

Pat Malaska's Legacy Lives on in Miami County Through a New Fund

Packed into the Tigarena, Peru's fans were on their feet. Their yells were deafening as they cheered the 1948 Tigers onto a Sectional victory. It was that golden era of basketball, when little town teams were pitted against big city teams. Victory led Peru to Regionals at a bigger gym, in a bigger town, with a bigger crowd.

Peru won again! The fans, hoarse from cheering and ears still ringing, celebrated long after the game was over. That year the Tigers went all the way to Semi-State, where they got as far as the final game. It was a David-verses-Goliath-like event, as they played the big Lafayette Jeff school in Lafayette. Sadly, this time the Peru team lost. Coached by Pat Malaska, it was the first and only time the Peru High School boys' basketball team advanced that far in the tournament.



Over the course of his career, Malaska set all kinds of records both as a basketball player and a coach. He was a co-captain and starter at Purdue on big ten championship teams. He set a college record with a legendary stall. He was named Converse All American Basketball Player in 1938. He then went on to coach a number of winning teams in Indiana high schools, including his impressive run at Peru. In 1988, he became the first of only a few Miami County residents to be inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

Now his family is breaking new ground by creating the Miami County Community Foundation's first donor-advised fund—the Paul D. 'Pat' Malaska Memorial Fund. This fund, created by his widow Willie, and his daughter and son-in-law Susan and Herschel Gulley, will support charitable causes in Miami County.

"He loved Peru. He loved the people and the small-town atmosphere here. So it seemed appropriate to celebrate his life by giving back to the place he loved," Malaska's daughter, Susan Gulley explained.

Malaska's life is one many people would want to celebrate. He was described by those who knew him as "a gentleman," "a very good coach," "a go-get-'em kind of guy," "witty, with a great sense of humor", and "dearly liked."

"He was very humble," Gulley said. "He never bragged or promoted himself in spite of all that he accomplished."

However, he certainly would have been entitled to. Malaska graduated from Crawfordsville High in 1933 where he played Varsity basketball. He went on to be a three year starter for Purdue, playing

on two big ten championship teams. He also set a college record that still stands today by stalling for 14 minutes while he ate an ice cream. The legendary stall was featured in a Sports Illustrated article. After graduating, he played professional basketball in the National Basketball League, which was to become the NBA.

In 1938, he began a full-time teaching and coaching career at Fairmount High School. His career would take him to Bicknell, Martinsville, Richmond, and of course Peru. He coached Peru during the 1943-44 school year. He then enlisted and served in the Navy during World War II. After the war, he returned to Peru where he continued to teach and coach until 1949.

Malaska eventually left coaching and Peru to become a stock broker. Upon retiring from that career in 1972, he and his wife Willie returned to make their home in Peru. His daughter Susan and her family later joined them and still reside here.

"He was so generous with his time and resources and did so much in the background for people," Gulley reminisced. "He was always helping others but no one ever knew about it."

"Pat Malaska's generous spirit became his legacy," Jenni Marsh, Associate Director of the Community Foundation said. "That is why the creation of this fund is such a fitting tribute to his life. Now his family can use the income from this fund to continue to support charitable causes in the place that he loved."

Anyone wishing to celebrate Malaska's memory can make a donation to the Paul D. 'Pat' Malaska Memorial Fund. Checks can be made out to the Community Foundation; please note on the memo line that it is for the Pat Malaska Memorial Fund. Questions can be directed to Jenni Marsh at 475-2859.