



# City of Brooksville

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 26, 2017

The “Great Brooksvillian of the Year” is an award program established by the City of Brooksville, Florida in 2002, whereby distinguished individuals are nominated by citizens to be recognized and honored for their significant contributions to the history, culture and/or economy of our community or have had connections and/or ties to our community.

This year, William “Ernie” Chatman, Jr., was chosen from many nominations and the voting process was completed by the Brooksville City Council on Monday, August 21, 2017. The “*Great Brooksvillian of the Year*” award ceremony and reception in the recipient’s honor is held each year. This year’s ceremony will be on Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. at City Hall, 201 Howell Avenue, Brooksville, Florida.

Here is a little information you may or may not have known about William “Ernie” Chatman, Jr....

Coach Chatman was born in 1949 and moved to Brooksville, Florida, at age 3. He was a Hernando High School Graduate, a teacher, mentor, coach, friend and helping hand to all who knew him.

He was known to most as “Coach Chatman”, having coached baseball for his alma mater, Hernando High, for 12 years, cross country for 28 years, softball for 5 years, track and field for 5 years, boys’ basketball for 5 years and 9 years as Hernando High’s athletic director.

While coaching at Hernando High School, Coach Chatman led the Hernando boys cross country team to a state title, coached several softball teams to the state finals, holds the school-record for season wins in basketball and softball. Coach Chatman collected 21 conference championships, 18 district titles, and 11 regional titles. He was named Conference Coach of the Year three times in baseball, 10 times in cross country, once in basketball, three times in softball and twice in track. The Tampa Tribune named Coach Chatman as the Baseball Coach of the Decade (1975-1985) and Coach of the Year eight times in Baseball, Basketball and Cross Country. The St. Pete

Times named him Coach of the Year nine times in Baseball, Cross Country and Softball and the “Most Influential Person in Hernando County Sports” in 2002.

While coaching for the Hernando Youth League, Coach Chatman coached the Dixie Majors to three state championships and a World Championship in 1983, the Hernando Youth League Girls Fast-pitch Softball team to a State Championship and third place finish in the World Series in 1997.

Coach Chatman also coached the Saint Leo University baseball team to a program record 46 wins in 1984, and coached at two other local schools; Hernando Christian Academy 2009-2011 and Nature Coast Technical High School in 2013/14. He was the private pitching coach to hundreds of young Hernando, Citrus and Sumter County athletes.

Many of us remember seeing Coach Chatman on his daily run on the streets of Brooksville. As an avid runner, he completed 104 marathons—at least one in all 50 states and Washington D.C., and at least two in 46 states—and jogged every day for 8,814 consecutive days. He was given the Key to the City of Brooksville in 2004, inducted into the Florida Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2004, the Hernando High School Sports Hall of Fame in 2011 and most recently in 2017 the Florida High School Athletic Hall of Fame.

Each accomplishment, whether a state, conference, district or regional title or a state final, winning season, or a team championship, is a testament to and recognition of his dedication and service to others. Coach Chatman never discussed one of his records or wins without quickly deflecting the attention and praise to the young athletes and his assistant coaches that he molded.

He was strategic, but bold; tough, but kind-hearted; stoic, but nurturing; and, humble, but proud. Each of these characteristics made him a one-of-a-kind coach, man, and most of all, husband, father, grandfather and brother.

Coach Chatman would be the first to tell you his biggest accomplishment, and greatest source of pride, was his family. He was the strong, oldest bother to his five brothers and sisters, to whom he became a father-figure and mentor after the passing of their parents. He was the rock, and yin to the yang of his life-long-love and wife of nearly 44 years, Linda. He was the perfect dad and a hero to his three children, Erin, Beth, and Bret, who respected, admired, and could never disappoint him. And, he was “Big E”, the larger-than-life grandfather to six young grandchildren, who lit up with joy and excitement when he entered a room. For six decades, he coached his

family through life's ups and downs with the perfect mix of tough-love, reality, and compassion.

After his passing on July 24, 2016, Coach Chatman is remembered not as a man measured by the things he collected, but by the lives he touched and positively impacted. By that measure, William "Ernie" Chatman set a high-bar. He had integrity, compassion, drive, vision, faith, hope, honesty and never gave up on anyone. He was truly a "Great Brooksvillian", deserving the honor of being bestowed the 2017 Great Brooksvillian award.

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