

E. Yager Marks



Yager Marks is number nine in a family of ten children. He was raised in Wolfstown, Virginia, and came to the Valley to attend Bridgewater College in 1962 after receiving an academic scholarship from the Armstrong Foundation. The \$4,000 covered nearly all of his college expenses. While working on his Bachelor of Science degree in biology, Mr. Marks also distinguished himself in sports. It was his accomplishments on the athletic fields of Bridgewater College that first brought Mr. Marks to the attention of Harrisonburg High School's Athletic Director Claude Warren.

In April of 1966, nearing graduation, he was invited to interview with Coach Warren. Mr. Marks' records in baseball and football were impressive. The interview went well, and after an hour of conversation, Mr. Marks became the new head baseball coach and JV football coach at HHS. There was also an opening for him as an 8th grade science teacher. "I found my niche, so to speak. I loved coaching and interacting with 8th graders." In 1969 he earned his M.S.Ed. at Madison College (JMU). He spent 12 years as the head baseball coach at HHS, two years as the head golf coach and he served as an assistant football coach for 14 seasons. He taught 8th grade physical science for 33 years. For 22 of those years, he team-taught with Ron Sours. Mr. Marks said, "Ron was a major part in my success as a teacher. I learned many teaching techniques from him. We evolved together as a team. *Marks and Sours* was really one word to many of our students."

After retiring in 1999, Mr. Marks returned mid-year in 2002 to Thomas Harrison Middle School to take over for a teacher who lost her battle with cancer. It was at this time that Greg Corder, who along with Michael Eye nominated Mr. Marks for today's award, was able to "pick the brain" of Yager Marks. Dr. Corder writes, "I attribute many of my skills in reaching students largely to the advice that he imparted during that time."

When asked about his thoughts on teaching, Mr. Marks said, "It is not the subject that you teach that students remember. It is how they felt as they sat in your class. I believed that each of my students was a genius and gifted in some way. If a student feels good about himself or herself, the rest is easy. There will be few discipline problems." He added, "Learning can be fun. Have a sense of humor. Be able to laugh at yourself. Humor, a story, surprise, a joke or magic is a wonderful way to bring students back to the lesson of the day. The attention span of an 8th grader is short. Have a backup plan. Science is a subject that involves hands-on activities. Labs and demonstrations are fun for the students. Love what you do and do what you love. You can never fake it!"

Mr. Marks holds these honors:

- Thomas Harrison Junior High School's *Model Teacher* (November 16, 1987)
- Thomas Harrison Middle School's *Outstanding Teaching* (May 22, 1990)
- 1991 *Excellence in Teaching* award at Thomas Harrison Middle School (June 10, 1991)
- Named to the *Bridgewater Athletic Hall of Fame* (October 20, 2000)
- *Wharton, Aldhizer & Weaver Educator of the Year* nominee (June 4, 2002)

Today, May 28, 2009, Mr. Yager Marks is being named as the recipient of Harrisonburg Education Foundation's fourth annual *Retired Outstanding Teacher Award*. This award is sponsored by Summit Community Bank and is presented today by Dr. Greg Corder and Mr. Michael Eye.