

★ TONY VALDEZ ★

The late Tony J. Valdez, our 59th inductee, into the Albuquerque Sports Hall of Fame, is another in a growing list of Albuquerque's distinguished renaissance men. Valdez achieved an amazing career as an athlete, coach and administrator. He was athletic director when he completed 35 years of service at Albuquerque High School in 1978.

A four-sport letterman at Cimarron High School in the late 1920's, Valdez went on to become a legend as a coach of minor sports, now Olympic sports, at Albuquerque High School. He was 83 when he died in 1994. His wife, Judy, died shortly thereafter.

A stern disciplinarian and a demanding teacher, Valdez was a great motivator who helped bring out the best among his athletes.

As a coach he achieved an astonishing record of 61 individual and team state championships in seven different sports! Many consider Valdez the most successful Hispanic coach and physical educator in the state's scholastic history.

At age 78, two years after retirement, Valdez won the prestigious 1987 U.S. National Senior Open Golf Championship in his age group at Palm Springs, Calif.

Other major Valdez honors include:

-- The National High School Athletic Coaches Association's national Distinguished Service Award in 1976.

-- The New Mexico High School Athletic Association's Hall of Fame in 1979.

-- The New Mexico Coaches Association's Hall of Honor in 1987.

"My father would have had that happy twinkle in his eye if he were to have been here to receive this honor," said Berdel Boulanger, Valdez's daughter. "He loved sports. And, he won the respect of the athletes he coached. Years after his players graduated, they would come back to thank him, mostly for demanding discipline that made them better ath-

letes and citizens."

Valdez was born and raised in Cimarron. In high school he lettered in boxing, football and basketball. He delayed enrollment at the University of New Mexico until 1935 by working as a cowboy. He helped his father, Narciso, who was foreman of the vast CS Ranch near Cimarron.

Valdez graduated from UNM in 1939 with a degree in physical education and became assistant football coach at AHS for 30 years (1943-1973). He also was assistant basketball coach.

Valdez coached four consecutive state championship boxing teams (12 individual champs) through 1949 when the sport was discontinued.

Such was his vision and talent that Valdez even created the pentathlon for state athletes. The highly-popular scholastic boy's sport stresses combined elements of strength, running and gymnastics in a singular event testing five separate athletic skills. Valdez had individual state pentathlon champions for 14 consecutive years (1946-1959)

He also organized and pioneered the sports of gymnastics and swimming in the Albuquerque public schools system. In addition he introduced one-wall handball in his AHS physical education classes.

Valdez is remembered most as AHS golf and tennis coach. Because of his encouragement and many times financing the sport with his own money, Valdez provided poor students the opportunity to learn golf, "a rich man's game." His golf teams won five state titles over a 12-year span and his tennis players won five consecutive state doubles titles.

"He was a loving father who was supportive of his extended family," said his daughter. "He took us fishing to his favorite spot above Pagosa Springs, Colo., every summer and would go deep-sea fishing every winter off Guaymas, Mexico."

A painstaking woodworker, Valdez made his own hardwood furniture. A realtor, he also founded the Rebonito Addition in the Northeast Heights.