

'Coach' James Sims dies Saturday at 82

By ED MAUEL
Sun Staff Writer

"Coach" died Saturday.

The formal way to say so is James A. Sims, Bernardino-born educator, coach and school administrator, died at Menifee Valley Medical Center, Sun City. He was 82.

For most of the boys who attended Perris Union High School between 1948 and 1969, Jim Sims was "Coach." Even the 11 years he was principal before he retired.

Not "Coach Sims." Just Coach. You couldn't mean anyone else.

He coached us in a lot more than athletics. Because none of us spent more than four years playing for him or in his physical education classes, none of us knows how many lives he kept on track or turned around.

He coached living and being a man as well as sports.

Coach was born in San Bernardino Oct. 15, 1910, and played all sports at San Bernardino High School. He went to San Bernardino Valley College and San Diego State College on a football scholarship. He was a tackle and place kicker.

He returned to coach at Valley from 1940 to 1942 before joining the U.S. Navy in World War II. He captained tank landing ships during several island invasions in the South Pacific and was discharged as a lieutenant commander.

He returned to Valley as a coach from 1945 to 1948, when he went to Perris High as athletic director, coach and physical education teacher.

One of his assistants, Dick Ad-

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air, became head basketball coach at San Bernardino High School for 30 years.

"Jim Sims was very instrumental in my life," Adair said Tuesday. "He was a wonderful man."

Adair took his first teaching and coaching jobs at Perris High School working for Sims as head basketball coach. When Adair was a student, Sims helped arrange a scholarship for him at San Diego State.

Adair said he learned how to relate to students from Sims: "Be fair, be honest, but give 'em hell when they get off track and then help them get back on the straight and narrow."

Another assistant coach and science teacher, John Mensinger, went on to become an administrator in the Riverside Unified School District. "(Sims) was just a big man, and he had a big heart," Mensinger said.

"He loved people and was proud of his boys and of his girls. If they succeeded, he succeeded."

Sims Field at the new campus he helped build and move into, is named for Coach.

In 1991, the Perris Union High School Alumni Association named him honorary alumnus of the year.

Coach is survived by his wife of 61 years, Mildred; a daughter, Margaret Haworth of Montana; a son, James E., and two grandchildren, Abigail and Nathaniel, all of Virginia; and a nephew, Douglas Sprague, of South Lake Tahoe.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Thursday at Evans Brown Sun City Chapel, Sun City.