impactful people in my life. He was a remarkable teacher, mentor and person. I will treasure the years I spent in his classroom as a student and math team member learning how to do speedy mental math, type away on the calculator and solve complex problems. His passion made so many of us feel special and want to excel. Rarely do you see this kind of attention to students and desire to educate from teachers, but Mr. Hay always went above and beyond. As a woman in STEM, I will forever be grateful to Mr. Hay for fueling my interest in math and science over. It was truly a privilege to learn from him for so many years. He will be dearly missed, but never forgotten. Sending thoughts and prayers to his family, friends, and students."

~Kendal Carrow

"Mr. Joe Hay, Flour Bluff is Flour Bluff because of you. Thank you for being a teacher who had high expectations for his kids and who always believed in us even when we didn't believe in ourselves. I STRUGGLED in your class and it was honestly one of the first times I had faced such a challenge, but you taught me more than just the craziness of Math Team, you taught me how to not let a challenge defeat me. You inadvertently taught us so much about LIFE, including things I'm sure you didn't realize you were teaching us. Little things like ordering our own food when we stopped at McDonalds, how to handle being away from home, and how to become self sufficient young men and ladies helped make me who I am today. Thank you, Mr. Hay, for the impact you left on thousands of kids, an entire school district, and an entire community."

~Monica Hester

"I don't post much here, but it came to my attention that my intermediate school math coach, Joe Hay, passed this past week. This man made math fun, exciting, adventurous, and competitive. He wasn't just a teacher, he was a role model, a leader, and an angel. The team I was a part of made it to state for MATHCOUNTS, and between @paul geffert, Alicia Olson, Chris Michael, Krystal Crump, and myself, we would dominate in TMSA in our grade. He was our "Stand and deliver" teacher. Thank you Mr Hay for being an overwhelmingly positive influence in my life. Rest easy."

~Jake Edel

"Mr. Joe Hay had a profoundly positive impact on my life and on the lives of countless students fortunate enough to participate on his teams across multiple decades. His dedication to his students was truly remarkable, giving so generously of his personal time so that we might learn new skills, what it means to work hard towards ambitious goals, and how to respond well to both successes and setbacks. Not only has my engineering career greatly benefitted from the skills gained from time on his team, but my life has been enriched more broadly from the friendships formed and lessons learned about teamwork and perseverance. The impact he had through his life is extraordinary and he will be deeply missed by all those who were able to spend time with him."

~ Allen Parish, Flour Bluff Class of 2001

"Mr. Joe Hay was one of the most dedicated and enthusiastic teachers I've been fortunate enough to have. He had a significant impact on my life. It is because of him that I became fascinated with learning about numbers and why I pursued teaching math. He spent countless hours of his personal time dedicating it to numerous students on his Math Teams. He had a passion for teaching math and always had a fun way to teach us a new trick. One of the best lessons he taught me was commitment. You had to commit to learning in order to succeed. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him."

~Lisa (Latour) Willis, FB Class of 2001

"When I received the news that Mr. Hay had passed away, someone had already posted a tribute to him on Facebook with assorted pictures from his time as the math coach for Flour Bluff Junior High. One from the 1989 yearbook was of Mr. Hay with the MathCounts Team from that year under the heading "Expect The Best ..." I was one of the four Mathletes in that photo and can say without hesitation that Mr. Hay expected the best from us, but not out of a win at all cost mentality, but rather as a motivation for us to always challenge ourselves and each other, to drive excellence as an expectation.

"But excellence doesn't just happen, even when it is expected, which brings me to the word I most associate with Mr. Hay: Dedication. He was a man truly dedicated to the education of his students, his math teams especially. He put in countless hours every morning before school and every afternoon after teaching, training and coaching the team members both individually and as a group, always challenging us to improve, to learn math tricks we didn't yet know, to compute answers faster and more accurately. It was methodical and he expected dedication on your part to keep improving. Along the way, we would go to a dozen or so tournaments per year, sometimes as far away as the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio (or Austin for MathCounts), leaving dark and early many Saturday mornings. And that took dedication. And he did that year after year after year for three decades from that first team in 1987-88 until he fully retired. And that took dedication. His competitiveness, incredible ability to motivate and unparalleled ability to teach produced 27 consecutive state math & science championships for Flour Bluff Junior High. And that took dedication.

"As one of the many math team members you coached over the years, you have been an inspiration to me and to countless others. Rest in peace, Mr. Hay."

~Craig Gowens