

## 2020 Spring Newsletter

# Thorpes made 'B' fans believe in Miracles

By Greg Hansen

**O**n the following day - March 8, 1963 - a newspaper report proclaimed it: 'The Greatest Comeback In The History Of The State Basketball Tournament.'

The previous night, before a sold-out Sioux Falls Arena crowd, the never-surrender duo of Louis Tyon and Marvin Red Elk won a crucial game for the Pine Ridge Thorpes that nearly everyone believed was already lost.

Pine Ridge's opponent, Monroe, was talented and big. The uniquely named Wooden Shoed Canaries were led by 6-foot-5 center Ivan Friese and brought a sparkling 22-1 record to the State Class B Tournament.

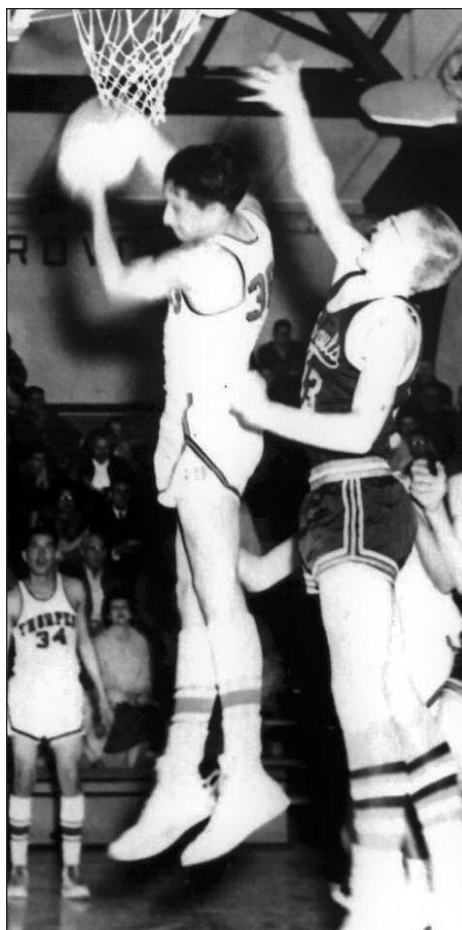
In the quarterfinals the Thorpes trailed Monroe by a seemingly insurmountable 20 points at 43-23 late in the third quarter. It was an era before the 3-point goal became a late-game equalizer. So spectators were already updating their brackets and moving Monroe into the semifinals.

But then Pine Ridge unleashed some desperate defensive pressure. Tyon is now 74 years old and he still remembers the sense of urgency that gripped he and his teammates.

"We started getting some steals and the momentum really turned," says Tyon. "We weren't very big. I was our tallest guy at about 5-11. So we full-court pressed and we ran as much as we could."

Baskets after steals by Tyon and Red Elk spurred the comeback.

"Marvin was a good outside shooter and in that last quarter



*Tyon Family Photo  
 Pine Ridge reached the Class B title game in 1962 and 1963 behind forward Louis Tyon, here rebounding against Edgemont as Filmore He Crow (34) looks on.*

him," says Tyon. "Whenever we really needed a basket the rest of us didn't want to even touch the ball. We wanted Marvin to take the shot."

So it was no surprise, in a game dripping with drama, that the 5-9 Red Elk had the ball as the final seconds ticked off the clock. When he pulled up, still 20 feet from the basket, and hit the game-winning jump shot it climaxed a resounding 28-6 run that gave the Thorpes a stunning 51-49 victory.

Red Elk finished with 22 points and Tyon had 18. Friese scored 15, Phil Mellegaard 13 and Ron Nugteren 12 for the Canaries of Coach Larry Ortman.

Pine Ridge beat Iroquois in the semifinals and then lost to Alexandria in the championship game. Monroe topped Agar in the consolation round and then fell to Irene in the fifth-place game.

Fifty-seven years later memories of the Pine Ridge-Monroe classic remain vivid for those who watched in person or on statewide television.

"People still bring it up," says Tyon. "That game has kind of lived on."

But the Miracle at the Arena was only one compelling chapter in the story of the Thorpes during the 1962 and 1963 seasons. Chuck Gustafson coached Pine Ridge. He was a native of Bryant and graduate of Northern State. Gustafson provided guidance and direction, says Tyon, but, "He gave us the freedom to play the way that came natural to us."

Tyon and Red Elk were juniors in 1962 when the Thorpes went

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against Monroe he didn't miss many," says Tyon.

How much did the Thorpes believe in the smooth-shooting Red Elk?

"We had a lot of confidence in

# Thorpes made 'B' fans believe in Miracles

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25-3 and won their first state championship since 1936. In the title game, facing McIntosh and star guard Homer White Buffalo, the Thorpes prevailed 70-68 on two late free throws by Tyon.

Pine Ridge's consecutive trips to the finals was aided by Marvin Ghost Bear, Myron Iron Cloud, Wilmer Kills Warrior, Filmore He Crow and Gordon Weston. But the Thorpes were built around Tyon, first team all-state in both 1962 and 1963, and Red Elk, a third team all-state selection both years.

Tyon went on to play at Northern and Chadron State. He graduated from Black Hills State and spent many years as the guidance counselor at Pine Ridge. He now lives at Rapid City.

Red Elk served in the U.S. Coast Guard. He died at age 39 in 1984. Red Elk is buried at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis.



*Submitted Photo*

*One year before the famous Pine Ridge-Monroe game, the Thorpes won the 1962 state title. Pine Ridge was 25-3 with, from left, front, Wilmer Kills Warrior, Gordon Weston, Marvin Red Elk, Filmore He Crow, Pat Twiss. Back, manager Bill Pulliam, Edger Ghost Bear, Don Standing Elk, Pat Hayes, Vincent Pourier, Joe Clifford, Louis Tyon, Ray Bull Bear and Coach Chuck Gustafson.*

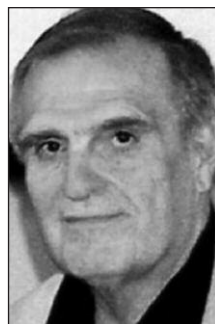
## A Message from the Hall of Fame

On this we can all agree, the 2019-20 basketball season was like no other in history.

The coronavirus pandemic caused a reshaping of priorities and a fundamental reawakening to the fact that nothing compares to the importance of keeping people safe and healthy.

Still, it is impossible to put into words the despair felt by student-athletes, coaches and fans who are now left to forever wonder what might have been.

With the onset of spring, we at the South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame join our



**Dave Wagner**

state and nation in looking towards the future with renewed hope and optimism.

It was regrettable but necessary to cancel our banquet in March. We now look forward to instead inducting the Class of 2020 in 2021.

We hope that our website and newsletter archives provided some respite during the

challenging months behind us. The edition you are now reading is our 12th and it will bring back memories of simpler times.

There are over 1,200 on our newsletter mailing list. And the number of states to which we mail has grown to 40. We thank our readers for your support and for sharing our belief in the value of keeping South Dakota basketball history alive.

*Dave Wagner*

Executive Director

# Basketball Cometh, igniting a S.D. Passion

By Bob Swanhorst

To find, let alone agree on, the origin and evolving of any movement or happening is very difficult to factually establish. So is it with basketball. I first learned that Columbus discovered America, but that was bogus since there were hundreds of thousands of people already in the Americas and Caribbean Islands. Leif Erickson (970-1020) had already been here too. President Calvin Coolidge said so at the Minnesota State Fair in 1925. Erickson has statues all across the country from Boston to Seattle including the Twin Cities and Duluth.

We do know that basketball was invented by Dr. James Naismith at a YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts, sometime in the year 1891. But how did he perceive the game and how did it develop and spread across the country? When did it come to South Dakota?

The first YMCA goes all the way back to 1844 in London, England. A quick explanation says that during the Industrial Revolution boys and young men were coming into cities by the hundreds. There was an apparent



*Jansa Family Photo*  
Clifford Jansa releases a shot for Nettleton Commercial College in the late 1930s. His son Steve, former O'Gorman star, is a South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame member.

lack of things for them to do in their spare time. Mischief took hold. To alleviate this trend an effort was made to place Christian principles into practice. The goal of the first YMCA, founded by Sir George Williams of London, was the development of "body, mind, and spirit." YMCA buildings were soon spreading across the entire globe. The buildings more often than not included gymnasiums.

Dr. Naismith, originally from Canada, was asked to develop a game to occupy the youth during winter months. The game could

be played indoors and should deemphasize roughness and involve some sort of goal. Because of a previous game known as Duck on a Rock a vertical throw at the goal was established. Anyone can find further explanations because the first 13 Rules of Basketball were written down and have been preserved for all of history.

Fast forward to the shores of Big Stone Lake in Northeast South Dakota. Henry F. Kallenberg, who once worked

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# Basketball Cometh, igniting a S.D. Passion

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with Naismith at Springfield, held a summer conference for Sioux Indians at the lake. The recreational period included the introduction of basketball. The year of that conference has been established as 1896. Kallenberg was, at that time, the physical instructor at the YMCA in Iowa City. Various references say Kallenberg also used basketball at a conference in Pierre and at various reservation schools in South Dakota at about the same time. Probably safe to say that basketball had come to our state.

General comments reflecting the attitude toward the game suggest that it was wildly popular. It appealed equally to girls as it did to boys. It was apparent that the Catholic Mission Schools in the Dakotas found it a great asset to keep students enjoying their free time and coping with their struggles at the Indian schools.

The Jesuits and Franciscans were certainly aware of basketball's impact and soon had teams of both sexes playing on a regular basis at Pine Ridge, Rosebud and other reservation schools. The most prominent of the Jesuit schools at that time was St. Francis Mission on the Rosebud, and Holy Rosary Mission on the Pine Ridge. The YMCAs had nurtured the first wave of spreading basketball, and it was now taken up by public and private schools as well. When the Catholic and public schools each had their own national tournaments, both in Chicago, things really progressed.

South Dakota's public schools, for the purpose of organizing athletics, held their first statewide meeting in Brookings and by 1906 were known as the SDHSAA. It has been well documented that Huron College sponsored the first tourney in 1912 and by 1916 the state association took control.

Those two nation-wide tourneys in Chicago became something of a bonanza for St. Francis. Held at Loyola of Chicago, St. Francis became something of a crowd favorite over the years.

The National Catholic Tournament was held from 1924-41. St. Francis, a Jesuit secondary school, went to the first tourney in '24 and most of the years until 1941. In '35 they took third place, in 1940 fourth place, and in '41 second place losing in overtime. Their style of play, ethnicity and colorful names made each team a crowd favorite. A fast pace and excellent shooting was rather foreign to the usual play in the public



*Submitted Photo*  
St. Francis Mission had many fine teams, like the Scarlett Warriors of 1941, from left, front, Jesse Clairmont, Vince Brewer, Ben Tibbetts. Back, Coach Ken Taft, Everett Little, Charles Bad Milk, Cal Valandra, Wilbur Blacksmith, Guy Little and Father Francis Collins.

schools. Colorful names like Emil Red Fish, Willard Iron Wing and Leonard Quick Bear drew lots of attention. One source said that names of the Scarlet Warriors, as the team was nicknamed, were more prominently recognized in Chicago then they were in the papers of East River communities in South Dakota.

On the public school side the National Interscholastic Tournament was held from 1917-30. Amos Alonzo Stagg had first organized the tournament and it was sponsored by the University of Chicago. South Dakota teams were always well represented and Yankton, Salem and Huron made impressive appearances. Yankton reached the championship game in 1924 but lost to Windsor, Colorado. More high schools played basketball by 1920 than any other sport. This led to a need to regulate the sport and eventually many high school associations were formed because of basketball.

The need for regulations were obvious but regulations often separated private and public schools. Coaches were mandated to have teaching certificates, and schools were regulated by varying degrees of player eligibility by their residence. These two rules alone put many Catholic institutions at odds with their public rivals. The rule that probably put even more controversy into the mix was the cut off for interscholastic competition at 20 years of age. Birth certificates were often lost or nonexistent many times causing mistrust and animosity.

It became apparent by the 1920s and several decades thereafter that the Native American teams were leading the advance of basketball in South

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# Basketball Cometh, igniting a S.D. Passion

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Dakota not only in participation but in excellence of play. Native Americans were enrolled in public schools, too, and played important roles on their school's teams. Two of the first teams to play in the state tourney with Native Americans were Wakpala and Waubay in 1931. Yankton, there was only one class at that time, had two African Americans in Donald Smith and Art Hayes. James Distribute of Wakpala became a hit and the Mitchell Republic said he could really play. Waubay had a 6-7 native lad named Roy "Lofty" Humbracht. He seemed to be the difference as they outlasted Wakpala 21-17. Yankton took out Waubay 23-12 in the semis and went on to win the championship. Wakpala started three Native Americans and Waubay two. Incidentally, Distribute died of tuberculosis several years later. A great athlete, he was playing summer baseball for Mobridge at the time.

It was St. Francis that consistently proved to be playing some of the best brand of basketball in the state. They won the first four Catholic Tournaments that were held from 1937-64. Space doesn't allow us to list **ALL** of the players and coaches of that time. One indication of their popularity was grasped by Nettleton Commercial College of Sioux Falls.

Wanting to field a winning basketball program in the late 1930s the Nettleton "Netts" turned to the state's Indian school players at St. Francis. Willard Iron Wing had acquired national fame as a player and coach. Starring for the team in the middle '30s he coached the 1938 team to the

second round in Chicago. A selection committee at the tournament named him "best coach for that year." The administration at Nettleton knew he was something of a celebrity and having him as coach was a real feather in their cap. He became the player-coach in the fall of 1938.

Following coach Iron Wing to Sioux Falls and Nettleton were former teammates Ernest "Spec" Blacksmith, Lenny Quick Bear, and Charles Tibbets. Also coming was 6-5 Townley Hare who had played at Haskell (Kansas). It had really become an Indian team with one notable exception. As Wade Davies in his book *Native Hoops* wrote; "the white players on the squad were permanently relegated to the bench except for part-time center Clifford Jansa, a Sioux Falls hero who had attended Cathedral High School."

Game attendance and ticket sales were important to the athletic department and they had over scheduled with too many high-caliber teams and even professional barnstormers like the Harlem Globe Trotters and the House of David Bearded Aces. As the season progressed the team played lesser opponents and ended with a 16-8 record. By the early part of 1939 Blacksmith and Hare were gone and Jansa became the team leader.

By season's close the natives had left and Nettleton's foray into being a consistent winning basketball program was over. Blacksmith's name popped up later with the famous Sioux Travelers team. Iron Wing went on to coach at Stephan another Catholic Mission School. There were no indications any of the

Native American team members earned a degree at Nettleton nor were there any specific reasons either financial, cultural, racial, or academic on why they had left Nettleton.

Basketball had Cometh and from that summer in 1896 to the present it has continued to evolve beyond all imagination. In the late 1920s Sharon Roscoe Mote staged a Northern Indian School Association basketball tournament that was to incorporate all federal and Catholic Indian schools in the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Nebraska. Various road blocks, including bad weather, came up and it was only held for two years and folded. This may have been the seed that led to the popular sports and cultural extravaganza that is today's Lakota Nation Invitational held in Rapid City. It is considered one of South Dakota's top events in attendance and interest.

Another great contribution to basketball and South Dakota is the awarding of the SuAnne Big Crow Star Quilt. It is given to a member from each class of the six tournaments (boys and girls) held each year. Known as the "Spirit of Su" award it represents excellence in all endeavors and a stand against drugs and alcohol. The tradition is believed to have begun in Montana in a high school game between Brockton and Poplar in 1947. During a timeout period a grandmother went to her grandson and wiped away his sweat with her shawl. The connection with honoring warriors in battle took hold and evolved over the years. Native Americans have had and continue to have a tremendous impact on basketball in the state and nation.

## ≡ Fast Break of Things to Know ≡

**HOF Overview:** The South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame is located at the Sanford Pentagon pictured at right. Exhibits are on display in the main Hall of Fame area on the ground floor with additional items on the second floor. We are a non-profit organization and chartered as a 501(c)(3) in 2009. To learn more about the Hall of Fame visit our website at [www.sdbbhof.com](http://www.sdbbhof.com).

**Deep Run:** Forty years ago Cheyenne-Eagle Butte product Terry DuPris, a SDBBHOF member, paced Huron College to third place in the 1980 NAIA National Tournament. There were nearly 600 schools in NAIA then, all in one division. The Tribe beat teams from Texas, Indiana and Pennsylvania before losing in the semifinals to Alabama State. Huron then topped Wisconsin-Eau Claire 59-54 for third place.

**Pioneer Leader:** Yankton College's athletic program was led by John Griffith from 1902-05. He then moved to Morningside and later Drake. Griffith coached basketball and football before becoming the Big Ten Conference's first commissioner, serving from 1922-44.

**Football Assist:** Before the Big Ten basketball tournament in March, Nebraska was short of players. Coach Fred Hoiberg bolstered his roster by adding Cornhuskers quarterback Noah Vedral of Wahoo, Neb. Nebraska lost to Indiana 89-64. Vedral's father, Mike, was from Gregory and also played football for the Cornhuskers.



*Sanford Photo*

**Matching Jacks:** In a display of same-town unity, SDBBHOF members Jim Sutton and Kent Hyde each scored exactly 417 points for South Dakota State in 1957. The Onida natives both played in 22 games for the Jackrabbits and averaged 19 points per game.

**Gym Dedicated:** The gym in Wakonda was dedicated as Ron Flynn Gymnasium on Dec. 19. The late Flynn coached the Warriorettes for 18 seasons. They had a 101-game winning streak during that time and won three Class B state girls titles.

**Respected Ref:** Philip product Kelly Pfeifer of Mitchell again officiated a full slate of major college games this season. He worked games involving Gonzaga, No. 2 in the final poll, and such teams as No. 6 San Diego State, No. 12 Maryland and No. 19 Ohio State.

**NAIA Elite:** Dakota Wesleyan joined only a handful of NAIA programs with 1,500 wins when it beat Jamestown 90-75 on Feb. 26. SDBBHOF member Gordon Fosness, a Presho native, is the Tigers' winningest coach at 351-195 from 1961-83. He won 10 conference titles.

**Clark Viking:** Clark graduate Mackenzie Huber finished an outstanding career at Valley City State (N.D.). Her coach was Vanessa Johnson, former West Central player. Huber set a Vikings season record by shooting 61 percent from the field. She averaged 15 points.

**Longtime Coach:** A college assistant for 43 years, Marty Gross is the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi associate head coach. All-state at Yankton in 1973, he earned four letters at Jacksonville University (Fla.). Gross captained the Dolphins as a senior in 1977.



# Hall of Fame Members



**A:** Amy Allard-Carmody, Jefferson '82: 2016  
Carla Allard-Watson, Bennett County '87: 2015  
Rich Andrzejewski, Arlington '69: 2014  
Robin Anderson-Thormodsgaard, Clear Lake '80: 2010  
Joe Ashley, Pierre '79: 2017  
Dick Authier, Woonsocket '67: 2014

**B:** Bruce Bad Moccasin, Pierre '67: 2010  
Dick Baun, Mobridge '44: 2018  
JoElle Byre-Benson, Washington '82: 2011  
Ron Bertsch, St. Lawrence '61: 2017  
John Bertolero, Lead '56: 2018  
SuAnne Big Crow, Pine Ridge '92: 2017  
Howie Bich, Yale '58: 2018  
Scott Bosanko, Aberdeen '77: 2013  
Frank Brost, Murdo '55: 2018  
Steve Brown, Hamlin '74: 2010  
G.E. Buenning, Parkston '66: 2014  
Jerry Buri, Hazel '60: 2017  
Amy Burnett, Huron '91: 2015  
Elton Byre, Reliance '56: 2016  
Scott Beckstrand, Lincoln '89: 2019  
Mike Begeman, Parker '75: 2019

**C:** Harry Carleton, Washington '43: 2011  
Lee Colburn, Brookings '69: 2015  
Conrad Collin, Huron '30: 2016  
Cathy Coyle-Grubb, Belle Fourche '79: 2011

**D:** Katie Dailey, Jefferson '81: 2015  
John Diefendorf, Irene '46: 2018  
Chris Divich, Doland '52: 2013  
Terry DuPris, Cheyenne-EB '76: 2011  
Jim Dyer, Willow Lake '60: 2015

**E:** Kriss Edwards, Watertown '77: 2017  
John Eidsness, Canton '66: 2015  
Gary Evjen, Washington '68: 2017  
Lefty Engebretson, Webster '46: 2019

**F:** Roger Faber, Canistota '58: 2016  
Randy Fletcher, Reliance '65: 2012  
Becky Flynn-Jensen, Wakonda '92: 2010  
Gordon Fosness, Presho '53: 2011  
Bart Friedrich, Mitchell '85: 2014  
Mike Freier, Tripp '67: 2015  
Carol Freeman-Galbraith, Canova '79: 2013  
Dave Fischer, Wall '61: 2019  
Rollie Furois, Deadwood '40: 2019

**G:** Barry Glanzer, Armour '78: 2012  
Max Gonzenbach, Milbank '54: 2010  
DuWayne Groos, Sisseton '62: 2014  
Chad Greenway, Mt. Vernon '01: 2018

**H:** Clyde Hagen, Webster '66: 2013  
Dale Hall, Ravinia '54: 2016  
Ray Hamann, Yankton '31: 2015  
Steve Hammer, Pierpont '69: 2014  
Becky Hammon, Stevens '95: 2010  
Greg Hansen, Hurley '70: 2012  
Maury Haugland, Murdo '54: 2016

**H:** Julie Harmacek-Bridge, Avon '83: 2014  
Fred Hecker, Washington '57: 2016  
Garney Henley, Hayti '55: 2013  
Kent Hyde, Onida '54: 2013  
Diane Hiemstra-Gabriel, Yankton '80: 2011  
Luther Hippe, Washington '83: 2014  
Kris Holwerda-Woerner, Brookings '81: 2014  
Cary Hornaman, Roncalli '75: 2018

**I:** Jim Iverson, Platte '48: 2010  
Chuck Iverson, Vermillion '69: 2015

**J:** Don Jacobsen, Lake Norden '57: 2010  
Steve Jansa, O'Gorman '64: 2016  
Randy Jencks, De Smet '71: 2012  
Julie Jensen-Rozell, Langford '91: 2015  
Matt Jones, Alpena '01: 2016  
Terry Jordre, Corona '57: 2017

**K:** Eric Kline, Aberdeen '91: 2012  
Mandy Koupal, Wagner '99: 2014  
Lisa Kurtenbach-Glanzer, Brookings '85: 2018  
Mandy Kappel, Roosevelt '00: 2018  
Freddie Knife, Cheyenne '59: 2019

**L:** John Lillibridge, Burke '58: 2017  
Jimmy Lovley, Elkton '20: 2015  
Lance Luitjens, Custer '92: 2010  
Jerry Lund, Belle Fourche '57: 2013

**M:** Guy Mackner, Sisseton '65: 2017  
Tom Malchow, Aberdeen '61: 2011  
Bob Marske, Andover '44: 2016  
Lien Marso, Harrold '51: 2014  
Tom McGrann, Watertown '59: 2010  
Jesse Mendoza, Cheyenne-EB '71: 2012  
Rod Merriam, Huron '80: 2010  
Phil Miedema, Hitchcock '58: 2014  
Amy Mickelson, Brookings '86: 2013  
Alan Miller, Stickney '81: 2011  
Chris Miller, Stickney '71: 2016  
Mike Miller, Mitchell '98: 2013  
Jim Mitchell, S.D. Deaf '54: 2015  
Myron Moen, Sisseton '63: 2012  
Colleen Moran, Stickney '79: 2014  
Scott Morgan, Mitchell '89: 2016  
Josh Mueller, West Central '01: 2016  
Donna Muir, Cheyenne-EB '78: 2017  
Megan Mahoney, Sturgis '01: 2019

**N:** Chad Nelson, Yankton '74: 2013  
Roger Nelson, Brookings '54: 2011

**N:** Dana Nielsen-Honner, Armour '88: 2012  
Rick Nissen, Miller '72: 2011  
Alan Nissen, Miller '68: 2019

**O:** Tom Orton, Madison '65: 2012  
Melissa Olson-Guebert, Lincoln '83: 2016

**P:** Ann Pancoast, Washington '81: 2017  
Harley Petersen, Hayti '54: 2011  
Henry Park, Chester '45: 2019  
Doug Peterson, Watertown '60: 2019  
Jodi Pipes-Altenburg, Armour '88: 2019

**R:** Marv Rasmussen, Claremont '55: 2015  
Wayne Rasmussen, Howard '60: 2016  
Dona Ray-Reed, Yankton '78: 2018  
Jared Reiner, Tripp-Delmont '00: 2018  
Renee Ruesink, Castlewood '84: 2013

**S:** Renae Sallquist, Brookings '86: 2011  
Jim Schlekeway, Britton '64: 2013  
Jim Schmidt, Dell Rapids St. Mary '41: 2017  
Harvey Schaefer, Hayti '54: 2018  
Mike Sisk, Miller '57: 2017  
John Sivesind, Roosevelt '96: 2015  
Holly Sivesind-Borchers, Roosevelt '93: 2016  
Terry Slattery, Salem St. Mary's '56: 2011  
Gene Smith, Watertown '47: 2010  
Rudy Soderquist, Rapid City '37: 2016  
Taran Stapp, Newell '96: 2012  
Courtney Stapp-Pool, Newell '94: 2012  
Lolly Steele, Pine Ridge '84: 2016  
Karla Stevenson, Hamlin '83: 2012  
Bob Stewart, Aberdeen '49: 2012  
Wayne Stone, Mitchell '41: 2013  
Jason Sutherland, Watertown '93: 2012  
Jim Sutton, Onida '53: 2011  
Bob Swanhorst, Cresbard '57: 2010  
Wendy Swanhorst, Cresbard '78: 2013  
Rex Swett, Huron '58: 2010  
Shannon Schlagel-Huber, Clark '01: 2019  
Cregg Skarin, Hitchcock '70: 2019

**T:** Jim Tays, Gettysburg '50: 2015  
Kim Templeton, Miller '72: 2011  
Denver TenBroek, McIntosh '99: 2014  
Mark Tetzlaff, Hamlin '81: 2014  
Jack Theeler, Sisseton '63: 2012  
John Thomas, Alexandria '65: 2010  
Harold Thune, Murdo '37: 2010  
LaMoine Torgerson, Forestburg '59: 2012  
Louis Tyon, Pine Ridge '63: 2018  
Lindsay Thomas, Roosevelt '02: 2019

**V:** Lisa Van Goor, Yankton '80: 2010

**W:** Marty Waukazoo, Rapid City '67: 2013  
Chuck Welke, Warner '94: 2013  
Vince Whipple, Rapid City '56: 2015  
Willie White, Pine Ridge '87: 2014  
Jerry Wingen, Canova '56: 2011  
Lori Wohlleber-O'Farrell, Summit '86: 2014  
Sox Walseth, Pierre '44: 2019

**Z:** Harley Zephier, Dupree '55: 2016

To read bios go to [www.sdbbhof.com](http://www.sdbbhof.com)

# Sioux Travelers set path for later Teams

They were called the Sioux Travelers and for several decades they cut an impressive swath through Midwest basketball. The team employed a charismatic style of play which was at the same time both frenetic and elegant.

Playing in exhibition games and in highly competitive Native American tournaments throughout the region, and beyond, the Sioux Travelers of the 1940s and 1950s had a revolving roster that included such players as Emil Red Fish, Collins Jordan and Ernest "Spec" Blacksmith.

The team made a resonant statement both near and far about the superior quality of basketball on South Dakota's reservations.

Later, in the 1960s, two of the players who helped the Sioux Travelers continue a standard of excellence were Freddie Knife and Chet Condon. As prep stars they had been part of a Cheyenne Agency team that went 31-3 and won the Class B state championship in 1959.

Knife and Condon, along with their Sioux Travelers teammates, used basketball as a means to spread good will. They made an impression on a generation of reservation youngsters.

The essence of the Sioux Travelers was re-created a number of years later by similarly talented teams. Two of the finest were the Lakota Coup Counters and the Great Plains Indians.

A number of standout players represented the Coup Counters at different times in the team's history.

Prominent among them were Mike Wells, a 6-foot-7 product of

## Love of the Game took team afar

The following item in an American Legion report illustrates how mobile and how far-reaching the Sioux Travelers basketball team was. The passage appeared in a report sent to Post 41 members in Berryville, Va. The date was Jan. 25, 1947:

*"The Legion basketball team played the Sioux Travelers Indian team at the Community Building. Admission was 50 cents for adults and 35 cents for children. The Legion made \$93 and paid the Indians \$86."*

Berryville is located about 65 miles northwest of Washington, D.C. To get there the Sioux Travelers had to leave South Dakota and pass through at least eight states while covering approximately 1,500 miles by car.

Stops were made to play games in various communities. In view of the distances they covered, the Sioux Travelers were aptly named.

Lead who played at the University of Wyoming and then at Black Hills State University, and Bruce Bad Moccasin who starred at Pierre and for South Dakota Mines.

Likewise, the Great Plains Indians also featured different players during different stages of the team's existence.

An especially noteworthy season for the Great Plains

Indians occurred in 1982 when they were selected by the South Dakota Sportswriters Association as the state's Independent Team of the Year.

That season the Great Plains Indians won each of the 15 tournaments they entered. Among them were the prestigious Yakima Nation Tournament in Wapato, Wash., and the National Indian Tournament in Spokane, Wash.

Rick LaPointe was director of the Indian Education Center at the University of South Dakota. He organized the Great Plains Indians and said the team was modeled after the Sioux Travelers of the past.

Among team leaders were some players who made impressive marks on both prep and collegiate basketball in South Dakota: Terry DuPris of Cheyenne-Eagle Butte and Huron College, Wayne Brittenham of Rapid City and Black Hills State, and Steve Withorne of Rapid City and Dakota Wesleyan University.

The Great Plains Indians got big production from 7-foot center Dave Pocknett, who came to the team after playing at the University of Southern Colorado. Pocknett was named MVP of both the Yakima Nation and National Indian tournaments, averaging 25 points and 15 rebounds per game.

Against other Native American teams that season, the Great Plains Indians posted an incredible record of 85-0.

The Sioux Travelers led the way. Teams like the Lakota Coup Counters and the Great Plains Indians gallantly followed.



# In Solemn Remembrance and Tribute

**Lon Nelson**, 65, of Norfolk, Neb., died Feb. 27, 2019. All-state as a prep at Clark, he went on to earn all-South Dakota Intercollegiate Conference honors while scoring 2,091 career points at USD-Springfield.

**Jim Riley**, 86, of Lincoln, Neb., died June 21, 2019. An all-around athlete from Faith, he graduated from South Dakota State and served in the U.S. Army. He coached basketball at Norfolk and Omaha Westside, then was executive director of the Nebraska High School Activities Association.

**Roger Pries**, 84, of Pierre died Nov. 1, 2019. The Army veteran excelled in basketball at Watertown and then went on to Northern State where he earned all-SDIC honors. He coached Pierre to the Class A state championship in 1979 and later was executive director of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation.

**Ron Lawrence**, 83, of Fort Pierre died Nov. 17, 2019. On the all-tourney team as Onida won the Class B title in 1953, he played at Huron College. He served in the Army and coached at Onida and Stanley County.

**Phil Miedema**, 79, of Sioux Falls died Nov. 21, 2019. Scoring 2,040 career points during an all-state career at Hitchcock, he was then all-North Central Conference at Augustana. He taught and coached 34 years at Whittier Middle School in Sioux Falls.

**LeRoy DeBeer**, 78, of Volga died Nov. 22, 2019. A graduate of White, he scored 1,781 career points. He then was a standout at General Beadle State and during his coaching career made stops at Rutland, Baltic, Lyons, Tri-Valley, Centerville and Howard.

**Gene Kluck**, 80, of Watertown died Nov. 22, 2019. After excelling in basketball at Watertown, he earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. He then attended Kansas State and after graduation he became a longtime veterinarian in Watertown.

**Jim Petersen**, 86, of Brandon died Nov. 29, 2019. Hayti had never reached the Class B state tournament before he led them to second place in the 1952 event and was chosen to the all-tourney team.

**Wayne Trousdale**, 82, of Wentworth died Dec. 1, 2019. After graduating from Madison, he was a standout player at Augustana and then General Beadle. He coached at Peever and Faith.

**Bart Berndt**, 86, of Rapid City died Dec. 6, 2019. A native of Kensal, N.D., he graduated from Jamestown College and served in the U.S. Navy. He was an assistant basketball coach at Northern State and served as the Wolves longtime head baseball coach.

**Dave Strain**, 88, of Rapid City died Jan. 2, 2020. The longtime Rapid City Central coach guided the Cobblers to Class A state titles in 1969 and 1980. He graduated from White River, played at South Dakota State and was an Army veteran. During his career his teams won 398 games.

**George Smith**, 85, of Milbank died Jan. 3, 2020. A graduate of Jackson, Mich., he was a star player at Dakota Wesleyan. He served schools at Gary, Flandreau and Hudson before becoming Milbank superintendent for 27 years. He then was development director of Grant County.

**Terry Woodward**, 79, of Hot Springs died Jan. 8, 2020. He was all-state at Pierre and then helped the University of Colorado's Buffaloes win Big Eight titles in 1962 and 1963. He taught for 30 years in Colorado Springs, Colo.

**Shelby Miller**, 95, of Sioux Falls died Jan. 12, 2020. A radio broadcaster who covered basketball for KIJV in Huron and KSOO in Sioux Falls, he was a Lennox graduate and Army veteran.

**Don Renner**, 84, of Sioux Falls died March 4, 2020. An outstanding basketball player and team captain at Sioux Falls Washington, he attended Iowa State on a football scholarship and graduated from Augustana.

**Ron Kambestad**, 70, of Hudsonville, Mich., died March 15, 2020. With a high game of 49 points, he was chosen to the all-state team while at Bristol. An outstanding runner, he was Class B state champion in the mile in 1967 and later competed in track at Northern.

**Jamie Zepp**, 45, of Rapid City died March 21, 2020. He was a Rapid City Central and USD graduate. A television sportscaster, he spent several years at KEVN in Rapid City and served in the South Dakota Air National Guard.

**Vern Tate**, 90, of Huron died April 9, 2020. Involved with the Huron College basketball program as athletic director, he was longtime coach of the successful Tribe wrestling team. He ranked among the winningest coaches in NAIA history with 201 career dual victories. The Army veteran graduated from West Waterloo (Iowa) and Western State (Colo.).

# Cheyenne legend Knife left lasting Legacy

*Freddie Knife was one of the most beloved players in state basketball history. The following story originally appeared in the South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame banquet booklet when Knife was inducted. It is reprinted here in memory of Knife on the 15th anniversary of his death.*

**By Greg Hansen**

**A**s years have passed, and tales of the late Freddie Knife have been retold, the Cheyenne Agency legend has become almost mythical.

Those who saw him play, including his highly respected coach, the late Gus Kolb, agreed that Knife did things with a basketball that had never been seen before in South Dakota.

The 6-foot-2 forward was a transitional player, a talent so unique that he did much towards elevating the appreciation of basketball on the reservations into the passion it has become.

An example of Knife's popularity, of his rare ability to capture the hearts of fans, surfaced in the State Class B Tournament in 1959.

The Braves were well on their way to victory over Plankinton when Kolb removed his starters. Newspaper reports said that a chant of "We want Freddie" cascaded throughout the Huron Arena for several minutes. Kolb finally gave the fans what they wanted and sent Knife back onto the court.

A year earlier Cheyenne entered the 1958 state tourney undefeated. The Braves lost to Corona 56-53 in the semifinals despite Knife's 19 points. Cheyenne won the third-



**Freddie Knife**

place game over Fairfax to finish 33-1. Knife was a sophomore and was named all-state.

Knife suffered a broken blood vessel in his right knee the following football season as a standout receiver. He was hospitalized and spent several days on crutches. Because of the injury Knife wore a knee brace and was slowed during the early stages of the 1959 basketball season. But, as Kolb said, Knife was soon back to dominating games with his normal flair and creativity.

In the opening round of the state tournament Cheyenne faced No. 1 rated Columbia. The Braves trailed at halftime but rallied to win 56-46.

After topping Plankinton 61-51 behind Knife's 25 points, Cheyenne sped past De Smet 63-47 in the championship game. The Braves ended 31-3 to extend their two-year record to 64-4.

Knife wasn't best known for his scoring, but rather for his moves - described as "elegant" by one sportswriter of the day - and for his ball-handling wizardry. He averaged 15 points per game as a junior and was again named all-state. Two months later, in May of 1959, Knife turned 20. That age made him ineligible to participate in prep sports in South Dakota.

So fans never had the opportunity to see what Knife might have accomplished as a senior. He did some traveling with touring Native American teams and also played several years in the amateur circuit. Knife lived at Red Scaffold at the time of his death in 2005.

## In Memory of a Loyal Friend of the Hall of Fame

The South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame wishes to extend its gratitude to the family and friends of the late Doug Olson of Mitchell.

Olson died Jan. 31, 2020, in Gilbert, Ariz. He was 75. Olson was a graduate of Artesian, where he played basketball and football for the Rams after overcoming a childhood affliction of meningitis.

It was the request of Olson's family that memorials in his memory be directed to the Hall of Fame, of which he was a faithful supporter. His wife Joyce's generous gift, and the gifts of many of his friends, are sincerely appreciated and are noted in our roster of donors on page 11.

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We thank our 'Friends' for your support and for your belief in our mission to preserve South Dakota's basketball history.

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## Banquet to return in 2021



*John Simko Photo*

Megan Mahoney starred at Sturgis and Kansas State University before playing for Connecticut in the WNBA and for professional teams in Iceland, Italy and France. Pictured above are the jerseys she has worn. They were on display at the banquet when Mahoney was inducted into the South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame in 2019. With deep regrets the Hall of Fame cancelled the 2020 banquet because of the coronavirus pandemic. Now the Class of 2020 will be inducted at the 2021 banquet on March 27. Members are Janel Birrenkott, Jerry Even, Jayne (Even) Gust, Austin Hansen, Joe Krabbenhoft, Sarah Mannes Homstad, Arlo Mogck, Bob Pidde, Dave Thomas and Dennis Womeldorf. To be inducted posthumously are Sam Perrin, Loren Thornton and Stanton Uhlir. Recognized as a Team of Excellence will be the Washington Warrior girls of 1980.