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07/29/1986 - Six Inducted To Hall Of Fame

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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (July 29, 1986)

CHARLESTON, IL.--Six former Eastern Illinois University athletic greats, a coach and one of the department's initial boosters will be inducted into the EIU Hall of Fame early this fall.

This is the fifth group to be honored, and these eight will join 37 previous inductees.

Those joining this exclusive club are Nate Anderson, Paul Henry, Dave Kessinger, John Milholland, Harold Pinther, John Ritchie, Orick Wickham and John Wilson.

Selected by an EIU Lettermen's Club committee, they will be inducted at the Panthers home opener on Saturday, Sept. 6. It's also Eastern's first ever night football game.

A dinner will be held that day officially citing the honored guests for their accomplishments, and then each or a representative will be introduced during halftime ceremonies of the EIU-Northeast Missouri game.

"The committee has again recognized outstanding individuals who have either contributed to Panther athletic success on the playing fields and courts or behind the scenes," said Athletic Director R.C. Johnson. "On behalf of the athletic department, I congratulate these eight as we are honored to have them join our Hall of Fame."

Anderson, a 1974 graduate now employed as an educational administrator at Decatur HS, was EIU's first NCAA football All-American. He gained 2516 rushing yards in 1972-73 earning College Division Kodak/AFCA 1st Team All-American honors in 1972 and Associated Press 3rd Team honors in 1973. His rushing totals are still fourth best on the all-time list.

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Henry, being honored posthumously, earned eight letters competing in football and basketball from 1937-41. In 1940 he was chosen UPI collegiate all-state as a running back. He flew for Eastern Airlines for over 30 years and, at the time of his death, was a Captain and senior pilot.

Kessinger, a 1938 graduate, was a .300 hitter for the Panther baseball team starting every game for four years from 1935-38 and lettering three times for the football team. He had tryouts with both the St. Louis Cardinals and Browns. Currently living in Sullivan he is retired from the insurance business but still broadcasts sports for Mattoon WLBH radio.

Milholland, a 1958 graduate, held the EIU career basketball scoring record of 1655 for nearly 20 years until Jon Collins broke it this past winter. He still holds the school record for season points (655), and was a three time all-conference pick leading the 1957 Panthers to fourth place in the NAIA tournament. Milholland currently is Assistant Principal and Director, Adult Basic Education Night School at Frankfort, IN.

Pinther coached several sports during a 20 year period (1955-74) receiving most of his recognition as head wrestling coach. His dual meet record was 151-103-11 with two conference titles and 51 NAIA and NCAA All-Americans. He currently is retired in Lake Wales, FL.

Ritchie, a 1936 graduate, lettered six times in football and track from 1932-36. He co-captained the football team as a senior and was active in numerous campus organizations. For 25 years he was also a prep official. He lives in Crete where he is retired from teaching in the Crete-Monee public school system.

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Wickham, honored posthumously, was one of Eastern's most active boosters providing financial and personal support for Panther athletic teams. From 1926-58 he operated Wickham's Cafe on the Charleston square employing many Panther athletes and assisting with housing for athletes and newly hired coaches.

Wilson, a 1951 graduate, was a three time all-conference basketball player leading the Panthers to a 79-22 record in the immediate post war period. He still is No. 7 on the all-time scoring list with 1408 points and in 1949 was the Most Outstanding Junior Athlete at the NAIB national tournament. He currently lives in Oak Forest and is retired from teaching in the Orland Park Sandburg school district.