

James Kimon Economides

Born: June 23, 1935, Alton, Illinois

High School: Highland High School

College: Health & Physical Education (UNM 1957); MA Fine Arts (UNM 1964); D.D.S. (Baylor Univ 1969); MSD (Baylor Univ 1972)

A man of many talents Dr James (Lefty) (Econ) Economides personified the American Dream and has truly left a footprint not only on the sport of baseball at Highland High School's (HHS) first 4 year graduating class (1949-53) and UNM's Skyline's Conference statistics book. In later life he went on to be one of, if not, the most accomplished senior 4 wall handball player on the national and international level from New Mexico.

High School:

- 1949-53. Four years of varsity baseball. At Highland High "Lefty" was an outstanding baseball player for four years.
- During his time the school won its first State baseball championship and in 1953 he won the city batting championship with a best 522 batting average. He was enshrined in the HHS Hall of Honor for all four seasons of his baseball play.
- Turned down an offer for him to play professional baseball and he then accepted a baseball scholarship to UNM.
- 1952, he was selected to an all-state, American Legion Junior Baseball all-star team that took 2nd in State.
- Played football at HHS.

College

- Played all his 4 years at UNM. (1954-57)
- UNM was the top team in the Skyline Conference. He led that conference with a slugging percentage of 762.
- All-conference selection, a batting champion of the conference culminating in a Western All-American selection as a senior.
- 1955, he was selected for an all-state team that played in the National; Baseball Congress championships held in Wichita Kansas.

Professionally

- While at UNM Jim joined the US Marine Corp ROTC and, upon graduation, was commissioned as a 2nd Lt in the Corps where he served his country with distinction as a qualified fighter and helicopter pilot. He was deployed to Southeast Asia and received presidential commendation for that service during the Laotian Civil War.
- After completing active duty in 1960 Jim returned to Albuquerque where he worked as the physical education coach at Hodgin Elementary School where he worked with young students for several years.
- During this period, he took up the sport of 4 wall handball beginning a lifetime endeavor. Between 1991 and 2010 he won 14 US Handball Assn National Championships in both singles and doubles as well as 3 Waterford Crystal World Championships. His World titles were won in Chicago, in 2001; Ireland in 2003, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 2006. He placed 2nd in Worlds in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada in 1997. He was a dominant force in senior handball and put Albuquerque and New Mexico on the top rung of handball venues.
- A couple of his handball friends, both dentists, encouraged Jim to attend dental school. He did that and was accepted at Baylor University where he earned his DDS Diploma in 1969. That same year he was awarded the Baylor Dental Basic Science Award. He went on to receive an Orthodontic Specialist Degree (MSD) in 1972.
- From his start as a dentist his work and research were monumental. He published numerous articles in the American Journal of Orthodontics and became a "Diplomat" on the American Board of Orthodontics in 1982.
- He was appointed to the Presbyterian Albuquerque Board of Trustees for Specialty Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and, at the time of his death was a consulting editor and referee for the American Journal of Orthodontics.

## Honors

- 2011 Inducted to the UNM Sports Hall of Honor.

## Community

- For many years he coached Little League Baseball and helped provide beautiful smiles for thousands of children over the years who called him "Dr E".
- Bought an airplane and flew with his staff to the Zuni Indian reservation to treat patients who could not make the trip to Albuquerque.
- Appointed to the Presbyterian Albuquerque Board of Trustees for Specialty Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

## Family

- Married his Highland High School sweetheart, Renee, in 1955. They raised two daughters and had 8 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.