

ED ERICKSON – Basketball 1955-57

Ed Erickson wasn't always a basketball player.

In fact, when he signed a scholarship with Kilgore College, he had never played a single organized basketball game. He didn't play in high school but said that he and his friends had a goal nailed to a tree in the woods near where they lived.

That was the extent of his basketball career until he received a call from Coach Joe H. Turner offering him an opportunity to play for KC. That offer would change his life forever.

Ed was born in Houston in 1937 and went to Milby High School where he graduated in 1955. One of the players on Coach Turner's team at KC in 1954 was Hunter Barton from Cayuga. Coach Turner asked Hunter if he knew of any good players to recruit for the following year, and Hunter recommended his brother, Bobby, who played at Milby High School.

Hunter also said that Bobby had a good friend who was 6'8" named Ed Erickson, but that Ed had never played basketball in high school. Coach Turner signed both Bobby and the 6'8" Ed Erickson, despite never playing in high school, to play for the 1955 Rangers.

Ed said there were three factors that swayed him to come to KC. 1) He liked the town and the college 2) He liked Coach Turner and 3) he liked the cute little things walking around campus (the Rangerettes).

Ed recalls his first game in Texarkana as an experience he'll never forget. He was shocked when Coach Turner tapped him to start in the first game since he had never truly played in a real game before. Ed said he started off by missing several shots, but finished the game with 18 points.

There were three returning sophomores for the 1955-56 Rangers – Ned Duncan, Ted Willock and Hunter Barton.

That season, KC went 27-5, winning the school's first national championship.

Ed said that playing in the national championship game in Hutchinson (Kan.) was like a dream.

In the first game in the national tournament versus Jacksonville (Fla.), Ed said he was in so much awe of the size of the arena at Hutchinson that he lost focus. He said he just couldn't hit a shot and only ended up with two points. The Rangers defeated Jacksonville by only one point, 70-69. At the end of the game Coach Turner approached Ed and asked him what was wrong. Ed replied, "Coach, we won by one point and I scored two. I'd say that's all I needed to score."

The next game, Ed made up for his two-point performance scoring 26 versus Graceland, Iowa in an 85-63 victory.

In the national championship game, KC was paired up with Hannibal out of LaGrange, Missouri. The Rangers defeated Hannibal by three points, 68-65, to claim KC's first national championship.

After the game, Ed was named to the national all-tournament team along with Ned Duncan. Ed said that he was shocked to make the all-tournament team and really thought that Hunter Barton, the team's best defensive player, was a shoe-in for the award.

After KC, Ed signed a scholarship to play for the University of Houston where he played from 1958-59 for hall of fame coach Guy Vernon Lewis who is originally from Arp. Houston was in the Missouri Valley Conference with teams such as St. Louis, Bradley, Cincinnati and Drake.

He graduated from Houston with a degree in mathematics and went to work for Armco Steel Co. Ed retired 30 years ago when the steel plant was shut down and has lived in Henderson for the last eight years.

He and his first wife, Beverly, had four children: Eddie, Kay Ann, Jo Lee and Troy. Eddie works for Valero in Houston, Kay Ann is a housewife. Jo Lee and Troy are both deceased.

He is married to Susan and has 12 grandkids, 13 great grandkids and two great-great grandkids.