



Vincent F. Rockel

October 30, 2024

Sergeant Major Vincent F. Rockel, US Army (Ret.)

Vincent Rockel, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, passed away on October 30, 2024, at the age of 91 in Sarasota, Florida. Born and raised in Washington Crossing, New Jersey, Vince spent over twenty years in Spring Lake before relocating to Sarasota in 1989. He also cherished his time as a part-time resident on Ocracoke Island, NC, for more than five decades. A dedicated soldier, educator, athlete, and community leader, Vince's life was a testament to service, loyalty, and love for family and friends.

A talented athlete, Vince began his athletic journey at Hopewell Central High School (now Hopewell Valley High School), where he distinguished himself as a multi-sport athlete, earning varsity letters in soccer, basketball, and baseball starting in his freshman year. In 1949, he was recognized as one of the top soccer players in the region, becoming the only student from his school to receive All-Regional honors, a testament to his exceptional skill. His achievements at Hopewell paved the way for an athletic scholarship to The Pennington School, where he continued to shine, earning All-Regional honors in football in 1951 and All-State honors in baseball in 1952. He graduated in 1952 and was inducted into The Pennington School Athletic Hall of Fame in 2012.

With a steadfast sense of duty, Vince served his country for over 35 years, including five years on active duty and three decades in the Navy and Army Reserves. Rising to the esteemed rank of Sergeant Major of the Army E-9, the highest enlisted rank, he exemplified dedication and leadership. After his military retirement, he continued to honor veterans by volunteering weekly at Sarasota National Cemetery.

After his military service, Vince earned a Bachelor's in Biology and a Master's in Education in Biological Science and Teaching from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A lifelong Tar Heel fan, he remained deeply loyal to his alma mater. Vince dedicated his career to education, teaching science, and coaching and officiating sports for over 25 years in Wall Township, Brick Township, and Ocean Township. He was also a founding member of the Shore Soccer Officials Association.

A true pillar of his community, Vince co-founded the Spring Lake/Spring Lake Heights Soccer Club and led the development of the girls' league in the early 1970s. His dedication extended beyond sports, serving as a Boy Scout Leader and guiding the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF). Following his retirement in 1987, Vince continued to pursue his passions, from cheering on his beloved Tar Heels and attending local games to volunteering at Major League Baseball training camps. He was a dedicated member of the Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church and the Rotary Club of Sarasota.

Vince's legacy of service, love, and commitment to community will continue to inspire all who had the privilege of knowing him. He will be dearly missed and remembered always as a true role model, devoted friend, and loving family man. He is survived by his beloved wife of 69 years, Jane Rockel, along with his cherished family: one brother, four sons, one daughter, two grandsons, six granddaughters, one great-grandson, and four great-granddaughters.

Tribute Wall

TW

“ *Tommy Williams lit a candle in memory of Vincent F. Rockel*



Tommy Williams - November 06, 2024 at 01:58 AM

KA

“ *My memory of Mr Rocket was that he was really nice. He came over to me and grabbed my nose and laughing. He was my science teacher in the 70's. Good man. My condolences to the family and everyone who knew him...*

Karen - November 04, 2024 at 06:26 PM

RC

“ Vince had a keen ear for possible events that may be beneficial Two come to mind.

1. Few will remember the Monte Carlo Pool in Asbury Park. It was the largest salt water pool in the country. Well word got out that it was donated to the Presbyterian Church and the boy scouts were invited to "rummage" Vince and I took many truckloads of three by twelves, three by tens, tongue and groove cedar, lockers and redwood boards while Vince's dad removed a lot of electric wire. Much of that wood was used in the construction of a house on Ocracoke.

2. There was an old horse farm called the Erlanger estate in Ocean Twp. Vince got in touch with the guy who was going to develop it. First, we removed several truckloads of lush pachysandra, then we were given the opportunity to salvage the slate roofing on the barn slated for demolition. Vince discovered several old black walnut trees on the property and asked if we could cut them. The Developer said "OK" cause they would probably be removed at ground clearing. Well, we cut three BIG trees down one morning and they made so much noise falling that we ran. Months later we went back and cut the limbs off and made nine foot logs. A year later, we retrieved the logs and stored them behind Vince's home in Spring Lake. from there they journeyed to a saw mill in North Jersey - to my garage - to a big planer at Sherman's Mill in Manasquan - back to my garage (to cure). Vince used much of his walnut for new kitchen cabinets.

Richard Coon - November 02, 2024 at 02:47 PM



Aurora Rini

What great memories of an extraordinary guy! Thanks Dick, for posting this. Aurora Schlegel OTHS Faculty1968-2001

Aurora Rini - November 04, 2024 at 04:50 PM