

The following was presented by Board Member June Contini at the Hall of Distinction Induction Ceremony of the Dover Historical Society, on Sunday, April 28, 2019.

Jim Render

Beyond the Dover area, George Elford was known as the man who created and coached the Dover Basketeers. That recognition brought George a certain amount of fame he never sought and with which he was never quite comfortable. But more on that later.

Locally he was just George Elford, the man with the Yul Brenner haircut who was always helping the youth of Dover in whatever was he could. That was just what he loved to do and what he spent his entire life doing.

More important than what he did was how he did it. George Elford brought to every endeavor an honest, forthright, and disciplined effort that he demanded both of himself and those he was helping.

The youth of the area in the 50-'s and 60's attending the summer dances at Dover's Deis Hill felt safer because it was George "spinning the records" and maintaining discipline, but more to the point their parents felt the same way. Any activity involving their children was O.K. if George was there. He had the trust and respect of everyone who ever met him.

George's contributions to the youth of Dover are well documented. He gave freely of his time and energy to help support Dover High School athletics. For 49 years he served as a member of the "chain gang" working the sideline markers for home football games. As a volunteer coach the values he stressed went far beyond the fundamentals of the sport. His were the lessons of character, morals, and how a person should conduct himself in life.

In his lifetime George Elford had a positive influence on the lives of thousands of people. He loved his hometown and had great faith in the young people growing up there. Helping them was reward enough for George. His legacy will continue in the lives he made better and he will be remembered as a wonderful example of a life filled with unselfish service.

Let me go back to the Basketeers. George created and coached this group of junior high boys for 8 years. Each year the make-up of the team changed as younger boys replaced older ones. Over the course of those 8 years the team became more and more noticed and popular. They actually began performing at halftime of the NBA games and had a part in a Jerry Lewis movie made in Hollywood, California. I could go on. Believe me I could. They became known as

the "Goodwill Ambassadors of Dover." This generated recognition of George's contributions to the youth of Dover over all the years and he began to receive some civic awards:

The Dover Lions Club made him an honorary member and he was the first non-member to receive that honor. It was given for his outstanding contributions to the community.

He received the Distinguished Service Award from the Dover JC for the same reason.

He was awarded the Athletic Achievement Award presented to a Dover HS graduate who has enhanced the city's reputation in the field of athletics. He was the third straight member of Dover's class of 1944 to receive that honor, following Ray Mears and Tom Patton. I should add that Tom Patton is already in our Hall of Distinction.

George told every boy who was ever a Basketeer this before any trip: They will not remember your name, but they will remember where you are from. So behavior on the court and off was important to George. George loved his hometown.

One final thought. George had a phrase he repeated over and over regarding shooting free throws – Concentration, relaxation and follow through. We should all consider this advice: Concentrate, relax and follow thought.