

JIM LEMMON



PROFILE

Jim Lemmon died in 2020 at age 58, a victim of brain cancer, but not before leading the Castro Valley's girls basketball program to a decade of success, including a 33-3 run to the Northern California finals in 2016.

Winning was only part of the fun of coaching, those closest to Lemmon insist. "He coached because he loved to," observed former Castro Valley athletic director Andy Popper, who recruited Lemmon to coach at Monte Vista. (Lemmon died midway through his second year with the Mustangs.)

"Other than spending time with his family," Popper continued, "what brought him happiness was coaching. He wasn't ordinarily coaching his own kid. He wasn't coaching club. He wasn't coaching AAU. He just wanted to be an old ball coach. I think that's why people liked him and respected him and gravitated toward him. He just did it for the love of doing it."

A 28-year veteran of law enforcement who rose to the level of Lieutenant in the San Leandro Police Department, Lemmon enjoyed his children's participation in sports at least as much as his own coaching success, according to wife Carolyn.

Asked to identify what her husband would claim as his single-biggest career highlight, Carolyn responded: "I'd say it was a tie. In coaching, it was when they went to Sacramento (for the NorCal finals). But I'd also say it was when (youngest daughter) Jessica got to go to the (NCAA) tournament (in softball) when she was at Saint Mary's."

Also a Castro Valley Sports Hall of Famer, Jessica rode dad's tutelage to stardom in softball, basketball and soccer. Older sister Samantha also often played for dad in soccer and basketball. But it was like Jim Lemmon had more than two daughters, Jessica says.

"He really took the time to teach you all the basics," she gushed. "He pushed you in a way to reach your limits. He really cared for you as a person. You felt motivated. People wanted to play for him. It was like a family."