



Robert Eller, right, hosted a live Monday evening call-in radio show, "Let's Talk Sports" on WAAA, which often included legendary WSSU Coach Clarence "Big House" Gaines, seen at left.



Recent photo of Robert Eller

Photos courtesy of The Robert Eller Family

Eller

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halls of The Chronicle's office, but have now been given to Eller's family. Pitt said the spots where those awards hanged will remain empty in honor of Eller.

Eller was born in Boomer, N.C., and attended school in Wilkes County. He earned an associate degree in Arts/English and Journalism from Wilkes Community College, a bachelor's degree from WSSU and a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

His sports reporting went beyond the written word. He became the Voice of the Rams as a public address announcer for WSSU sports. He hosted a live Monday evening call-in radio show, "Let's Talk Spots" on WAAA, which often included legendary WSSU Coach Clarence "Big House" Gaines and national guests he'd interview over the phone. Eller also became a BET Budweiser sports reporter.

Winston-Salem Recreation and Parks Director Tim Grant was a player for the championship-winning WSSU basketball team in the late '70s when he met Eller, who was one of the few newspaper reporters covering WSSU sports. After Grant graduated from WSSU, he was a coach there in the 1980s and Eller covered his Lady Rams softball team winning repeated CIAA championships. He said Eller was an exceptional sports writer. "Without a doubt, he was one of the best," Grant said.

Along with sports reporting, Eller had a long career with the Parks and Recreation Department beginning in 1975. During

his 30-year career, he worked at Old Town, Georgia Taylor, Sprague, Happy Hill and Little Creek recreation centers.

Eller did pioneering work with special populations in the recreation department, including bringing Beep Ball for blind softball players to the state. He coached the Smokers wheel chair basketball team. Eller also served as the chairman of the local Special Olympics and coached a gold medal winning Special Olympics team.

Grant said Eller had the perfect skill set for his work.

"He had the perfect attitude to work in parks and rec," he said. "Because he enjoyed people, he was interested in all people, always had something humorous to say, was always willing to help any and everybody, and he was one of those employees who wasn't always watching the clock. He would work until he got the job done."

Eller's wife, Dianna, whom Eller married in 2003 after a long courtship, said he truly enjoyed his work at local recreation centers.

"He loved raising the city of Winston-Salem's children," she said.

After he retired in 2005, he became actively involved in his church, First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue. She said he continued to work with children with his best friend, Dr. William Warren, through First Baptist's Kids for Christ (KFC) ministry. She said Eller was volunteering with the church up until the day he passed away.

She said he was quick-witted and well read and always had something to say about everything. She said he was compassionate

and helped anyone he came across who needed help.

"He was a Samaritan," she said. "There was no he could pass on the road."

Eller had three children, Marcus Dixon, Jamar Eller Crawford and Jamailya Eller-Mathews, along with 11 grandchildren. Eller-Mathews said her father touched the lives of many children in Forsyth County, especially those who needed it the most.

"Daddy could reach anybody," she said. "It seems like the toughest ones, the ones everybody kind of threw their hands up to, he'd be more patient with them, he'd let them know he really cared, and he did. He was always able to reach the kids that most people had given up on."

Eller-Mathews has fond childhood memories of her father, who she said was a kid at heart with a great sense of humor. He'd ride all the roller coasters with her at Carowinds. He would play Cabbage Patch Kids with her. She took him as her date to her senior prom, where he danced a "Soul Train" line, and she said what he lacked in rhythm, he more than made up for in enthusiasm.

She also spent time with her father at his recreation job. It exposed her to people with different disabilities and made her see beyond those disabilities. She said Beep Ball was "awesome to watch." She said she'll never forget all the things he taught her.

"He was just the best dad. He just had an awesome way of making me feel loved," she said. "And he was just a great man, great friend, great son and an awesome person, and he will be missed, but I feel his spirit every day."

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