Rick Callahan gave back as a true role model
By Tom Wilson
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Hundreds who knew him or were blessed to cross paths along the way remain shocked and saddened over the sudden passing of one of Galesburg’s best sons Richard “Rick” James Callahan. Rick passed away Sunday, July 20 in Denver.

Rick was born in Galesburg, the son of Edward and Audrey Callahan, in August 1946. He attended Silas Willard Grade School, Lombard Junior High and graduated with high scholastic honors from Galesburg High School in 1964.

He will long be remembered as a standout basketball player for three seasons on Silver Streaks teams that won 62 games and qualified for the state finals in 1963 and 1964. In 1964 Rick connected on 13 consecutive free throws, leading Galesburg to a super-sectional victory over Springfield Lanphier. GHS coach John Thiel declared that the 63-64 Silver Streaks “was one of the smoothest functioning and best teams in the history of Galesburg High basketball.” Callahan’s teammates included Mike Davis, Frank Dexter, Larry Doyle, Marv Harris, Dave Lundstrom, Bernel Cowan and Mike McCreight. In his senior year Rick was elected homecoming king and earned the prestigious Gerald D. Phillips Award for his scholastic and athletic accomplishments.

Following his graduation from GHS, Callahan was awarded a full scholarship to play basketball at the University of Denver. Rick starred on the basketball court and achieved high honors in the classroom. What he chose to do in his first few days at college can be traced to his positive family ties and athletic experiences in his hometown Galesburg.

When Rick arrived at the University of Denver he quickly realized that one of his freshmen teammates would be Harry Hollines, one of the most recruited high school basketball players in the country. Ironically his high school team was Denver Manual of Colorado. Although Callahan and Hollines had little in common they became instant friends. At that time Denver had a policy that whites roomed with whites and blacks roomed with blacks, but the new friends decided they wanted to room together.

Although the university, especially the basketball coach, was a bit reluctant, their request was eventually settled satisfactorily and the two future Denver basketball stars became inseparable. Following graduation from Denver the former Silver Streak from Galesburg was awarded a NCAA post-graduate scholarship and earned a law degree.

While a member of a Denver law firm Rick met his wife Sue. His college roommate Harry Hollines eventually became director of Skyland Recreation Center and recruited Rick to coach a group of underprivileged grade school boys. One of the young boys that Rick and Sue helped was Chauncey Billups who eventually would enjoy a professional basketball career.

Rick’s love and caring for young kids led to a 20-year period of coaching at Skyland Recreation Center. Both Rick and Sue’s dedication touched the lives of hundreds of youth in a most positive fashion. In the mid-1990s the Callahan’s opened the Patterson Historic Inn in Denver.

Rick Callahan and wife Sue were in Galesburg a few weeks ago to attend the 50th Anniversary of the Galesburg High School Class of 1964. Rick never forgot where he came from or his family and friends in Galesburg. Rick Callahan demonstrated over and over since hanging up his Silver Streaks basketball uniform that he “has been and hopefully will be forever a role model for the youth of Galesburg.”

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