

1992 Hall of Fame Inductee Mike Kronkright – Grand Junction

Myron Myles “Mike” Kronkright was born Oct. 4, 1922 in Litchfield, Nebraska. He married Ellen S. Swanson in Loup City, Nebraska and served in the U.S. Marines in the South Pacific, New Caledonia and Guadalcanal during World War II. He was also involved with the Navajo Code Talkers.

The Kronkrights moved to western Colorado in 1950 and it was a love of sports that got Mike involved in officiating. Mike was involved the newly-formed Grand Junction Football Officials Association. His football officiating career launched in 1956. He covered area high school and Mesa Junior College games and worked Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference games after Mesa became a four-year institution. Football was just the beginning for Mike — he went on to become a multi-sport referee and umpire.

Mike began umpiring baseball games in 1958, working high school and college games. He was a member of Colorado High School Activities Association playoff baseball officiating crews for much of his career, including 10 state championships and three all-state games. He officiated the Junior College World Series for two years and was an alternate for several more.

As an accomplished basketball referee, he worked 27 straight Gunnison Valley League tournaments and a few of the state basketball tournaments, including four championship games and two all-star games.

Mike was considered one of the state’s elite officials. Among the many aspects to his career that sets him apart from others was his unselfish work in working with younger officials. Because of his work with the younger officials, Colorado has achieved a reputation for quality officiating statewide.

The National Association for Basketball Officials adopted a pregame conference sheet developed by Mike in the 1970s. “I think that was one of my most rewarding endeavors when the national group recognized me that way,” he said in a story detailing his career.

Mike retired from basketball court and football field duties in 1986 but remained active in officiating, assigning football and basketball officials for area schools. Mike said that he has enjoyed the time spent officiating and was lucky to work as long as he did. He said watching “the progression of sports as they grew and changed. Just being a part of that process was very rewarding”.

The Grand Junction City Council passed a resolution in August, 1988 to rename the Pomona Park softball fields the “Kronkright Softball Complex.” A story said Mike had officiated about 1,000 varsity basketball games, 600 varsity football games and “about the same number” of softball and baseball games.

Even after “retirement,” Mike still donned the softball umpires’ uniform twice a week to keep his love affair with sports going.