

1998 Hall of Fame Inductee Ernie Ortiz – Aurora

Ernie Ortiz has a lifetime of military experience which, coincidentally, prepared him for an outstanding career as a sports official. A retired Army Sergeant First Class, Ernie first distinguished himself athletically in the "Squared-Circle" as an award winner boxer. Early in his career he squared off against another pugilistic standout, Richard "The Hawk" Hawkins. While the exact outcome of this historic first meeting has been lost to history and formidable duo as umpires working high school and college baseball together in the Denver Metro area.

Ernie's further preparation for umpiring came during the Korean Conflict as he served his tour of duty as a military policeman stationed in Hawaii. Ernie's successful athletic career in the service led him into officiating, and during his second tour of duty in Europe, Ernie was assigned as a sports official. He distinguished himself in this capacity as well and was named to an elite crew of umpires who worked games involving major league ballplayers fulfilling their military obligations on the ball field. Ernie kept the peace in games involving the best the Army, Navy, and Marines had to offer, as well as working contests involving The University of Hawaii and teams from the Caribbean.

Perhaps as a result of this experience, Ernie found himself in Cuchi, Viet Nam training young recruits in guerrilla warfare tactics during his final tour of duty in 1966. Entering civilian life, Ernie became a standout arbiter in the Denver area working baseball and softball games at the high school and college level. Besides his membership in The Colorado High School Baseball Umpire Association, Ernie was also a charter member of The Colorado Collegiate Umpire Association.

Today, Ernie still remains active, and reports that "the wheels are still working" but says he misses the camaraderie and competition on the athletic turf. However, Ernie's military and officiating career experiences are still put to good use as he and his wife Eva have eight children, twenty-two grandchildren, and six great grandchildren to keep under control.