



2002 MASTER OF WRESTLING AWARD

Jim Keen

Jim Keen has been actively involved in the great sport of wrestling for nearly half a century. Although many of his contributions are “behind the scenes,” they often impact the sport in major ways. His dedication to the sport began while he was still in high school, spending many hours in the basement of his home working on a new form of protective gear with his father, the legendary coach Cliff Keen. As a result of their determination and research, the sport’s first headgear was introduced.

After high school, Jim wrestled at the University of Michigan under the tutelage of his father. In 1963, his senior season, the team won the Big 10 Championship and placed 3rd at the NCAAs. It was during that time, while still in business school, that Jim truly fell in love with the sport and realized he would make it his life vocation to support it in any way he could.

Upon graduation from college, Jim was excited to be able to work along side his father in developing and expanding Cliff Keen Athletic, the company that resulted from Coach Keen’s headguard invention. Together they had a passion that naturally manifested itself in wanting to make top quality wrestling apparel and gear available to wrestlers that



had the same love for the sport that they did. Today, Cliff Keen Athletic is the world’s largest manufacturer of wrestling equipment and uniforms, as well as being heavily involved in the manufacturing of uniforms for other sports. Currently the company’s CEO, Jim, is still actively involved and continues to raise awareness of the safety issues

of the sport and the importance of protective gear. With the help of his sons, who have the same passion for the sport he does, Cliff Keen Athletic strives to make a difference in Wrestling by sponsoring a myriad of tournaments, including The Wrestling USA/Cliff Keen Dream Team Classic. This annual event raises money for the Friends of Wrestling, to help disadvantaged wrestlers.

Jim’s commitment doesn’t end there. He has served on the Board of Governors of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame since 1993, where, as Vice-Chairman, he helped in raising funds for the new facility in Stillwater, Oklahoma. In addition, Jim has worked on many national committees, particularly with congressmen, in trying to find a solution to the problem of Title IX and its detrimental effects on the Sport of Wrestling.

Whether he’s working with congressmen in Washington, or kids in Ann Arbor, Jim’s philosophy has always been to, in his words, “do the best you can and try to do what’s right.” He feels strongly about giving back to the sport that has meant a lot to him.

Jim and his wife, Mary, have three children: Jim Jr., Caroline, and Tom. They are also the happy grandparents of four girls.