

## Robinson's Body to Lie in State Capitol Rotunda

Contributed by Darryl D. Smith - Black College Wire  
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Grambling cancels classes for day of funeral

"O' Grambling, dear Grambling," he sang. "We love thee dear, O' Grambling."

Alzheimer's disease left him with a short memory, but he did not forget a song that he held dear to his heart. Former Grambling State University Coach Eddie Gay Robinson, 88, died April 3 from complications of Alzheimer's.

Robinson's body is to lie in the state Capitol Rotunda in Baton Rouge, La., on Monday, April 9. On April 10, a wake is to be held

at New Rocky Valley Baptist Church in Grambling, La. On Wednesday, April 11, the funeral is scheduled for Grambling's newly constructed

assembly center.

"In recognition of the outstanding contributions that Coach Robinson made to the University, State, and Nation, all classes

scheduled for April 11, 2007 are cancelled," Provost Robert Dixon said in a statement. "The cancellation of classes will give all members of the University family the opportunity to attend the funeral services."

### RELATED STORY

With Robinson, "No Aspect of Your Life . . . Went Unattended"

Robinson was admitted to Lincoln General Hospital in Ruston, La., early on April 3 due to a "setback," according to his son,

Eddie Robinson Jr.

"His blood pressure was really low, but it's getting better," Robinson Jr. told the News-Star in Monroe, La. "That's a bright spot; it's gone up, so that's encouraging. It's kind of a wait-and-see thing."

Later that night, at 1 a.m., the News-Star reported that the Jackson, La., native had succumbed to Alzheimer's. Shock

waves

went through the Grambling community and the nation.

"It is impossible to measure fully the impact of Coach Robinson's life," said Horace Judson, president of Grambling State.

"He touched, shaped and inspired the lives of so many," he said. "His sterling example and great positivity influenced the

whole nation. Coach Robinson was a great American. As long as Grambling State University exists, as long as football is

played, as long as Americans remain patriotic, Coach Rob's spirit will live."

As Grambling State students heard the news, Facebook groups were created, dedicated to Robinson's legacy.

"Even though I go to Southern University, Eddie Robinson was a great man and the best black coach of any sport ever," said

one poster, Kristofer London.

Robinson is the second all-time winningest coach in Division I history, with 408 wins. Robinson compiled a 408-165-15 record

from 1941 to 1997. Robinson's 45 winning seasons included nine National Black College championships and 17 SWAC championships.

His 408 wins used to be the record for all-time wins in college football. It stood from the time Robinson retired in 1997 until 2003, when John Gagliardi of St. John's University in Minnesota broke it. Gagliardi has 443 wins to date and is still an active coach.

Many people do not relate to Robinson through his win-loss record, however, but to his record of training his players to be citizens.

Robinson saw more than 200 of his citizens become professional athletes in the NFL, a number that eludes many college

football coaches. One of those citizens was Doug Williams, one of the seven first-round draft picks out of Grambling.

Forced to retire in 1997 because of politics and a disgruntled fan base, Robinson became an icon in the Grambling community.

"Today we mourn the loss of a great Louisianan and a true American hero," said Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco. "Coach Eddie

Robinson became the most successful college coach of all time and one of the greatest civil rights pioneers in our history.

We will not only remember him . . . for his leadership and service to others, both on and off the field. Generations of Louisianans will forever benefit from Coach Robinson's fight for equality."

The Southwestern Athletic Conference also noted his death.

"The SWAC, its member institutions, student athletes and fans are truly in a moment of reflection and honor as we mourn a

great coach, great American and a great person in Eddie Robinson," said a statement from the SWAC. "To the SWAC, he was

simply great. He will be remembered and will truly be missed."

Robinson's impact is still being felt. The Eddie Robinson Stadium at Grambling State hosts home football games for both the university and Grambling High School during football season. It was also home to the 2005 SWAC soccer championships.

The city of Grambling has named its lone post office after him, selling commemorative stamps bearing his image. A paraphernalia shop still sells commemorative Coke bottles noting his 408 wins.

Grambling State expects to have an Eddie Robinson Museum built at the university this year, with Robinson memorabilia. Its creation was just recently approved by the University of Louisiana Systems.

"The entire football world will miss Eddie Robinson," said Roger Goodell, NFL commissioner. "His contributions will never be forgotten."

While most remember Robinson for his contributions, there is something else that Robinson loved to brag about.

"People talk about the record I've compiled at Grambling, but the real record is the fact that for over 50 years I've had one job and one wife," Robinson once told the News-Star. "I don't believe anybody can out-American me."

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Coach Eddie Robinson: "Learn to Stand Tall"

In November 2002, Black College Wire published this story about a university banquet and convocation honoring the legendary coach:

By De'Eric Henry

Grambling State University and its Student Government Association honored the winningest coach in college football Eddie G. Robinson with a banquet and convocation, and Robinson told those in attendance that, "you can be anything you would like to be, just pay the price and hang in there, because that's the way it is." He also advised students to "support the school and give back, because all I wanted to do is be a good American."

Robinson became the first African American coach to achieve 300 victories, and broke the record with 408 wins to become the winningest coach in college football. He also has 17 conference championships.

The Nov. 7 event began with a video presentation called "Pay the Price," featuring people who were inspired by Robinson and those who inspired him.

In the video, Robinson said, "students must get an education and a good GPA to remain on the team."

Robinson's mother, the late Lily Robinson, said in the video that Robinson had loved football since he was a boy. "I remember when he used to tackle me," she said.

"Robinson continues to carry the torch of good will," said Miss Grambling, Colandra Paige Dupree.

Adonis Ducre, the Student Government Association president, called Robinson a molder of men who had sent more than 200 players to the professional leagues.

"A lot of people have only heard of Robinson, and the convocation gives them a better understanding of our history," Ducre said.

Robinson graduated from the now-defunct Leland College in Baker, La., and received a master's degree from the University of Iowa. From 1941 to 1997, the Tigers were under his guidance, and he made Grambling an international name.

The Rev. E. Edward Jones Sr., the keynote speaker at the convocation, said Robinson was more than a football coach;

he coached basketball when there was a shortage of coaches in that sport.

Grambling's former president R.W.E Jones and Robinson formed a pair that "could conquer anything," Jones said.

In his address, Robinson said it has always been "Grambling, Grambling, Grambling" for him since 1941.

"Learn to stand tall, and when to cry and when to stop," he said. "Always keep Grambling's flag flying high and never let the flag hit the ground for dear old Grambling."

De'Eric Henry is a student at Grambling State University in Grambling, La., who writes for The Gramblinite. To comment, e-mail [bcwire@hotmail.com](mailto:bcwire@hotmail.com)

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