

WENDELL J. MITCHELL

A lifelong resident of South Dakota, Wendell “Jim” Mitchell represents the best in local boy makes good. His rural upbringing, solid Irish-Scottish-Norwegian-Swedish family background and acquired standards for himself and his community have resulted in a citizen representing what we would hope all deaf South Dakotans to be. Jim has come to symbolize talent, integrity, honesty, and compassion through his caring attitude and sense of responsibility for others around him – “Mr. Nice Guy of the Community.” Every community in America stands to benefit much from having someone representing the synthesis of the town’s character and personality around, which is literally the role that Jim performs gracefully for all of us in Sioux Falls.



Born on August 18, 1935 in Watertown, South Dakota, Jim went to the South Dakota School for the Deaf in 1941 and, during his high school years, established a seemingly unmatched reputation for himself on the basketball court. He exhibited his wares in all other sports for which he tried out but basketball held the claim to his time and passion. He was an exemplary youngster in all phases of the total school curriculum – a role model for both adults and youths, the South Dakota way...the way champions are made.

A natural athlete, Jim was an automatic first-stringer in all sports in which he participated at SDSD and in the highly competitive city leagues – basketball, 6-man football, track and field, baseball, volleyball, and bowling. He played baseball in the Watertown American Legion League and amateur baseball in Howard, South Dakota.

Recently, he barely missed a perfect game of 300 in bowling, ending with a respectable score of 290 on March 6, 2000. The most remarkable of his many athletic feats, however, was the 52-point basketball performance against Worthing High School in 1954, a record that may stand forever. Other records of Jim “Dead Shot” Mitchell worthy of mention here are his averages of 25.7 points per game in 1953, the year SDSD captured the Little Sioux Conference championship and a total of 470 points during his senior year, 1954, averaging 27.6 and winning the title as *The Silent Worker’s* Deaf Basketball Player of the Year, the only SDSD player ever so honored. Induction into the coveted Midwest Athletic Association of the Deaf Hall of Fame is among his long list of laurels, both as a player and as a leader.