

ARLINGTON SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - JUNE 1, 2005



Alward V. Burch, retired in July 2004, as principal of Bishop Denis J. O'Connell High School, Arlington, VA, after having served the educational needs of the students, families and surrounding communities of the school for 43 years.

Al Burch is a native Washingtonian, raised in Anacostia and educated at St. Theresa's parochial school and St. John's College High School where he lettered in baseball (All-Prep 3 years), basketball and football (All-Prep 2 years). He attended Montgomery Junior College 1955-57, starring in baseball, basketball and football. In 1956, he was named an All-American in Football.

Mr. Burch received an athletic scholarship from the University of Corpus Christi, Texas, where he played three sports and hoped to become a coach after graduation. He earned his B.S. Degree at Corpus Christi in 1959, and at graduation, received the

Good Fellow Award for academic and athletic accomplishments.

Early in his educational career, Al Burch served as instructor in History, Science and English at Surrattsville Junior High School in Surrattsville, MD. In 1961, he began his lengthy association with O'Connell H.S. after being hired by athletic director, Bob Rusevlyan, and became the freshman football, freshman basketball and junior varsity baseball coach. In 1963, he became the varsity baseball coach. Under Burch's guidance, the varsity baseball team won 42 consecutive games during the 1963-65 seasons, a feat that was recognized in 1965 by the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. During that same period, O'Connell never lost a game in the Washington, D.C. Catholic League, winning three consecutive Catholic League championships.

In 1972, Burch, while continuing his baseball coaching duties, became assistant principal of O'Connell. During his tenure as assistant principal, he earned his M.Ed. Degree from American University in 1975. His baseball teams won five consecutive Virginia State Catholic League championships (1973-77). In 1977, he became the first lay principal of the school and had to relinquish his position as head baseball coach. His fifteen year, 1963-1977, varsity baseball coaching record was 262-52.

Mr. Burch received Coaching Achievement Awards from the Better Sports Club in 1964 and 1976, was named Coach of the Year by the Northern Virginia Umpires Association (1977), and elected to the Sandlot Hall of Fame by the Washington, D.C. Home Plate Club in 1977.

During his lengthy academic and administrative career, Mr. Burch, through his leadership, coordination and many innovative ideas, helped O'Connell H.S. modernize and expand its facilities, enrich its programs, increase its enrollment and develop a strong professional staff, to become one of the largest and finest coeducational institutions in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. In 1992, the school was named a "Blue Ribbon Secondary School of Excellence" by the U.S. Department of Education. In 1998, Mr. Burch was presented with "The Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award."