

**Don G. Millett**  
**Mesa City Sports**  
**Hall of Fame**  
**2018**



By Jason P. Skoda

Don Millett kept reading about surrounding cities and their sports hall of fames.

The names were impressive and deserving but in his mind nothing like those who displayed their athletic prowess from Mesa.

And yet one of the state's biggest cities did not have an event, a ceremony or a hall to celebrate the great athletes that represented Mesa on high school, college, the pros and the Olympics.

It didn't sit well with Millett, so he did something about it.

"We talked about it a lot and always wondered why we didn't have one when Scottsdale and Phoenix did," his wife Donna said. "They were honoring athletes and champions. And Mesa had nothing. He said we needed something, so I said, 'Go for it.' "

Soon thereafter the first induction class for the Mesa City Sports Hall of Fame was hashed out and honored in 1992.

Millett spent some time as the president of the Mesa Historical Society so creating and maintaining a sports hall of fame came easy to him and his love of sports made it a nearly perfect fit.

Millett, who passed away in March at the age of 88, could be found at the ceremonies, most likely enjoying it more than anyone else in the room, very proud and gracious toward all of the inductees. He had an excitement and love of sports that he was able to share with the Mesa community ever since taking the first step in creating the Hall.

"He absolutely loved it and poured everything he could into it to make it special for everyone," said Donna of the man she was married to for 65 years. "This was one of his favorite events of the year every year since the very beginning."

After 26 years of celebrating others, Millett is getting his turn as he is part of the 2018 eight-member Mesa City Hall of Fame class that will be honored on Nov. 19 at Red Mountain High School.

"Don made this happen," Mesa District Athletic Director Steve Hogen said. "It probably would have happened eventually, but he took the initial lead and made sure it did. He helped define what the Mesa City Hall of Fame is all about and continues to be."

He is getting in as the founder of the Hall, but he also had an impact as an athlete for Mesa High.

Millett was a guard on the 1945 state winning basketball team, played fullback on the 1946 state title team alongside Whizzer White and also won the 200-yard low hurdles in 1947 at the state meet.

“He loved sports and he excelled in sports himself,” she said. “He really enjoyed being around all of the champions and athletes. He felt like he belonged and was always excited to see everyone together every year.”

Millett, who started out in farming and became a real estate broker, eventually became a man around town because of his time at Mesa and the Hall.

“I don’t care where we would go someone would come up to him and talked to him about all of it,” Donna remembered. “They’d talk about that big long run he had or thanked him for putting them or someone they knew into the Hall of Fame. It happened all of the time.”

And now Millett will find his rightful place in the Hall himself.

“He would love it,” Donna said. “It is too bad it didn’t happen earlier, so he could truly enjoy it, but he would be very happy about being in there with everyone else who made it over the years.”