

Sylvester Everhart dies today at the age of 79

by Dave (Nellie) Clark

Sylvester I. "Steve" Everhart, 79, 227 South Third St., an educator and Boy Scout leader who helped mold the lives of hundreds and hundreds of youngsters throughout his long and distinguished career, lost his gallant battle for life at 4:20 a.m. today at the Decatur Community Care Center, following an extended illness.

Mr. Everhart, a well-respected man who also was active in the Boy Scouts of America for many years, retired from teaching on May 30, 1969, after almost half of century of service as a teacher, coach and principal. His educational career spanned 44 years.

At the time of his retirement, Mr. Everhart was serving as principal of the Southeast Elementary School. He was the first principal of the school, beginning in that capacity from the school's construction in 1960 and serving there until he retired nine years later.

Always a friend to the community's youth, the soft spoken and articulate educator told the successor, Gary Gressler: "I served nine years as principal. I wish I could serve nine more!" Gressler remembered when Mr. Everhart retired from his educational career.

"Steve" as he was known to his countless number of friends, in addition to being soft-spoken and mild mannered, led by example. he was such a well-respected man and so well thought of by the community that the Decatur City Council named the street in front of Southeast Elementary School after Mr. Everhart - "Everhart Drive" - more than a decade ago.

Mr. Everhart also was honored in May of 1969 at a reception at Southeast, hosted by the PTA. Some 200 friends and members of the his family attended the event in the school's gymnasium on a rainy Sunday afternoon to pay tribute to a man who gave so much of himself as an educator.

He began his teaching career in a one room school in Monroe Township back; he taught all eight grades. Later, he began teaching at the Monroe school where he taught grades four through six for a four year period. In 1929 he taught at the Central School in Decatur, then later at the newly-constructed Junior Senior High building (now Belmont Junior high School) as a junior high and high school teacher. He taught health, physical education, safety and student driver's training (approximately 20 years in that field alone). He also served as elementary physical education teacher, junior high coach, and later coached the fifth and sixth grade basketball team at Southeast, while he was principal there.

The educator also is well-remembered here for the many years of service he gave his community as recreational director at Worthman Field, when the city's recreational money came from the five-cent recreation levy in the school fund.

He also was director of the popular Den, a youth canteen, which was located on Madison St., where the American Legion has a parking lot at the present time. The Den closed in the early 1950s.

While "Steve" was a well-known educator here he always had a very warm spot in his hear for the Boy Scouts of America. He was quite active in Scouting for half a century, beginning that service in 1930. He managed the Boy Scout cabin for many years and was Scoutmaster of the Rotary troop for a

number of years. Mr. Everhart was honored with the Silver Beaver Award in 1940, an award he received from the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America for his untiring work in the Anthony Wayne Council. The Boy Scout leader also was awarded the Scoutmasters Key in 1938, the Council Emblem in 1955, and the Award for God and My Country, a four-year program award, back in 1958.

He was the third county resident to receive the Silver Beaver award. Carl C. Pumphrey and Bryce Thomas also were recipients of the honor.

Many adults today will remember that he led a number of groups of Boy Scouts to the Philmont Scout Camp in New Mexico; Beaver Island, Mich., Munuscong Bay, Mich., and Washington, D.C. He accompanied Scout troops from Decatur to Big Island many times, and helped in organizing new Scout and Cub troops in Decatur. He was coordinator and leader of the contingent of Scouts to National Jamborees in Valley Forge, Pa.; Irvine Ranch, Calif.; and Colorado Spring, Colo.

A tireless worker, Mr. Everhart arranged numerous Scout banquets and served as a Scoutmaster for Rotary Club Boy Scout Troop 61 in Decatur, 1931-35. He also was a District Commissioner member of the Anthony Wayne Boy Scouts of America, 1935-42, a member of the Camporee staff of the Limberlost District, 1936; an Anthony Wayne District Commissioner, 1943-74, and committee chairman of Boy Scout Troop of the First United Methodist Church, 1963-78; and committeeman for the same group, 1978-83.

The Boy Scout cabin in Hanna-Nuttman Park at Camp Quinn was officially dedicated Oct. 19, 1940 and Mr. Everhart, Carl C. Pumphrey, and Lloyd Cowens were named trustees. It has been used by thousands of Scout since that time.

Active in the affairs of the First United Methodist Church for many years, Mr. Everhart served on various boards of the church. He served on the Boy Scout committee of the church's Scout troop since its inception, was on the Official Board, served as a chairman of the Board of Trustees, and was head usher for many years.

Both Mr. Everhart and his wife, Justine, formerly served as trustees of the Decatur Public Library, both in the position of secretary. He also served on the Centennial Pageant Committee in 1936.

Born in Adams County on Nov. 12, 1903, he was the son of Absolom Everhart, a carpenter who lived to be 91 years of age, and Sarah Johnson-Everhart. "Steve" was married to Justine Zerkel on June 15, 1930; she survives. Also surviving are two daughters, Mrs. Janet Torson, route 3 (Roe Acres), and Mrs. Larry (Janelle) Rensberger, route 3, Decatur; and six grandchildren. One brother preceded him in death.

Services will be conducted Thursday at 11 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church, with Rev. Philip Hillsamer officiating, assisted by Rev. Dennis Rush. Burial will be in the Decatur Cemetery. Friends may call at the Winteregg-Linn & Haggard Funeral Home after 7 p.m. today, all day Wednesday, and then at the church one hour prior to services Thursday. Preferred memorials are to the First United Methodist Church and the Boy Scouts of America. Masonic services will be held at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday.