

Long-time IGHSAU head Cooley dies at 90

Written by Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union
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The name E. Wayne Cooley has become synonymous with girls' high school sports in Iowa. His vision and leadership is viewed by contemporaries as essential in advancement of the female athlete. The longtime Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union Executive Secretary passed away Saturday, May 11 at the age of 90.

Edward Wayne Cooley was born in Mercer, Missouri on September 16, 1922 to Reverend O.E. and Mae Cooley. He was united in marriage to Gertrude "Gerry" Konkol in 1944 and had two children, Craig and Denise. After Gerry's death in 1982, he married Wendy Wykoff in 1987.

Dr. Cooley was raised Coon Rapids, Iowa. Dr. Cooley earned a collegiate degree from Buena Vista University and later received Honorary Doctorates from Morningside College and Buena Vista.

A Commissioned Naval Officer during World War II, he returned to Iowa, coaching football and track at Nevada. In 1950, he served as an instructor for one year at Grinnell College and next served as Assistant to the President at Grinnell for three years.

In 1954, Cooley accepted the assignment as Executive Secretary of the Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union, which embraced one interscholastic activity at the time, basketball. In the following 48 years under Cooley's leadership until his 2002 retirement, the IGHSAU expanded to include track and field, cross country, softball, golf, swimming, tennis, volleyball and soccer, with many of those programs flourishing well before the implementation of Title IX legislation. During his tenure, the Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union has been the nation's trailblazer in the development of girls' interscholastic athletic programs. A 1973 three-part Sports Illustrated cover story on the limited access girls had in athletics during the wake of the Title IX passage used Iowa and the IGHSAU as a model of proof to the viability of equality for girls and women in sport.

With the success of all of Iowa's girls' programs, it is the popularity of the Iowa Girls' State Basketball Tournament that Cooley is most synonymous with. Called by contemporaries as "the P.T. Barnum of hoops", Cooley turned the six-day March tournament into one of Iowa's most beloved annual events. The tournament has been televised since 1951 and was seen in as many as nine states by 1968. In addition to outstanding basketball, the tournament is also famous for its brilliant entertainment shows at halftime and between games. The tournament's

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popularity and tremendous fan-following was featured in two different photo essays by Sports Illustrated in 1969 and 1988. The tournament has also been the subject of features stories by USA Today, Chicago Tribune, Newsday, ESPN and National Public Radio.

In addition to his IGHSAU duties, Cooley also served as the Executive Vice President to the Iowa High School Speech Association, a position he held from 1963 to his retirement in 2002.

Dr. Cooley was active in many other endeavors, both in athletics and in the community. He was a long standing member of the Drake Relays Executive Committee, a member of the Board of Directors of the Women's College Basketball Hall of Fame, a Director for three banking institutions, the Buena Vista College Board of Trustees and his family church. He has also served as a vice chairman for the Iowa Games and was Chairman of the Iowa Heart Association.

He also served as National President of the United States Track and Field Federation, and was a major leader in resolving two decades of conflict over control of the nation's amateur track and field administration by successfully merging the two parties into the Athletics Congress of the United States. For his efforts, he was inducted into the United States Track and Field Federation's Hall of Fame. His efforts promoting and advancing girls high school basketball led to his induction into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 2000.

Dr. Cooley is survived by wife Wendy; son Craig (Elizabeth) of Prescott, Ariz.; daughter Denise (Roger) Brode of Chicago, Ill; grandchildren Amanda and Andrew; and one sister Rosalee Johnson of Waterloo.

Preceding him in death are his parents, and first wife Gerry.