

# Eller's friends and family proud of his many achievements

BY LAYLA GARMIS  
THE CHRONICLE

City native Carl "Moose" Eller received more than a few accolades over the course of his storied 15-year NFL career.

A first round draft pick in 1964, the Atkins High School alumnus was selected to play in six Pro Bowls, made four Super Bowl appearances, holds the all-time record for sacks in Minnesota Vikings history and was named the NFL's Defensive Player of the Year in 1971. The former defensive end was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2004 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 2006, but that didn't stop the butterflies in Eller's stomach when he returned home to his hometown to pick up one more award.

"Over my lifetime, I've given many (acceptance) speeches," Eller remarked. "...but none of them are more important or exciting than this honor I'm receiving today to come back to my old high school to be with family and friends, people who knew me way back when."

Allstate insurance and the Pro Football Hall of Fame honored the 71 year-old father of three with a Hometown Hall of Famers plaque during a March 5 ceremony at Atkins Academic and Technology High School on Old Greensboro Road. The plaque, which denotes Eller's many accomplishments in the League, was presented as part of a national effort to honor football's greatest players, coaches and contributors in the places where their legacies began.

Eller told the audience of students, faculty, family members and fellow alumni that he is proud of his hometown.

"I'm very proud of being from Winston-Salem and I've never forgotten my roots because that's where it all started," he declared.

"...I'm really glad to see all of you here. What a great group of people. It's just wonderful to see that they have contributed and helped to build up not just Atkins High School, but all of Winston-Salem."

Eller's oldest child, Cinder Eller, joined Eller's aunt Elizabeth Scott and cousin Linda Cole of Winston-Salem at the ceremony.

"It's an honor," the longtime Los Angeles resident said of the plaque. "I'm so excited that this will stay in the school. It's history, and it's something that our family can be proud of."

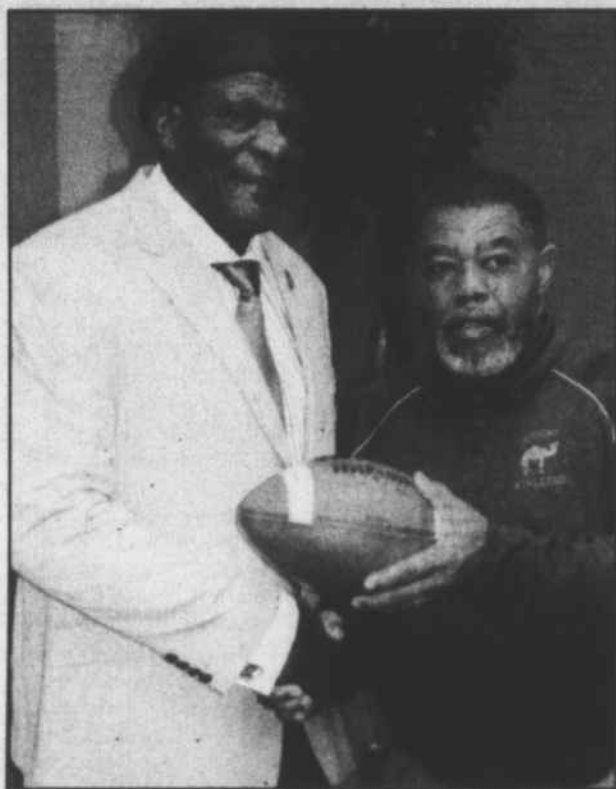
Scott, a city native, said watching Eller progress from a hulking youth to an NFL sensation was a surreal experience for her.

"I can't describe it because I never thought it would come to this. It's been beautiful," she related. "...When he was inducted into the Hall of Fame in Akron (Ohio), we didn't get a chance to go, so I thought it would be a great honor just to be here to support him and let him know that we are proud of the achievements he has made down through his life."

Cole, Scott's daughter and Eller's first cousin, said



Carl "Moose" Eller poses with his daughter, Cinder Eller, and the plaque commemorating his career that is now on display at Atkins.



Atkins Athletic Director Linwood Jerald takes advantage of a photo opportunity with the former Camel.

she relished watching Eller excel on the field all those years ago. The Winston-Salem State University employee said Eller had expressed his excitement about the event, and she wanted to be there to root him on, just like in the old days.

"He was just so enthused about receiving this honor that we knew he would appreciate our being here, and it was fun to see all the students," said the Anderson alumna.

The Atkins football team showed their respect for Eller by donning their jerseys at the ceremony, and Eller said he was glad to see the old Atkins Camel mascot has remained a part of the school's legacy.

"Thank you for continuing that tradition. It's a very proud and strong tradition that you guys are following," the University of Minnesota alumnus told current players. "Take great, great pride in that."

Camel pride ran deep in the audience, as evidenced by the presence of folks like Kirby Thompson, who, like Eller, was a member of the school's Class of 1960. The two were only acquaintances in high school, but that didn't stop Thompson, a retired probation officer, from supporting his former classmate, whom he says belonged to an elite group of athletes that helped to set the school apart from the crowd.

"We were known all over the nation. Atkins High School was a nationally known black high school," he recalled. "Even though we came from different sections of town and we were not always social with each other, today, it's like one big family."

Eller's former teammate, HESSIE SMITH, has many fond memories of his high school football days and the camaraderie members of the team shared. Even in those days, Eller put in long hours on the practice field, staying on long after the others had headed for the showers, but his success didn't stop at the football field. Eller was also a shot put player, a member of the drum corps and president of his senior class, Smith reported.

"We loved football, we loved each other and we got along well," he said. "...Eller was more than a football player; he was a good student."

Fellow 1960 alumnus Anthony Scales said he jumped at the chance to be in the number at the ceremony last week.

"Of course I wanted to come here as a classmate and friend," said Scales, who added that he followed Eller's NFL career closely. "It's a great honor for him, and it's a great honor for the kids here to meet him to meet somebody from this area who has been successful. These are the types of role models they need."



Eller's first cousin, Linda Cole (left) and aunt, Elizabeth Scott.

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