



## Fred Jacoby, commissioner for seven different leagues, dies at 80

March 17, 2008

### The NCAA News

Fred Jacoby, who led the Southwest Conference for 10 years before four of its members left to create the Big 12 Conference, and then came out of retirement in the mid-1990s to serve as commissioner of leagues in Divisions II and III, died Saturday in Dallas. He was 80.

His death follows a 2 1/2-year battle with multiple myeloma, a cancer that affects the bone marrow.

Jacoby led seven different conferences in all three divisions during his career, beginning with the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1966. He retired in 2006 from his dual post as commissioner of the Lone Star Conference in Division II and American Southwest Conference in Division III, but continued to serve as a consultant after stepping down.

"College sports lost a giant," AT&T Cotton Bowl President Rick Baker, a former Southwest Conference assistant commissioner, told The Dallas Morning News Sunday. "Fred Jacoby knew everyone, and everyone knew and respected him. He was all about service, and he dedicated his life to helping student-athletes succeed in the arena, in the classroom and in life."

Jacoby, who survived and bounced back from a heart transplant in 1989 during his tenure at the Southwest Conference, also led the Mid-American Conference in Division I from 1971 to 1982 (and served during that period as commissioner of the Central Collegiate Hockey Association). He also led the Ohio Athletic Conference in Division III for a year before moving to the SWC.

During his administrative career, Jacoby served 22 years -- the longest tenure in program history -- as chair of the National Letter of Intent program.

As a commissioner, Jacoby oversaw the integration of women's athletics programs into both the Mid-American and Southwest Conferences.




"Professionally, Fred will be remembered as the consummate commissioner," said Rick Chryst, commissioner of the Mid-American Conference, who worked on the SWC staff under Jacoby. "His broad experience as a student-athlete, coach and administrator; his unwavering commitment to the highest values of intercollegiate athletics and higher education; most of all, his abiding sense of fairness and unflinching integrity are all qualities which any commissioner would be fortunate to possess."

"On a personal note, as with anyone fortunate enough to know Fred, his kindness, decency and humanity will be what is remembered."

Jacoby also oversaw the transition from NAIA to NCAA Division III membership of the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic and American Southwest Conferences.

"The American Southwest Conference lost its founding commissioner and a true friend with the death of Fred Jacoby on Saturday," said Dr. R. Vic Morgan, president of Sul Ross State University and chair of the ASC Council of Presidents. "His leadership in developing the constitution and bylaws, building the membership and

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**Photo courtesy  
Dallas Morning News**

transitioning to NCAA Division III affiliation made the American Southwest Conference what it is today, a vital and widely acclaimed conference in the southwestern part of the United States."

Jacoby's successor as ASC commissioner, Amy Carlton, is one of eight current conference commissioners who worked at one time or another for Jacoby.

"Fred was a thoughtful and dedicated leader in intercollegiate athletics throughout his career, influencing the lives and careers of student-athletes, coaches, administrators and staff at the many schools, conferences and organizations he was involved with," she said. "He maintained a passion for college athletics and a keen interest in the ASC and Division III throughout his struggle with multiple myeloma."

His service in Division I also is being recalled this week, a full 15 years after the disbanding of the SWC.

"I became a commissioner at 32, and Fred was one of the commissioners that really mentored me in a lot of ways," Big 12 Conference Commissioner Dan Beebe, an NCAA director of enforcement who became commissioner of the Ohio Valley Conference in 1989, told the Morning News.

"He was just a good human being who would have been a good person in whatever profession he wanted to get into, and a lot of us were lucky that he was in intercollegiate athletics. He was a very principled man and very kind and supportive of anybody that would seek his assistance."

"Fred was a source of ideas, unmatched energy and enthusiasm, and always held the student-athlete in the highest regard, championing the role of athletics in the development of young people," Sul Ross State's Morgan said. "On every occasion, Fred worked for student opportunities to participate, grow and excel in athletics, academics and the community."

"I'm saddened to hear of Fred's passing, but I'm glad to know that his long struggle ended peacefully," said Stan Wagnon, also a former assistant to Jacoby who succeeded him as commissioner of the Lone Star Conference. "The Lone Star Conference was very fortunate to be a part of Fred's legacy and I feel blessed to have worked with and learned from such a great man. He'll be missed but his influence will live on in collegiate athletics."

Jacoby also served during his career as a president of the Collegiate Commissioners Association, and chaired several NCAA committees, including the Research and Postgraduate Scholarship committees and a special committee on membership structure. He also served as secretary-treasurer of the College Football Association and the Cotton Bowl Athletic Association's team selection committee.

A native of Logan, Ohio, Jacoby graduated from Ohio State in 1948, then was a high school coach in Ohio and Wisconsin. He served from 1958 to 1966 as assistant football coach at Wisconsin, where he earned a master's degree in 1953.

The recipient of numerous honors and awards, Jacoby also became an advocate for organ donation and the Texas-based Southwest Transplant Alliance following his 1989 surgery.

Jacoby is survived by his wife of 51 years, Marcia; sons Tom, Steve and Bob; and two grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. (Central time) Tuesday at King of Glory Lutheran Church, 6411 LBJ Freeway, Dallas

Donations in memory of Jacoby may be made to U.T. Southwestern Medical Center Heart, Lung and Vascular Program, 5909 Harry Hines Blvd. Dallas, Texas 75390-9243, or King of Glory Lutheran Church (Foundation), 6411 LBJ Freeway Dallas, Texas 75240.

*The NCAA News thanks Amy Carlton, commissioner of the American Southwest Conference, for her assistance in compiling this article.*