

**G.E. "Shag" Grossnickle**, passed at age 100, April 25, 2016, in Kirksville, Missouri. And what a legacy this well-spoken, humorous and stately gentleman left as son, brother, husband, father, Papa, public servant, sportsman and raconteur. He was from another era, and he was steady of hand and steady of mind until the end.

Shag was born on June 3, 1915, to parents Albert and Effie Grossnickle in a small house a stone's throw from the river in Carlisle, Iowa. The next to youngest of ten children, he was raised in a family with little materially, but full of joy and good character, which he was known for to the end of his days. His parents were his heroes and were a great influence on him throughout his life, telling him "your word is your bond", and to be honest and do whatever he thought was right.

He graduated from Carlisle High School in **1935**, and was scouted by the Chicago Cubs but decided to stay with his folks a little longer; a wise choice, as things turned out. He eventually ended up attending Kirksville State Teachers College (now Truman State University) on a scholarship to play football, basketball and track, but it was softball that was to be the catalyst for several turning points in Shag's life. He graduated in 1942 but was called into WWII service in April making him one month shy of the May Commencement services. He served part of his tour of duty in the U.S. Navy as the Chief Petty Officer in the physical education program for the Navy Reserve Training Center in Newport R.I. and was later transferred to the Great Lake Naval Base in Chicago.

Later when he returned to Kirksville, he yearned to walk across that stage each year when he saw the students graduating. Over fifty years later, Shag proudly received his official sheepskin from Truman State president Russell Warren who arranged for him to lead graduation procession in 1993.

And now to softball. His brother Basil gave Shag his nickname in honor of his ability to shag fly balls. In Southeast Iowa and Northeast Missouri Shag was well known for his fast pitch softball. In 1938 a doctor and avid softball coach who had heard of the Carlisle boy over 140 miles away, recruited Shag aggressively for a community softball team in Kirksville MO, offering room and meals at the hospital and a chance to attend college if he would come and play softball in the summers. Shag thought about it and decided he would give it a try, so at twenty-one, he was off to a new life in a new town. And what a good decision it was. He always said softball gave him an education and a wife.

While there, Shag coached and managed a girls' softball team, the Kirksville All-Stars, all the way to the 1941 State Championship. The pretty blue-eyed catcher caught his eye, and after a four-year courtship, they were married on April 2, 1942. It was a lifelong love affair that continued for Shag though Sarah died in 2011. He always said they never had a cross word. In 1949, Shag began the first of many years of service to Adair County in various positions. As Sheriff (1949-1957), he would call cornered thieves out by name if he knew them and often chose to mentor rather than arrest wayward young people, taking them home instead of jail, and telling their

parents to take care of it. He said he carried a badge, not a gun--the gun was in the car. He once co-operated with the FBI in a stake-out ending in the apprehension of the murderer of a family of five with a relative in the area. He had a few close calls and upheld the peace and dignity of the county. He was also County Assessor (1958-1966), and Public Administrator (1973-1980). He helped to organize the Northeast Missouri Peace Officers Association and was its first president. Shag was an avid sportsman. Growing up on the banks of the Des Moines River, and with a large family to be fed, he learned to hunt and fish, becoming an excellent shot. In fact, at age 98, he killed his limit while duck hunting, missing only one shot. While hunting in southern Missouri in 1960, he saw his first wild turkey and wondered why he didn't see them in Northeast Missouri. Through diligent efforts he brought wild turkeys back to his area. It all started with the delivery of twenty birds, with Shag handfeeding them at first, but Adair County had its first open season on wild turkeys in 1967. For these efforts in northern Missouri, the Missouri Conservation Commission honored him by bestowing upon him their highest honor in 2005: Master Conservationist. Later, he was recognized for his conservation accomplishments when he was inducted into the 2012 Missouri Sports Hall of Fame, and during the same ceremony his son Gary was recognized for his football talents while playing for the University of Missouri. They were the first father and son to be inducted at the same time.

He thoroughly enjoyed nurturing young people and did so throughout his life. He helped establish the Kirksville Baseball Association in 1953 and has sponsored age 7-8 Little League teams for over fifty years. He was still sponsoring these "Shag's Teams" at the time of his death. He started the DeMolay youth organization of the Masonic Lodge and served as Den Dad. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge and all its bodies, including the Shriners. He served as president of both Greenwood Elementary and Junior High School's PTAs. After his wife's passing, he added to her memorial by creating the Shag and Sarah Grossnickle Scholarship which is awarded to a Truman State University student with a calling to work with the young people at the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), where Shag was a longtime member, and served as a deacon and head of the Men's Division.

Shag had the pleasure of being honored many times in his life. He was a charter member of the Kirksville Baseball Hall of Fame, the Kirksville Lodge of the Loyal Order of the Moose, and the El Kadir Shrine Wildlife Hall of Fame. He joined the Kiwanis Club in 1945 and was a lifelong member. He also was a member of the Kirksville Jaycees, United Way, YMCA, and the Red Cross. He served as secretary of the Kirksville Chamber of Commerce Committee and was elected to the Chamber's Hall of Fame in 1992. He served on several Boards of Directors: Grim Smith Hospital and Clinic, Northeast Regional Medical Center, First National Bank/Bank Midwest, and K-REDI (Kirksville Regional Economic Development Inc.) For his work with hospitals, Shag received the Excellence in Governance Award (1998) from the Missouri Hospital Association and was instrumental in the consolidation of the two hospitals in Kirksville which took more than 2 1/2 years to complete. In 2010 he was honored with the Andrew Taylor Still University Spirit

award. In 2015 the Kiwanis Club of Kirksville dedicated the Inclusion Park in Kirksville and honored Shag.

Shag stayed connected with his alma maters. He regularly attended his high school class reunions in Iowa and was elected as a charter member of the Carlisle High School Hall of Fame. He also helped to start the Bulldog Booster Club and the Kirksville Quarterback Club of Northeast Missouri State University, now Truman State University. He helped to establish and write the bylaws of the Athletic Hall of Fame of NMSU in 1983 and served on the selection committee until his death. In 1984 he was elected to the NMSU's Hall of Fame.

He enjoyed successful and varied business opportunities in Kirksville over many years. He taught and coached at Kirksville High School, ran the Snappy Service Restaurant, and in 1965 became a partner with Les Orwiler in the Grossnickle-Orwiler Insurance Agency, now Grossnickle Insurance, with son John joining him in 1974. Shag continued to go to the office often until his passing, a familiar fixture in town, always perfectly turned out, sporting one of his many hats. He was a wonderful and sought-after storyteller who regaled his friends and family with fascinating takes and tales of the old days. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren liked nothing better than to be entertained by Papa Shag. Once he got going, he didn't want to stop, and no one wanted him to. He was that good.

Shag was married to wife Sarah Rose, had two brothers and seven sisters.