

Irving "Pete" Petross, Jr., (principal of Mumford High School from 1975-1986) was born February 21, 1926 in Canton, Illinois. He was the proud father of 6 beautiful children: Deidra, Gail, Jennifer, Lance, Candice, and Melissa.

Irving Petross attended Wethersfield High School in Kewanee, Illinois, where he was the only African-American in his class and excelled in sports. He earned Varsity Letters in football, basketball, and track and field. He was recognized for demonstrating exemplary leadership skills and thus he was appointed captain of the basketball team in his senior year. In addition to excelling in sports, he also played the saxophone. He graduated from high school in 1943.

From 1944 to 1946, Mr. Petross served in World War II in the United States Marine Corps, where he played as a quarterback for the football team while in the Marines. He was honorably discharged as a Corporal. After the war, he settled in Michigan where he attended Wayne University on a GI Bill. Because of his love and commitment to children and their development, he selected education as his major.

While at Wayne, he excelled in sports. He earned Varsity Letters in football (3 years), Varsity Letters in track (4 years), and was the captain of the track team in 1949. He graduated from Wayne University in 1950 with a Bachelor of Science degree in education. Pete continued to serve his country while both enrolled at Wayne and after graduation. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant at Wayne State's United States Air Force ROTC program. He later attended Squadron Officer's School (1953), Command and Staff School (1963) and Air War College (1974). He was assigned to the Air Force Reserve Unit (1952-73), additional Reserve Assignments (1973-78), and the Pentagon (1972-76). Pete was promoted to First Lieutenant (1953), Captain (1957), Major (1964) and Lieutenant Colonel (1971). After proudly serving his country since 1944, Pete retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel from the United States Air Force Reserves, he married the love of his life, Lois Ann Wingo.

Petross began his rapid ascension in the Detroit Public Schools by teaching at Chadsey High School (1958-1967) where he also coached football and track. In 1965, Pete earned his Master of Arts degree in Education from Wayne State University. He was a teacher and coach (football and track) at Mumford High School and was promoted to counselor (1967-1968). While at Mumford, he was recognized for his great leadership skills and earned a promotion to Physical Education Department Head while at the same time, coaching track and cross-country (1968-1970). Pete earned his Master of

Arts Degree in School Administration from the University of Michigan in 1971]. From 1970 to 1973, Pete was again promoted (Assistant Principal at Mumford). He also served as Assistant Principal at Henry Ford High School (1973-1975). In 1975, Pete was again promoted and he became the Principal of Mumford where he was the school's first African-American Principal. Pete believed whole-heartedly in leadership mentoring and training and thus groomed many who later went on to enjoy promising careers in the school system as educational leaders. After 11 years as the Principal of Mumford and after 34 years as a visionary and educational leader, he retired from the Detroit Public Schools in 1986. Petross was also a stellar track athlete in which he was a sprinter. He excelled in the 100 and 220 yard dashes and was a five time State Amateur Champion. While on the Wayne University track team, he ran on the 440- and 880-yard relay teams that won at the Penn Relays in near record time. Pete also ran anchored the Detroit Track Club's 880-yard relay team to a world indoor record. He was most proud of being inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame at Wayne State University in 1982.

After graduating from Wayne University, Pete began his outstanding educational career with the Detroit Board of Education. Because African-Americans were not offered contractual teaching positions in the 1950s, he became a substitute teacher. However, in 1954 he became one of the pioneers in Detroit's Public School system in that he received a permanent, contractual teaching position, one of only a handful of African-Americans to do so. He helped pave the way for other African-Americans to land employment in Detroit when he became a teacher at Custer Elementary School.

In 1993, the athletic complex at Mumford High School was named in his honor "The Irving Petross Athletic Field". Even after retirement, he was a continued to be a spectator and financial supporter of the athletic programs at Mumford.

Because full retirement was not an option for this driven and energetic man he became the Principal of a Charter School in Oak Park, Michigan ". (1996). In addition, in 2000 he came back to the Detroit Public Schools as an Executive Director of the Northern/Osborn] Pershing Cluster. Pete was a very committed and active community member. He dedicated his time and resources to numerous causes. His philosophy was that strong families and strong communities go hand-in-hand. He was a Life Member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. where he pledged at Wayne State in 1949. He was also a Boy Scout Leader from 1970-71. He was the founder and first president of the Northwest Detroit Cougar Youth Association (Little League football, cheerleading, and softball) that began in 1970 and is

still a thriving youth organization for boys and girls today. He was elected as Precinct Delegate from 1938-92 for his Northwest Detroit neighborhood. Pete was also very active with the Detroit Varsity Club (1952-78).

In his spare time, he was an avid golfer and passed along his love of the sport to his children. Over the years, he belonged to several golf groups but was most recently a member of The Sunday Headsman Golf and Social Group. He always eagerly anticipated the group's yearly outings to Florida. He continued to play golf until he was 84 years old. In addition to playing sports, Pete enjoyed watching sports. He had season tickets to the Detroit Pist0n's games and would take his wife (or children or grandchildren) to watch the Piston's play. He also enjoyed watching amateur competitive sports and would frequent athletic competitions be they Little League, high school games, college games, or the Olympics. Pete was also seriously into physical fitness. He belonged to a gym and would lift weights and swim to keep himself in excellent shape. In his quiet time at home, he would read numerous books of which his favorite genre was mysteries.

Although Irving "Pete" Petross was a very accomplished man, he would tell everyone that his "proudest accomplishment" was his family. He was a proud husband of 60 years, married to a devoted wife Lois, and a proud father who was fortunate to send fund the educations of all 6 of his children, who all graduated from college.