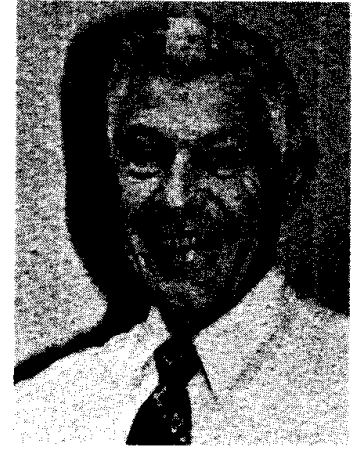


# ***Ray Eugene Kuka***

## *Havre High School*



There are a lot of good athletes and even star athletes, but only a few true sports legends. Ray Kuka is one of the few who earned that honor for his basketball heroics at Havre High School and then in the college and professional ranks. He was truly one of the "greatest of the great."

Kuka played basketball four years for the Havre Blue Ponies and led them to their first state championship as a senior in 1940. As a junior he set what was then a Class A state record by scoring 210 points in 16 games and he earned All-State honors both as a junior and senior. Class A was called the Big 16, indicating the largest sixteen schools in the state. His accomplishments on the basketball floor are remembered by many because of his style and grace on the court.

Kuka played football one year in high school and while it was not a high school sport, he also played hockey on a city team. And his ability on the ice was good enough that Dartmouth offered him a scholarship to play hockey. But he opted for basketball instead, and enrolled at Notre Dame.

He was a starting guard for the Fighting Irish as a sophomore in the 1941-42 season and received All-American honors. But his collegiate career was interrupted when he was drafted into the Army Air Force.

However, that didn't end his basketball career because he played for the Frederick Army Air Force Falcons while stationed at the base in Oklahoma. And he was named to the Service League All-Star first team after leading his team to victory in 25 out of 30 games.

After the war, Kuka married his high school sweetheart and went back to Notre Dame. Because the school did not offer facilities for married students, Kuka enrolled at Montana State and finished his college basketball career there, graduating in 1947.

Kuka was named to several all-opponent teams and also earned all-conference honors at MSU in his senior season and then launched a professional basketball career with the New York Knickerbockers. After a brief career as a starting guard with the Knicks, he served a short stint as a coach for the team before returning to Montana to launch a high school coaching career.

Although Kuka had many great employment opportunities following his career as an athlete, he chose to return to Montana, taught and coached at Havre Central High School from 1949 to 1964 and then served three years as the head basketball coach at Havre High School.