

## Durward Eugene "Deke" Edwards

February 5, 1939 - August 17, 2023

Durward Eugene Edwards, known as Eugene (to family) or Deke (to friends), passed away on August 17, 2023, at the age of 84 in St. Louis, Missouri. He was born on February 5, 1939, in Bellflower, Missouri, to Durward Ezekiel Edwards and Ruth Darlene (Copenhaver) Edwards. Eugene was preceded in death by his beloved wife Joan (Wallace) Edwards in 2019, parents and his sisters, Eugenia and Drusilla.

Deke was blinded in a hunting accident at the age of 11. Following his recovery, he began as a student at the Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) where he was blessed to have been surrounded by numerous remarkable teachers who helped him grow to be the person he became. He was introduced to wrestling at MSB and it replaced baseball as his sports passion. In high school he achieved a record of 75-2 with 58 of his wins by pin and became a Missouri state wrestling champion twice. He continued his wrestling career at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale (SIU). At SIU, he was surrounded by coaches and teammates who helped him to continue to excel. From 1957 to 1961 at SIU, Deke had a record of 45-6, despite injuries, was a three-time conference champion and was team captain his senior year.

Deke received many awards for his achievements in wrestling during his life:

1980 – elected to Missouri Wrestling Hall of Fame

1982 – inducted as the 6th wrestler in the Missouri Hall of Fame  
1994 – elected to Greater St. Louis Area Athletic Association Hall of Fame  
2005 – lifetime achievement award from the National Wrestling Hall of Fame  
2019 – Southern Illinois University – Carbondale Saluki Hall of Fame  
2022 – The St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame

He was humbled and embarrassed by the accolades that he received. In his opinion, he was not responsible. Deke said that he would have achieved "nothing" in his life if not for the help of his family, coaches, teachers, teammates, and most importantly, his wife.

Eugene was a brilliant, determined, and humble individual who possessed a curious and generous nature. He was a wonderful father and grandfather, a dedicated teacher, coach, and a true friend. Eugene's courage and independence were an inspiration to all who knew him.

Deke's career spanned over 30 years as a mathematics teacher at the Missouri School for the Blind. He also served as a wrestling coach for an impressive 47 years, leaving a lasting impact on countless students and athletes and was a founding member and longtime board member of the United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA).

Eugene's educational journey began at Silex Elementary and the Missouri School for the Blind. He furthered his studies at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, where he earned his B.A. degree. He later pursued a master's degree in Education at the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

A visitation to honor Deke's memory will be held on Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM, followed by a service from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM at the Bibb-Veach Funeral Home located at 606 W. Main St. in Bowling Green, Missouri.

Eugene is survived by his loving daughter, Teresa/Teri Edwards, his son and best friend, Sean Edwards, his daughter-in-law, Tonda, and his cherished grandson, Ian. He is also survived by his sisters Barbara Edwards, Genola Hawkins and Phyllis Rupp; his brother Glenn Edwards; his sister-in-law Ruthann; brothers-in-law Bill Hawkins and Dennis Rupp, numerous nieces, great-nieces, and great-nephews.

The important aspect about Deke is that he went through something traumatic and encountered some very good people that helped him achieve things and helped him develop into who he was. He spent the rest of his life doing the same thing for those kids like him, many kids far worse. He understood first-hand the positive impact that a teacher/coach can have and did his best to pay that forward. Wrestling and teaching were the vehicles he used to do it.

Deke's legacy will be remembered by those whose lives he touched through his dedication, kindness, and unwavering commitment to his students, athletes, and loved ones. He will be deeply missed and forever cherished in our hearts.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that contributions be made to Shriners Hospitals for Children or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. These organizations were close to Eugene's heart, and donations made in his memory will continue to support causes he cared deeply about.

# Cemetery Details

## Indian Creek Memorial Gardens Cemetery

New Hartford, MO 63359

# Previous Events

## Visitation

**AUG 26.** 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Bibb-Veach Funeral Home's & Crematory LLC - Bowling Green  
606 West Main Street  
Bowling Green, MO 63334  
(573) 324-2211  
office@bibbveach.com  
<https://www.bibbveach.com/>

## Funeral Service

**AUG 26.** 10:00 AM (CT)

Bibb-Veach Funeral Home's & Crematory LLC - Bowling Green  
606 West Main Street  
Bowling Green, MO 63334  
(573) 324-2211  
office@bibbveach.com  
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## Burial

AUG **26** (CT)

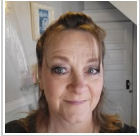
Indian Creek Memorial Gardens Cemetery  
New Hartford, MO 63359

# Tribute Wall

MG

“ Eugene "Deke" Edwards made our world a better place to live. God bless him!

Mary Garvine - September 10, 2023 at 12:26 AM



“ I didn't know Durward personally, I have heard many stories from My Dad Charles Weatherford. He always thought very highly of Durward and his stories of him brought smiles. I know he will be missed.

Rhonda Florez - September 07, 2023 at 04:43 PM



“ So sorry for your loss! Deke was always a good friend to my dad. Remembering him talking about his roses... and how the neighbors thought it was strange when he pattered around the garden in the dark! And then the stories of the trip they took to Vegas! So many memories!



Cristy Wheeler - August 28, 2023 at 07:21 PM

MS

“ We grew up miles apart and seldom visited with our cousins, but we knew Eugene was admired and praised for the person he was and his outstanding accomplishments throughout his life by the family. What I remember most about him is thinking how happy he always seemed to be. Our mother, his aunt, was very proud of him. Melva Stewart

melva stewart - August 24, 2023 at 08:30 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Durward Eugene "Deke" Edwards.*



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August 23, 2023 at 03:35 PM