

Due to WWII the sport was inactive from 1942-1945. In 1946 Ernie was the YMCA Singles Champion until 1951 when he retired his position. In appreciation to the YMCA for helping him excel in sports as a young boy, Ernie succeeded in raising funds to build the YMCA located on Montana St. An avid sportsman, Ernie was also inducted into the Golf Hall of Fame in 1997, an honor he greatly cherished. He also served as president of the El Paso Country Club, the West Texas-New Mexico Senior Golf Association, and the Inner City Group. Ernie Ponce played and promoted sports and displayed good sportsmanship since he was a young boy and continued to do so until his death.

Mary S. Ponce was born in New York City. In her early teens her family moved to El Paso and made it their permanent home. She was also a tireless civic leader and is remembered for her outstanding contributions to the city and county of El Paso. For more than 55 years Mary volunteered her time and energy in humanitarian and civic affairs. She was the director of the Woman's Department of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce. She was also president of the El Paso Council of Garden Clubs. Mary served as a member of the advisory committees for three former El Paso Mayors and directorships on numerous boards committed to the El Paso community. In 1967 she was voted El Paso Woman of the Year. She was also recognized in 1980 with the highest award given by the City of El Paso: the "Conquistador Scroll." In addition to her civic activities, Mary served as Executive Regional Director of the El Paso Chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In 1980 Mary and several Hispanic businessmen formed the Paso Del Norte Broadcasting Corporation. They served as owners and operators of El Paso's only Hispanic television station Channel 26, KINT-TV, KSVE AM Radio, and KINT FM Radio. Mary was recognized as a founding partner in the El Paso Hispanic Endowment Fund established in 1995 for the University of Texas at El Paso.

Bill Rakocy

2015 Hall of Honor Inductee

William Rakocy was born in Youngstown, Ohio on April 14, 1924. His interest in art sparked early. When he was a boy, not older than 7, a teacher gave him a note to deliver to his mother. It suggested she send him to art classes. His mother, Anna Mae, sent him to the Butler Art Institute where he studied well into his teens.



In 1943, William was drafted into the Navy and spent three years enlisted, including some time in the Philippines. He worked on recruitment training murals with historically based themes and sketched thousands of portraits of his fellow soldiers while overseas.

After returning stateside, he enrolled at the Kansas City Art Institute where he received both his bachelors of arts and masters of fine arts. While in school, he met Gloria Canterbury who soon became his wife, and they went on to have five children.

Over the next six decades, Rakocy worked for advertising agencies, as a film set designer, published an art newspaper, was fine arts chairman at the College of Artesia, New Mexico, taught art classes, including in El Paso and New Mexico, wrote twelve books about the southwest, settled and built an art studio in West El Paso, was Curator of Education at the El Paso Museum of Art, worked on the El Paso Museum of History and Wilderness Park Museum, worked with local artists such as Mario Parra and Manny Acosta, and participated in a variety of art shows in the southwest and throughout several states.

Art was Rakocy's life, and he shared his life with others through his work. He was eager to show people his work and to teach up and coming students. He was adamant about sharing the southwest to people all over the country.

Nestor Valencia

2015 Hall of Honor Inductee

Nestor Valencia is a native El Pasoan who knows what it means to improve and give back to a city. He was born and raised in Ysleta and graduated with a BA degree in Art, and later an M.A. in political science from the University of Texas at El Paso. Prior to this, he spent four years in the Air Force.

In 1958, Nestor began working for the city of El Paso. As a trained urban planner, he was instrumental in bringing about the Chamizal Settlement, the refurbishing of the Plaza Theater, and the Wyler Aerial Tramway. He is also a staunch advocate of the street car system, being fascinated with them since he and his mother traveled to Juarez in them in the 70s. He served as Vice President for Planning for the El Paso Community Foundation as well.

He retired as Director of Planning for the City of El Paso and continues his work in art these days with his wife, Xochitil. He is a member of the Portrait Society of America and owns the Valencia Art Studio on 2113 W. O'Hara Road, Anthony, New Mexico.

