

Jim McKim



I was born on February 9, 1944, to Richard and Virginia (Clark) McKim. Before my birth, both of my parents were schoolteachers at a two-room schoolhouse near Sterling, Kansas. My dad had volunteered to serve in the war, but while standing in line for his physical, he collapsed and was later diagnosed with polio. The doctor advised him to find work outdoors, so he asked his father if he could return to the family farm. That decision led to me being born and raised on the farm, where my dad worked for the rest of his life.

Because the war was still going on, Morrill High School did not have a basketball coach. My dad volunteered, and my first experience with coaching came from helping him. The position only lasted one year, and then it was back to farming full time.

I loved farm life, but I suffered from severe hay fever, which led me to feel called to become a teacher when I was in sixth grade. I graduated from Morrill High School in 1962, attended Hutchinson Junior College for two years, and then completed my final two years at Ottawa University, earning a degree in mathematics, though without education hours.

I was accepted into Temple University's intern teaching program for college graduates. At the time, I didn't realize it was designed to place teachers in inner-city Philadelphia. I was the first student accepted from west of the Mississippi River, and when they met me, they decided I would be better suited for a suburban school. I taught for three years at Pennwood Middle School in the Pennsbury School District and earned my master's degree from Temple University during that time. It was a very good experience, but I had always known it would not be permanent.

My wife and I then moved to Hutchinson, Kansas, where I taught one year at Sherman Middle School. Still wanting to be closer to my dad's farm, I began what would become a 37-year career teaching math at Sabetha Middle School.

During my first five years in Sabetha, there were no coaching openings. I kept scorebooks for both the high school and middle school and did some refereeing, but I really wanted to coach. Eventually, I had the opportunity to coach seventh-grade boys basketball for two years. After that, I was asked to coach seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade girls basketball.

At the time, girls coaching positions paid only half of what boys coaching positions did. Superintendent Von Lauer encouraged me to attend a school board meeting and advocate for equal pay, which I did. Because of a split season—girls before Christmas and boys after—I was later able to coach both.

I continued coaching until I retired in 2007. Throughout most of my teaching career, I also kept the scorebooks for high school games, stepping aside only when my own children were playing so I could watch them. Since retiring, I have continued to keep the books for all Sabetha home games and for the boys' away games.

My wife and I lived just five-eighths of a mile from the family farm. My dad operated a dairy until taking a buyout in 1985. I helped him after school and during the summers. After the buyout, he replaced the dairy cattle with a Brangus herd. I continued helping him, and after he passed away, I moved to the farm, where I still raise cattle today.

It has been a good life.

