

Ed Custenborder

Topeka Officials Association

Hall of Fame inductee 2009

Ed started his career by registering in Basketball in 1958. He was encouraged to begin his officiating avocation by Tom Lutz. Tom started Ed out and became his partner and good friend. Ed was also encouraged to officiate by the owners of TEAM Sporting Goods in Topeka: Larry Waddell and Jerry Reichart.

He additionally registered in Football along with a sport very few people know he officiated, baseball.

Ed is a past President, Vice-President, and Treasurer of the Topeka Officials Association Serving in these positions in the sixties, and the seventies.

Along the way Ed worked numerous state tournaments, and sub-states. He lists one of his proudest moments in the sixties at the 1A State Basketball Tournament at Fort Hays College. It was the same year the College had opened up their new Field House. During these times, officials worked five days. Ed was the only official from the eastern part of the state to be assigned to the 1A Tournament. He was selected to officiate the finals by then Asst. K.S.H.S.A.A. administrator Nelson Hartman. No, he doesn't remember who the teams were; but he had a tremendous week at the Tournament.

Dad also told me that he is proud to have worked multiple 1A-3A state Baseball Tournaments in Emporia at Soden Field.

What levels did Ed work at? Let's cover some sports and levels he's been assigned too. In Football he's worked Middle School, High School, and College including schools such as Kansas Wesleyan, Bethany and the Eastern Division of the Jayhawk JUCO Conference.

In Basketball he worked many games at the High School and Middle School levels. Ed lists some of the officials he remembers working with: Lee Wilson, Norman Laurie, Jerry Abramson, Al McComas, Dick Weller, Don Brock, Rod McMaster, John Laurie, Phil Laurie, Don Brentlinger, Larry Elliott, Greg Custenborder, George Bistline, Tom Lutz, Dick Weller, Pidge Vigola and many more men he refers to as his friends.

If you were officiating back in the those days you have to mention some of the unique towns he's worked at: Havensville, Appanoose, Madison, Olpe, Leroy, Gridley, Williamsburg, Kelly, Waverly, Lebo, Hartford, Dover, Circleville, Netawaka, Soldier, Wetmore, Corning, St. Peter and Paul, Baileyville, Quenemo, and Eskridge.

Some of the courts were so small the half-court line served as the free throw line when you went to the opposite end. Ed remembers Pot Belly stoves burning at the corner of the gyms to keep the crowds warm. Ask him about crowds back then. He has a story or two to tell. Women's Basketball was played with six players on a team, three on three on one end and three on three at the other end. When he started football officiating, Kansas had six man football with 60 yard fields. Varsity games were worked with two officials.

In Baseball Ed officiated, High School, College, Semi-Pro, and Minor League. He has a great story about his umpire experience in Minor League Baseball. You will hear about it shortly.

When you officiate so many games, Ed remembers athletes that impressed him.
Jay Jackson-Valley Falls, Davy Lopes-Washburn University, Fuzzy Martin-Overbrook, Jerry Boldren-Valley Falls, Lonnie Krueger-Silver Lake.

Athletes, and Officials, how about some of the Coaches Ed remembers working for:
Tom Carlson-Seaman, Ken Buetel-Hayden, Larry Longhoffer-Washburn Rural, Ellis Dahl-Shawnee Heights, Neil Bartley-Hayden, Chic Downing-Atchison, Frank Blackburn-Topeka West, Willie Nicklin and Jack Dean-Topeka High School, Floyd Morgison-Perry, Randy Springs, Jim Bell, Paul Sexton-Highland Park High School, Jack Sheldon-Jackson Heights, Ray Kovar-St. Marys, Larry Elliott-Silver Lake and Washburn University, Grover Eddy-Circleville High School, John Darr-Corning High School, Nick Dawson-Lyndon, Ralph Rindt-Dwight, Les Holtgren-Osage City H.S.

Ed ended his career in 1998. He still has the check from his last football game. He never cashed it.