



## Richard A. Lawinger

July 30, 1952 - July 21, 2020

Mineral Point - Richard A. Lawinger, age 67, of Mineral Point, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at Upland Hills Nursing and Rehab in Dodgeville.

He was born to Bill and Helena (Salzmann) Lawinger on July 30, 1952. He grew up on a Dairy Farm south of Mineral Point where the value of hard work was instilled in him at a very early age by his father and his overwhelming kindness to people by his mother. His youth consisted of hard work alongside his parents, brothers and sisters, his proud accomplishments as an Eagle Scout and his love for the outdoors that was given to him by his Grandpa Will. In 8th grade his father sold the cows and free time presented the opportunity for sports. At that point hard work, determination, and his natural ability to analyze a situation set the stage for his success throughout life.

Rich attended St. Mary's Catholic grade school and graduated from Mineral Point High School where his passion and commitment for anything he decided to do was showcased. He first stepped foot on a wrestling mat as a Freshman in High School for Coach Al Bauman, his Senior year he finished the 1969-70 season undefeated and captured the state title at 145 pounds. His drive and the support he had from all of those around him to achieve his goals also earned him the honor of being the Pepsi all American athlete.

Richard was the first in his family to attend college. He was fortunate enough to share the experience with his brother Steve who would soon join him not only in college but also as a UW Badger wrestler. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where his forever lasting friendship began with head wrestling coach Duane Kleven, assistant coach Russ Hellickson and countless teammates and the foundation was created for Wisconsin Wrestling. Richard became Wisconsin's first National Champion in wrestling in 1974. A Big Ten Conference champion in both his junior and senior seasons, he was a three-time team MVP and ranks fourth in UW history with an .882 career winning percentage (130-17-1). He also won a bronze medal in freestyle wrestling at the 1973 World University Games. After graduating from UW-Madison he went on to teach at River Valley School District and followed his competitive wrestling career by coaching at River Valley High

School from 1974 to 1980. As a coach at River Valley, he motivated his team to the state's No. 1 dual meet team in 1978 and 1979. One of his greatest accomplishments was the group of friends, fans, and supporters who would become his lifelong family that he was eternally grateful for.

Richard was a natural motivator and his ability to inspire you to reach your goals was unmatched. He believed in you and he made you believe in yourself. To all those that were fortunate enough to know him along his journey through life, he believed he was truly the fortunate one for having crossed paths with you.

He was an active member of St. Mary's & Paul's Catholic Church. He is a member of both the UW Athletics Hall of Fame and the Wisconsin Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the George Martin Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1983 and the UW Athletic Hall of Fame in 2016.

Richard went on to share his passion for farming with his brother Nick for over 20 years as they raised hogs together. The value of hard work and determination they both acquired from their father and mother continued throughout this time as they grew their business to over 13 locations across Southwest Wisconsin. After leaving the farming business Rich found himself in another profession he not only excelled in but had the passion and drive for while working for Lawinger Law Office in Vandalia, IL founded by his sister Jane. The incredible contribution of knowledge he provided to the clientele of Lawinger Law Office for 13 years as a paralegal was apparent in the outcome of their cases. His loyalty and kindness toward his co-workers and individuals he met along the way created lasting friendships. During this time in Vandalia he also had the privilege to be a part of his niece Miranda and nephews Alex and Gabe (godson) childhood and that added such joy to his life.

Rich found real joy in having great conversations with individuals he would cross paths with and was always more interested in learning about their life and what brought joy to them. He enjoyed watching his grandchildren's sporting events, attending area wrestling matches with his childhood teammates and friends, spur of the moment outings with his niece Tammi, visiting sister Patti for Coffee at the Red Rooster, hayrides at sister Ann's, cookouts with brother Billy, catching up on the latest "chit chat" with family and friends, playing Sunday night cards with Aunt JoAnn and cousin Annie Weier, and countless stories told with his brothers and his son Adam at family gatherings.

Above all, Richard most enjoyed his family and friends. His greatest joy was being a father, a Grandpa, and Great Grandpa. Rich shared his value of hard work and love of the

outdoors with his son Adam, his nephew Alex and was just beginning to with his grandson Bo. His time spent hunting and fishing with his son Adam was one of his greatest loves in life. He found great joy in discussing his shared love of farming with his grandson Earl. His sense of humor shared with his son Adam and grandson Bo could have you laughing for hours, and usually at something only they really thought was funny. His passion and competitiveness for sports created a special bond with his grandson Bo and is seen in his grandsons Jarren, Dawson and Dreydon. He would come to life every time he watched his grandchildren on the court, on the field and most definitely on the mat. His foundation of hard work and kindness is so apparent in his granddaughters Tessa, Destiny, Daelynn, Danika and his great grand-daughter Aubri Jo. The world is a kinder place and his love for life continues through all of his grandchildren, his great-grandchild and his children.

Richard is survived by his children, AmyBeth (Kyle) Levetzow (Tessa, Bo and Earl), Adam (Tami) Lawinger (Tera and Great Granddaughter Aubri), Tara (Chris) Hill (Destiny, Dawson, Daelynn, Dreydon and Danika), and Kimberly (Larry Hawkins) Lawinger (Jarren, Marley and Madeea); sister Patti (David) McKinley (Matt, Mandy and Mike); brother Steven Lawinger; sister Laura (Gary) Jenkins; Nick (Margo) Lawinger (Nick Jr., Nichole and Curtis); Ann (John) Trace (Tammi, Travis, Trisha and Trevor); Jane Lawinger (Miranda, Alex and Gabe); Billy (Patti) Lawinger (Elizabeth and Hannah). Adored Great Nieces and Nephews, Brittanie, Heather, Kayla, Keaton, Taylor, Lexie, Jaxson, Theresa, Trysten, Trianna, Treven, Trinity, Trenton, Jackson, Gavin, Serena, Scarlett, Monte, Berkley, Blair, Bentley, Landon, Remy. Great-Great Niece Marley.

Richard is preceded in death by his parents, twin sisters Mary Beth and Mary Helena, nephew Will and his very special friend Patricia Schmidt.

A Public Visitation will be held from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Friday, July 24, 2020 at the GORGEN-McGINLEY & AYERS FUNERAL HOME in Dodgeville. With COVID 19 concerns in mind, friends and family attending are encouraged to wear face masks and apply social distancing as a safety precaution. If you don't wish to travel, or if you have special memories of Rich, please consider leaving the family a short message on the funeral home website.

Saturday's Private Family Mass will be live streamed at 11:00 a.m. at the following link: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Religious-Organization/Congregation-of-St-Marys-St-Pauls-113542338679461/>

# Cemetery

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# Events

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## St. Mary's Cemetery

700 Dodge Street

Mineral Point, WI,

**JUL**  
**24**

**Visitation**

05:00PM - 08:00PM

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Gorgen-McGinley & Ayers Funeral Home

400 East Grace Street, Dodgeville, WI, US, 53533

# Comments

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“ PRAYERS AND HUGS FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS. Rich assisted us in starting a career in the restaurant business, he was a hard working good man. Rest in Peace friend

**Betty & Roger Roe** - July 27, 2020 at 06:42 PM

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“ Rick and I were in the 1970 recruiting class in Duane Kleven's first season. As roommates and teammates the first two years, we got to know each other well. Rick was always considered family, including his son Adam. I wrestled and played football, but never saw anyone as competitive as Rick. It was not surprising to see him win Nationals, he was just that competitive. Outside of sports, Rick was engaging and a great conversationalist. We will miss him dearly. Randy and Kate Frokjer

**Randy Frokjer** - July 26, 2020 at 04:43 PM

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“ Rick was a great teammate and workout partner. His work ethic and determination were infectious. Under the coaching leadership of Duane Kleven and Russ Hellickson, Rick was the guy on the mat that lifted the UW wrestling program to new heights, and he certainly helped lift my ability to compete on the mat. At the UW and at River Valley, he made a huge impact on the lives of those with whom competed and mentored. While we have lost this teammate and coach, the values that Rick instilled in all those whose lives he touched will go on and continued to be passed on.

Through the power of Christ, I look forward to catching up again with Rick one day. We will talk, laugh, and relax together. But no more drilling; at that point, we'll be perfected.

Craig Horswill

**Craig Horswill** - July 25, 2020 at 01:17 PM

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“ My sincerest condolences to the Lawinger family and the entire Wisconsin Wrestling community. When I walked into the Wisconsin wrestling room for the first-time, Rich was larger than life. He epitomized the culture at the time, which was a team looking for respect. He was not a ra-ra leader. Quite the opposite. But no one influenced me more than Rich...for a couple of reasons.

He was 100% committed. Not 80-90%; a 100%! He was hard-nosed tough, and he was from Wisconsin. He was the start of one of the greatest wrestling rooms ever!

I was a Sophomore when he won his title. He was runner up in 73 and was not going to risk winning a NCAA title for himself and UW. Jarod Hubbard from Michigan was back. His choice was to cut another 8 lbs. when making 150 was a challenge. There are only a few that understand what Rich did to win his title, but few more grateful than me. It was UW's first and he proved it could be done! He set the table for a slew of wrestlers that won it; after him.

He also went on to win a lot as a HS coach and positively influence hundreds of kids.

Rich didn't smile a lot during the season. But, when he had a full belly, he had quite the personality.

I will miss him.

Pat Christenson

Pat Christenson - July 25, 2020 at 12:59 PM

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“ My condolences to the Rick Lawinger Family, on Rick's passing. I will be forever indebted to Rick for his Leadership, Motivation, and Friendship in help make me and many many others, better people. I Wrestling for Rick for the first 4 years of his Coaching Career, out of those 4 years, 3 of them were spent on Ricks Varsity Team, 167lbs, in 1976, and 185 in 1977 and 1978. Rick took a less then Average Wrestler at best, and as a JR ,in 1977, I was in the Conference Finals, along with many other teammates, two of those teammates were my Brothers , Bill at 138, and Henry at 155. What a Cherish moment, 3 Brothers in the Conference Finals, because of the Motivation and Leadership of Rick and his Wrestling Program, Rick believed in Team and in Family. Ricks practices built your character of self belief and team belief, through hard work consisting of drilling moves till you could do them in your sleep, and conditioning by running, line drills, sprinting on the whistle , monkey rolls for up to 16 minutes plus at one time , to Wrestling with Top National UW Wrestlers. He started the Wrestle Backers Club at River Valley, which had all the Community involved in the Sport, home matches had standing room only, hundreds and hundreds of people. How could we not be successful with that type of Leadership. Rick was such a Motivator, in Wrestling for sure , but also in Life. Rick remained a close freind to my family after Wrestling, having an office for his Pig Operation, down at my Parents House,(Norm +Pat Jennings) that had an attached Apartment , and he attend gatherings that we would have, to having coffee and great conversations. The confidence Rick, built inside a person, helped Excell his Wrestling in their careers, beyond average, to Excellence. Rick , On behalf of your 1978 Wrestling Team and all the other teams you Coach, THANK YOU, for making us Better People. And THANK YOU to your Family for sharing you with us. Because emotion were running high and no one could talk you wrote on the chalkboard down in the locker room after State in 1978, at midnight. ( Always Remember Each other, ) Because of you we will forever have a bonded Brotherhood with each other and you my Friend are forever our Leader. We all Love You! and will Miss you. Until we meet again, and we can Wrestle each other, Enjoy Heaven , with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Joe Jennings Family

Joe Jennings - July 25, 2020 at 12:01 PM

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“ That smile. A great and loyal friend. Miss you buddy.

Ray Schutz - July 25, 2020 at 11:47 AM

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“ Thoughts and prayers to the family from McKeown family

mary mckeown - July 24, 2020 at 10:24 PM

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“ My deep condolences extend to the Lawinger family. Personally, I never met a more disciplined, focused, driven warrior with such Spartan traits. I was one of the few fortunate wrestlers to have been his teammate while competing for Mineral Point High School. Rich, through his example of fierce determination and focused performance, taught those around him to compete to the best of their ability. He was truly an inspiration exhibiting intense focus and confidence. He made one believe in oneself...as an athlete and later as a coach at River Valley High School. My friend fought the good fight, he ran the good race, and in his greatest triumph, he captured the Final Victory. May Rich now have his Rest In Peace as Eternal Light shines upon him in the Love and Grace of our Heavenly Father. 🙏🏻🕊️

Fred Rideout - July 24, 2020 at 09:16 PM

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“ My sincere condolences to Rick's family. The Wisconsin wrestling community has indeed lost one of its great wrestlers and coaches. But his legacy goes beyond his wrestling accomplishments as evidenced by his obituary and the other comments given here. As a former teammate, what I remember most about Rick were his intensity, dedication, work ethic and trademark smile. I know he will be greatly missed but fondly remembered by many.

Jerry Guth

Jerry W Guth - July 24, 2020 at 07:39 PM

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“ My sympathy goes out to the entire Lawinger family. Rich was an inspiration to all us MP wrestlers that followed. We all benefited from the legacy he left at the UW. If there were recruits at a weight that a Pointer was being recruited. The Pointer had the upper hand. My older brother Dan still talks about how much he learned from Rich during a summer Rich came home from college and turned their farms milk parlor into a wrestling room. Rich would work out at night with Dan and others after bailing hay.

I also see first hand how Rich transformed RV wrestling during his tenure. What a coach!

#### Favorite Pic

The NCAA champions picture when Rich won the NCAA. Rich was to the far right front row kneeling looking up and over to Hubbard in the far left second row. Both looking at each other, both with a big smile. (Could not find pic, but I seen it every day in the UW wrestling room.)

We will miss you Rich!

Mark, Jody and the Schmitz crew

**Mark Schmitz** - July 24, 2020 at 07:29 PM

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“ Our deepest sympathies to Rick's family as they grieve. Thanks for leading the way for UW Badgers in earning their first national champion. I was motivated to follow in his foot steps and earned the Badgers second national championship. The bond of wrestling has stayed with us throughout the years as a shared friendship til now.

Some day we will meet again and our bodies will be renewed by Christ and we can take to the mats again! Jack and Doreen Reinwand

**Jack Reinwand** - July 24, 2020 at 07:07 PM

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“ How blessed I was to have him as a coach and later as a close friend. Rick was a master at turning boys into men. He motivated people not only on the mat but also the entire community Spring Green Wisconsin School District. To take a high school wrestling program that was just mediocre to the powerhouse that River Valley became was a remarkable task and all this as a young man in his twenties. We can go on and on with the accolades and there are many. I was one of the fortunate ones, I really got to know Rick on a personal level away from wrestling and helping build his farm after coaching.

I really owe so much to him and his family for allowing him to dedicate his self to all of us/me. Rick never forgot his roots or his hometown of Mineral Point WI. He'd often share with me lessons taught to him from his coach/friend Al Bauman. There are so many stories I can share. I feel honored and blessed to have those special memories.

God bless you Rick, we will shoot for takedowns in heaven someday. You will be missed and thank you.



Dieter Kaboth - July 24, 2020 at 03:45 PM

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“ my heart goes out to the family.i new all of them. there mother and father were one of the most hardest workers . all the kids are very strong people. i remember the boys were bulls on the mat. richard always smiling and laughing so much fun to be around. i was nicks friend in school he was a sweet guy to. we would walk from st.pauls to his house and then i would walk to galles body shop. thinking of you nick and you family . paula kearns

PAULA MITCHELL - July 24, 2020 at 03:28 PM

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“ Rainbow Reflections Basket was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 24, 2020 at 12:41 PM

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“ My sympathies to the Lawinger family. Rich was an inspiration to me as I went through my wrestling career. During his last years in mineral point we shared several wrestling memories that I truly enjoyed. God Bless!!  
Bob and Jody Cody

Jody Cody - July 24, 2020 at 09:32 AM

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“ Frances Roen lit a candle in memory of Richard A. Lawinger



Frances Roen - July 24, 2020 at 12:44 AM

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“ Rich and I had many fond conversations about my son and himself with scouting, what types of wine we both enjoyed, and talking about how his family grew up on the farm. Rich was a very kind, patient, and wonderful friend that I will miss forever.

Frances Roen - July 24, 2020 at 12:44 AM

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“ Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 24, 2020 at 12:16 AM

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“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 07:15 PM

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“ Guiding Light Bouquet was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 06:57 PM

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“ There are so many would not know where to start, Rich's family and ours spend so much time together. Rest in peace my friend.

**Jean Hartung-Newquist** - July 23, 2020 at 06:31 PM

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“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 05:57 PM

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“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 04:25 PM

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“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 03:43 PM

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“ I always enjoyed having open conversations with Rick for the insight and feedback he provided. He was always very nice to me. So humble and kind, even before my accident at RVHS. My condolences to his family, friends , and all those he impacted in so many ways. RIP and God Bless. Chris Riska & family.

**Chris Riska** - July 23, 2020 at 01:37 PM

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“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 12:27 PM

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“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 11:53 AM

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“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 11:15 AM

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“ Kim lit a candle in memory of Richard A. Lawinger



kim - July 23, 2020 at 08:43 AM

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“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 23, 2020 at 08:34 AM

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“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 22, 2020 at 06:27 PM

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“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 22, 2020 at 05:33 PM

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“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Richard A. Lawinger.



July 22, 2020 at 03:12 PM

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“ My husband and I thought a lot of Rich! So sorry to hear of his passing. He was a friendly, fun, interesting man! Our thoughts and prayers are with the Lawinger famiy!

**vicki choisser** - July 22, 2020 at 02:43 PM

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“ I am a classmate of Rich's from MPHS. He was a nice guy who was singled minded in his love of wrestling. To see, via tributes, how he excelled at the UW and at River Valley High School is a tribute to his perseverance and talent. I am sure he helped his wrestlers be the best they could be and brought honor to RVHS.

I remember him as someone who could take a joke and give one out as well! My mind's picture of him is with a smile on his face and a spark in his eye. It is possible I had a bit of a crush on him in high school!

The world lost a good man but he leaves a great legacy not only in the world of wrestling but also to a family who loved him.

**Jeanne Palzkill** - July 22, 2020 at 02:15 PM

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“ I worked for that wonderful man...I loved him like a brother...My gosh i had so much fun up there...He was my friend and loved the community...He will be greatly missed by this women...So sorry to the whole family...He was one of a kind

**marie siebert** - July 22, 2020 at 01:57 PM

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“ I first met Coach Lawringer at River Valley Jr. High School. He was the boys Junior high school gym teacher. I remember being struck by his obvious fitness and confidence. I was a Junior High School wrestler. I was very average, I lost as many times as I won.

Coach Lawringer began coaching High School wrestling. His first “project” was to promote a winning attitude at River Valley High School wrestling which began with a conditioning program geared towards dominance and state of the art wrestling techniques. He then, with the help of many others in the community began to promote River Valley Wrestling to the families of the River Valley school system with the goal of getting fan support and athletes for the wrestling program. Wrestling matches went from being viewed by dozens of fans to hundreds of fans in the matter of a few seasons.

Some of the people who attended the matches, I’m sure, were there to see the program fail. Coach Lawringer had promised big things for the program. Many thought his goals of beating our conference rivals like Richland Center and winning the conference were unattainable with the wrestlers he had to work with. To be sure Coach Lawringer had a talent for recruiting athletes from River Valley who had never touched the mat in their life and transforming them into state level competitors.

During my years at River Valley High School Star Trek was a popular T.V. program. I instantly drew parallels between Coach Lawringer and Captain Kirk. Coach Lawringer had the leadership qualities and charisma portrayed by Captain Kirk. Coach Lawringer encouraged loyalty, hard work, and commitment. His promise to us was simple, you work harder than anybody else and you commit to the program and I’ll make you the best wrestler you can be. Speaking for myself I went from a very average Junior High wrestler with low prospects of making the varsity wrestling team to wrestling for a state championship in just 4 years!

I am sad that Coach Lawringer passed but I want him and his family to know that he was loved and respected by many and his accomplishments and friendships will live on forever!



**Michael Bahr** - July 22, 2020 at 07:44 AM



“ I am a classmate of Mike and wrestled for Coach Lawringer with Mike. Mike already said it all. Mr. Lawringer was definitely a positive influence on my life. I crossed paths with Rich several times since high school, and every meeting was a pleasure. THE WORLD IS A LESSER PLACE WITHOUT HIM.

**Tony Wilson** - July 22, 2020 at 09:21 PM