

Nominations to  
El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame  
By  
J. Steve DeGroat

Albert Charles O'Leary  
Coach/ Administrator

A YMCA member since 1930, Al O'Leary has made his mark on thousands of El Paso boys and girls, men and women in his capacity as a teacher, coach and administrator with the El Paso YMCA.

Five years after joining the YMCA in 1930, Al's pattern of success was set when he won the El Paso City All-Around Gymnastics Championship. His work experience began in 1935-36 when he served as a camp counselor at Skyline Ranch, the YMCA camp near Cloudcroft, NM.

In 1937, he started working part-time at the YMCA as an Assistant Physical Director. He taught health, PE and religion and coached basketball, handball, boxing, volleyball, badminton, and gymnastics. He helped start the Leaders Club, entering his teams into church and city athletic leagues. Basketball greats such as Bud Lassiter, Don Nance, Lee Floyd and Billy Johnston were among members of his team who were later basketball stand outs in the Border Conference.

In 1938, Al's YMCA team won the National Hexathlon (indoor track), competing with other YMCA's all over the country.

Next Al became the full-time Physical Director and organized a Varsity Volleyball team. In 1939, he competed in the U.S. Nationals, he organized and directed a "Learn to Swim" program in El Paso and coached a YMCA Swimming Team to a city Championship.

Between 1942 and 1946, Al left the YMCA to serve as a Lt. and Captain in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army; after war times, he helped organize the Athletic Sports Program for the XXth Corp in Bavaria.

The year 1946, brought Al and the YMCA back together again in his capacity of Physical Director. In 1947, he completed his degree in Journalism and Physical Education at Texas Western. His work at the YMCA had him organizing leagues in many sports. His all star Volleyball Team won West Texas, NM and Arizona Championships several years running.

Al became volleyball official and officiated at National Volleyball Tournaments. He served on the physical committee of the National YMCA Council, National YMCA Council and the Southwest Board of the YMCA. He coached the YMCA gymnastics team that competed all over the Southwest with standouts Bruce Bixler and Bob Chesak. Craig Naylor, while under the YMCA training, won a gymnastics scholarship to New Mexico State.

Other YMCA greats under Al's guidance were handball champion, Oscar Villareal, an El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame recipient and Jim DeGroat, a regular in Al's fraternal leagues and also an El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame recipient. Fenton Slaughter, on softball fame, was another Al O'leary product.

Other programs Al organized as director in our city were the 20-30 Club Junior Olympics, Father and Son Indian Guides, Gray Y and many others.

Of some of his greatest accomplishments, are building character and leadership skills of El Paso youth and young adults. Al's mark has been left with Ralph and Wall Lowenfield, Doug and Greg Ramsey, Raymond and Kenneth Terrell, Bill and Bob Chesak, Sherrod and George Mengel, Clinton Dean, Bobby Squires, Morgan Broaddus, Bruce Cameron, Kay Arbuckle, Will Kransthor, Spike Wisburn, James Pack, Mike Newland, James Haggard, David Wiggs, Bobby Wiggs, Ken Abrams, Jim Caster, Russell Waterhouse, Mary Wilson, Skip Broaddus, Tommy Gunning, and Jim and Steve DeGroat; many who served the YMCA as an officer or director.

In 1976, Al was promoted to General Director of the YMCA and held this position until his retirement in 1983. Al is a past recipient of the City of El Paso Conquistador Award, recognized by the YMCA, United Way, various foundations and local businesses for all of his contributions to our city. In recognition for his outstanding service, the gymnasium at the downtown YMCA shares his name.

As a leader, using the YMCA and sports to strengthen the physical and moral fiber of El Paso youth, serving our community for over 50 years, for building so many great El Paso citizens, and making El Paso a better place, Al O'leary is a worthy candidate for inclusion in the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame.