

CHARLES "CHUCK" HILL

The balance, the grace and the sheer artistry of his broken field running made Charles "Chuck" Hill one of the finest of Albuquerque football performers during the seasons that followed World-War II.

He starred first for Albuquerque High where he was a two-time all-state selection.

He later established school and NCAA kickoff return and rushing records as a shifty halfback for the University of New Mexico Lobos.

Hill, who died in Missouri in 1969, held the following school marks until All-America Terance Mathis set new standards last fall: season kickoff returns (27) in 1950; career kickoff returns (54) in 1949-51; season kickoff return yardage (729) in 1950; career kickoff return yardage (1,336 yards) in 1949-51.

As late as 1963 Hill owned or shared four NCAA kickoff return records. Because of the then-existing freshman rule, he achieved his marks over a 3-year span instead of four seasons. Also, the Lobos then were restricted to a 10-game season.

He still holds three school records: 5 touchdowns and 30 points in a single game, against Northern Arizona University in 1950, and a single-game kickoff return yardage of 215 yards against West Texas State, also in 1950.

When the Lobos played Army at West Point in 1950 (UNM

lost 51-0), the famed broadcaster Ted Husing called Hill "the best back on the field today." Hill returned 7 kickoffs for 150 yards against the Black Knights of Earl "Red" Blaik that afternoon.

He was highly recruited by Michigan, Navy and Illinois when his prep marks for Albuquerque High drew national attention.

In his two all-state seasons at AHS Hill rushed 290 times for 2,624 yards for an average of 9.048 per carry. He had a combined rushing and passing mark of 3,389 yards. He scored 258 points and 42 touchdowns. During his senior year he scored 147 points and 24 touchdowns.

Ralph Bowyer, a former UNM star and a legendary coach at Carlsbad High School (he's being inducted into the National High School Hall of Fame this summer), said Hill was "the best high school football player I've ever seen." Bowyer is a member of the Albuquerque Sports Hall of Fame board of directors.

Fans never forgot Hill's spectacular broken field running ability. The UNM media guide lists Hill with TD runs of 92, 90, 90 and 72 yards, as well as 73-yard TD punt return.

Many who knew Hill personally say that he not only was an outstanding football star, but had the potential to play major league baseball. He was a star third baseman in high school and on semipro diamond.