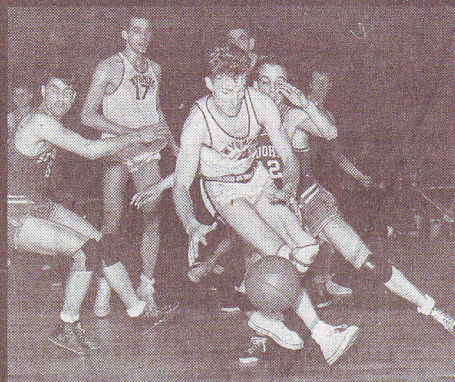


LIVING COWBOYS LEGEND



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Wyoming's Kenny Sailors drives against St. John's in a charity game that matched the NCAA and NIT champions April 1, 1943. On March 6, Sailors was announced as part of the class that will be inducted into the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame.



DAN CEPEDA | STAR-TRIBUNE

Former University of Wyoming basketball player Kenny Sailors waves to Zander Allen, 2, and his father Jeff Allen before the College Basketball Invitational on Wednesday night in the Arena-Auditorium in Laramie. Sailors is credited with popularizing the jump shot while playing for UW in the 1940s.

Jump shot innovator recalls glory days

By JACK NOWLIN

Star-Tribune staff writer

LARAMIE — Jimmy Chitwood had nothing on Kenny Sailors.

Norman Dale? A mere movie version of Ev Shelton.

Tuesday, Sailors, who last week was inducted into the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame, opened his press conference recalling the first time he and his University of Wyoming teammates met Shelton, their new coach.

Sailors, considered by many to

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explained that the rules were the same; the courts, from Madison Square Garden to the Boston Garden, were basically the same size; the rims were all 10 feet high.

(In the 1986 movie "Hoosiers," Hickory High coach Dale helps calm his players' pre-state tournament nerves by demonstrating that the rims at the tournament site were the same distance from the floor as the ones at their home gym.)

And Shelton, who was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1982, made a point of taking his team on the road where they would be forced to deal with adversity and hostile crowds.

"[Shelton] let us know that when the opposing fans were booing you, it was just a way to indicate respect," Sailors said.

The Cowboys earned a lot of re-

SAILORS TRACKER

■ **WHO:** Former University of Wyoming basketball player Kenny Sailors.

■ **BIG HONOR:** Last week Sailors was elected to the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame.

■ **HE SAID IT:** "I'm proud of this, especially since I'm such a good-looking guy." - Sailors.

be the inventor of the jump shot, and Shelton led UW to the school's only national championship in 1943.

"At the first practice we had, Ev spent the whole two hours talking about how tough it is to play on

spect during Sailors' UW career.

The 1942-43 team finished 31-2 and beat Georgetown for the NCAA title. Two days later the Cowboys beat National Invitation Tournament champion St. John's.

They proved their road toughness by winning 22 of 24 road games.

Shelton, who had already won an AAU championship prior to coming to UW, had a simple message when he came to Laramie.

"[Shelton] wanted to win a college championship," Sailors said. "He said 'I came here to win a championship and we're gonna do it. We're gonna win a national championship.'"

"And you're talking about a bunch of country kids that just came off the farm. We didn't know nothing much except milking cows and riding horses."

Sailors, now 91, played an integral role in making that happen.

He had a game-high 16 points in the title-game victory against Georgetown and was named the tournament MVP. Sailors was later pre-

the road," Sailors said. "He asked us, 'What's the difference? What makes it so hard to play on the road?'"

Sailors recounted how Shelton

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sented the award as the College Player of the Year.

It's well-chronicled that Sailors invented the jump shot on his family's farm in Hillsdale, Wyo., as a means of shooting over his older brother, Bud, who was five inches taller.

Sailors, however, has never said he invented the jump shot.

"Ray Meyer put it best," Sailors said. "He said, 'There are several people that claimed to have invented the jump shot. Kenny doesn't make that claim, but he does claim that he developed the jump shot (that) is being used today.'"

"I like that a lot better."

As for finally being elected to the Hall of Fame, Sailors said he's had other honors, but this one holds special significance.

"I'm proud of this," Sailors said, "especially since I'm such a good-looking guy."

"But it is a big issue with me that I can represent Wyoming and that I'm the only player [in the Hall of Fame] from Wyoming."