



2010 Citizen of the Year - Alex Deka

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Created 07/19/2010 - 9:32am

Mon, 07/19/2010 - 9:32am — speterlin



Al Deka was born August 17th, 1929 in Cold Brook Twp in Ashtabula County. He was the third youngest of seven boys and two girls. Raised on a dairy farm during the Great Depression, attending a very modest one room school for the first two years. Al's father and some of the brothers left to earn money for the family in Cleveland. Al's mother stayed in Cold Brook to continue to tend to the farm and raise the rest of the family. In 1939, Al's mom decided the farm was too much to handle and moved to Cleveland - joining the rest of the family in a Slavic village neighborhood. Al attended Sacred Heart Catholic School from the third to the eighth grade. He attended a Cleveland trade school to become a tool and die maker until a teacher talked him into attending South High school. In 1945, at the age 16, Al enlisted into the Marines for the duration of World War II. He continued to serve in the Marine

Reserves for two more years. Al returned to South High as a junior where he became a star athlete in both football as an end and linebacker and as a baseball pitcher. As a football player he participated in the City Football Championship at the Cleveland Stadium in front of 48,000 fans. He also played in the City Baseball Championship at League Park, which was the last game played at that park. A football injury to his pitching arm cost him an opportunity to play professional baseball with the New York Giants along with a baseball scholarship to Ohio University. After high school, Al went to work at the Wellman's Company until he was drafted into the Army at the start of the Korean War. After basic training, he became a Corporal and was sent to leadership school. He was deployed as part of the Occupational Forces in Europe (Munich, Germany) for one and a half years. After the war, he went back to work at Wellman's to begin his highly successful 39 year career as a metallurgist engineer. Al married longtime Hinckley resident Delores Kasco in 1954, and built their home on land which was part of the Kasco farm. The Deka's have three children: son Tim, daughter, Mary Jo Halnar (husband Denny) and son Paul (wife Kristi) with twins Max and Ashley (Al's two grandchildren). Al's many Hinckley activities included being a Weblo scout leader. He also managed and umpired the Hinckley's Girl's Ponytail League for 8 years. He became an early founder and leader of a very active Hinckley Chamber of Commerce serving as a vice-president for two terms. His involvement with the Chamber led to many accomplishments which included the starting of the Buzzard Day celebration in 1957 at Ledge Park. He is known as Mr. Sausage for his 35 year commitment to the kitchen duties and sausage preparation for the Buzzard Day celebration which included all of his family members. He was a part of the Chamber group that negotiated a deal to have the Old Phoenix Bank come to Hinckley and share a building to include the first Post Office for the township (previously used a Brunswick address).

Al and the Chamber group helped build Bronger's Cabin and band stand. He also is one of the founding fathers of Our Lady of Grace Church, raising money to build the present day church. The church originally started its masses at what is now the Ascherl's Studios and then moved to the Hinckley Elementary School. Al had continued to stay active in the church as a long time volunteer, serving in many committees. Unfortunately in 1989, Al's wife Delores passed away after thirty five years of marriage. Al remains active, working part time as a consultant for American Friction Technology. Al still resides in the same home he built in 1954, and continues to enjoy traveling the country, golf and yard work and his family. Because of Al's longtime dedication and unselfish commitment to the community, the Citizen of the Year Committee would like to announce Alex Deka "The 2010 Hinckley Citizen of the Year". A framed picture of Al will be hung next to the citizen of the year plaque in the township meeting room. Al was honored at the Hinckley Memorial Day parade.

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