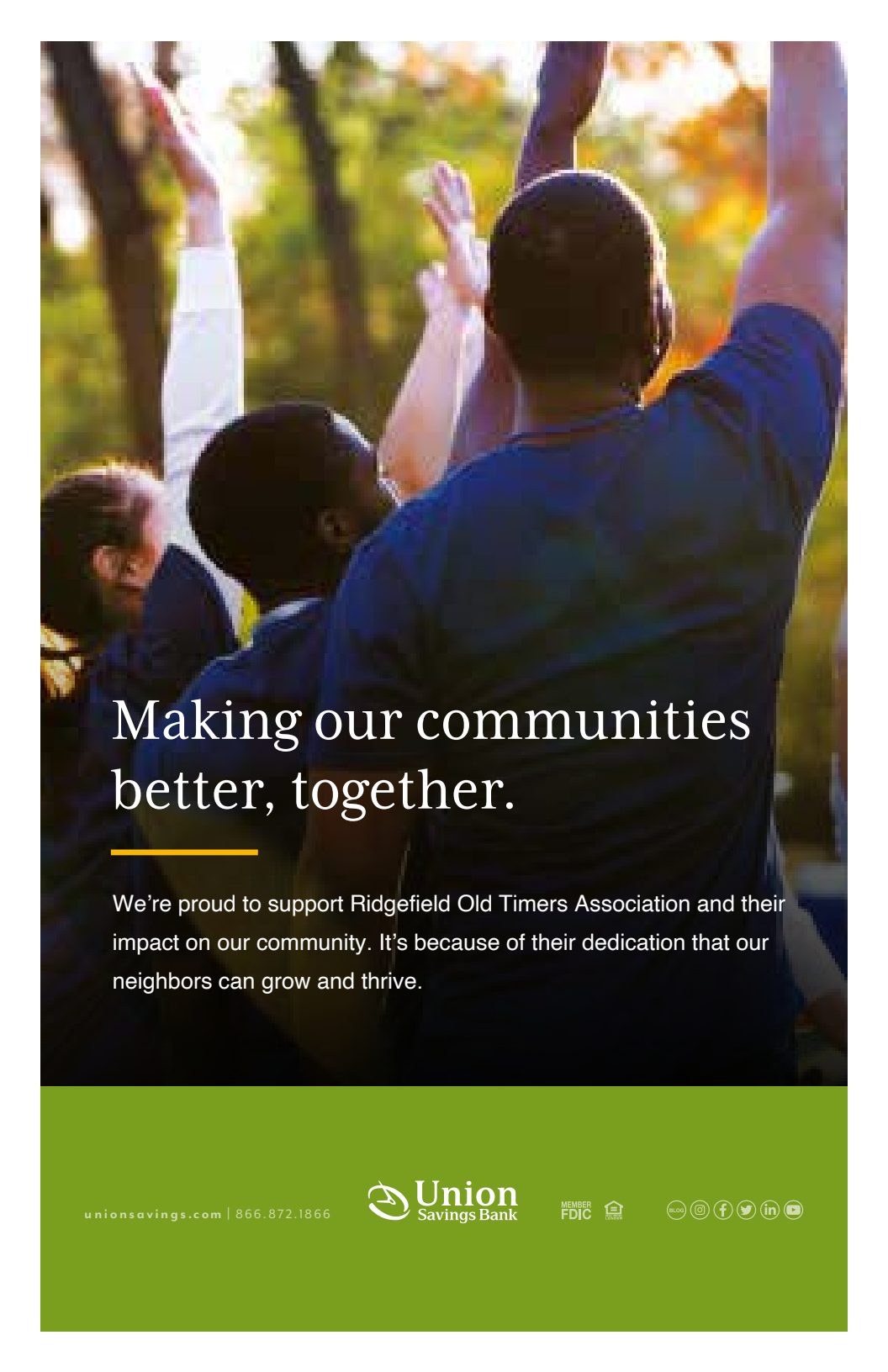


RIDGEFIELD OLD TIMERS
ASSOCIATION



30TH ANNUAL DINNER
OCTOBER 14, 2023



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A Message from Our Chairman

As the chairman of the Ridgefield Old Timers Association (ROTA), I would like to offer congratulations to tonight's four Ridgefield High School 2023 graduates: Henry Idone, Kathleen Tebbe, Tyler Berman, and Caroline DelGuidice! Tyler and Caroline are receiving the Tom Belote Scholarship which began only four years ago in memory of Tom, who was a longtime ROTA chairman.

These (4) scholarships each year would not be possible without the support of so many people and local businesses over the past 30 years, and those that contributed to the Silent Auction, which has also been very helpful too. Please do what you can to help support ROTA.

Tonight's annual recognition dinner is being catered by Ridgefield Prime as it has for several years and we would like to again thank St. Mary's Parish for allowing us to use their beautiful hall once again.

The purpose of tonight's dinner is to honor Ridgefielders for their past accomplishments on the athletic field and in the classrooms along with honoring those who have dedicated countless hours for the benefit of our town. This dinner also helps us raise money to fund our scholarships. We are one of the few organizations which give our scholarship recipients a check for each of their four years of undergraduate studies.

I would like to thank all the members of ROTA for their continued hard work throughout the year by coming to meetings, organizing this wonderful event, writing the bios for each of the recipients, organizing/collecting the ads and bios and putting them into the program, setting up the ticket sales, running tonight's silent auction and so much more! Those members are: Gregg and Manette Hutchings, Mark Fitzgerald, Peter Nichols, John Pieriandri, Trish Larosa, Darla and Ben Shaw, Trish Gernert, Dave Kiley, Rich Pereira, and Linda Hutchings.

I would like encourage anyone that is reading this to get involved with this wonderful organization tonight or in the near future. Find out more about us at Ridgefieldoldtimers.org and thanks so much for coming and enjoy the evening!

— *Mark Lionetti, Chairman*



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30th Annual Dinner

Ridgefield Old Timers Dinner

Saturday, October 14, 2023

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Who's in charge of the Old Timers?

The Officers: Mark Lionetti, Chairman; Trish LaRosa, Secretary;
Dave Kiley, Vice Chairman; Manette Hutchings, Treasurer

Awards Dinner Committee: Mark Fitzgerald, Andree Fitzgerald,
Trish Gernert, Terry Hughes, Gregg Hutchings, Manette Hutchings, Linda Hutchings,
Dave Kiley, Trish LaRosa, Pete Nichols, John Pierandri, Darla Shaw, Ben Shaw

Former Chairmen: Paul Baker, James Belote, Tom Belote, George Hanlon,
Frank Lancaster Sr., Rudy Marconi, Andy Montanari Sr., Jay Montanari,
John Pierandri, Mark Fitzgerald, Pete Nichols



Congratulations to the Bossidy's

Thank you so much for all
that you have done for the
Town of Ridgefield.

Paul and Dewey McNamara



CIVIC AWARD

Nancy and Larry Bossidy

A Fifty-Three Year Commitment to Ridgefield

Perhaps no two people have done more than Larry and Nancy Bossidy to improve the quality of life in Ridgefield. ROTA is recognizing Larry and Nancy because they have spent the past half century enriching the lives of Ridgefielders.

For Nancy, the Civic Award is posthumous as she passed away peacefully in her beloved Ridgefield home on March 21st of this year.

Larry and Nancy grew up in Pittsfield, Mass. While they were acquaintances throughout high school, they did not start dating until both were in college (Larry at Colgate University, Nancy at Regis College).



Bossidy family at Tiger Hollow early 2000's

Larry and Nancy fell in love and married in 1956. Over the next fifteen years they had nine children (Lynn RHS '75, Larry Jr. RHS '76, Paul RHS '78, Pam RHS '79, Nancy Immaculate HS '81, Mary Jane RHS '82, Lucy RHS '84, Mike RHS '87 and Kathleen Sacred Heart Academy '89).

Larry and Nancy spent the first thirteen years of their married life in Schenectady, NY, where Larry worked for GE and Nancy managed an incredibly busy household. They moved to Ridgefield in 1970 when Larry accepted a position at GE Capital in Stamford.

Over fifty-three years Larry and Nancy have contributed to the growth of Ridgefield in countless ways. In the early years Larry coached his three sons in Babe Ruth baseball and Townies basketball. Larry was an extraordinary athlete in his youth and apparently he and Nancy passed some of the athletic DNA to their children as sons Larry Jr., Paul and Mike are all previous ROTA Sports Award honorees.

Larry and Nancy joined St. Mary's Parish in 1970 and over the years they have been active members and supporters of the St. Mary's Church and school communities. Nancy taught religious education at St. Mary's for thirteen years.

Larry and Nancy have given generously to many of Ridgefield's wonderful organizations, including the Ridgefield Volunteer Nurse Association, the Ridgefield Library, Founders Hall, the Boys and Girls Club, Ridgefield Little League, the Tiger Booster Club and Family & Children's Aid in Danbury among others.

Nancy served on the Founders Hall Board of Directors for eleven years and Larry served on the RVNA Board. Amazingly, Nancy tap danced with the McDonald Pin dancers for thirty-six years!

Larry and Nancy were also the initial benefactors to one of Ridgefield's greatest assets: Tiger Hollow. Thanks to the up front planning and generosity of Larry and Nancy, thousands of Ridgefield's youth have had the privilege of playing and practicing at Tiger Hollow, one of the pre-eminent athletic facilities in Connecticut. Larry and Nancy were thrilled to watch some of their thirty-one grandchildren compete on the Tiger Hollow field.

From the start, family has been the centerpiece of life for Larry and Nancy. They felt fortunate to raise their children in this awesome town. Much of the time and treasure they invested over the years has built or strengthened programs for young people, ensuring that many future generations of kids can enjoy Ridgefield as much as the Bossidy clan did.

Over the years and anonymously, Larry and Nancy have stepped forward many times to assist Ridgefield families in need.

The quality of life in Ridgefield is greatly enhanced by the incredible resources, facilities and service organizations that benefit all of us. Larry and Nancy Bossidy were instrumental in the formation and growth of virtually every one of these town treasures.

Larry and Nancy, thank you for your boundless and unwavering fifty-three year dedication to Ridgefield. ■

— *Paul T. Bossidy*



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for their amazing support
the past 20 years.



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EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Denise Charboneau

Teacher of the Year 2023

Denise is being honored for her dedicated athletic work at Ridgefield High School. She spent thirty-five years at the school teaching physical education and coaching. Ridgefield athletes have fond memories of working with Denise.

Since Denise was in high school at Platt, in Meriden, Ct., prior to Title IX, only club sports were available to girls. She played softball and basketball when you had six players (3 defense, 3 offence, of which two were rovers). In her spare time Denise also liked to play wiffle ball.

For college Denise went to Arnold College (University of Bridgeport). Here she played on the golf team and played varsity field hockey for four years. In her senior year she was the captain of the field hockey team and won the E.H. Arnold award for Outstanding Senior Woman. During her summers in high school and college, Denise worked as a sport's camp counselor and director at an "at risk" girls camp in the Poconos.



For her first professional job out of college in 1970, Denise came to work at RHS. She was so happy to be working with Gerry Matteo, fellow phys. education teacher, Hal Healy, principal, and Bill Allen, athletic director. Denise remembers that she began teaching in the old high school gym while the new high school was being built. She had huge classes of girls in half of the gym, and the outside hockey/soccer field had a decided slope which gave an advantage to one team or the other. She also remembers that early on teams played in the Southwest Ct. league with Bethel, Masuk, Newtown, etc.

When Title IX came into play, everything changed for Denise and boys became part of her classes to a limited degree. These boys liked to "hog" the play as they felt that girls were incapable of being good athletes. After a short period of time, activities were offered by different sports; archery, fencing, golf, games, square dancing, etc. so boys were more fully integrated into classes. During these early years Denise remembers such good female athletes as Betsy McDonald, Janet Yanity, Izzy Caporale, Carol Robertson, Midge Robertson, Karen Kaprowicz, Kathy Smith, Sherry Edwards, and LeeAnn Schmidt to name just a very few.

Denise started the RHS girls' track team as a club in 1973, but it was not until 1975 that the team gained FCIAC status. To develop the team, Denise read many books and got assistance from Rick Medve, Chris Wilkinson, Mike Oshan, and Gerry Matteo. She was shocked when over one hundred girls came out to try for the team. Many of these girls were good softball players and wanted to try track.

Finding indoor track time in the winter was always a problem for the track team, as was the cinder outdoor track. Girls always had to bring their cans of “cinder suds” to clean out scraped knees, hands, and elbows. In the beginning the field events and distance runners brought success to RHS, but later on sprints, hurdles, and relay events were beginning to be won by RHS girls.

In 1991 when Denise was assistant girls’ coach and John Osborne was in charge of track, the RHS girls won FCIAC for the first time. It was sixteen years in the making, but so worth it. Much of the credit for the win goes not only to the runners, but to the timers, measurers, and judges. As Denise says, “It takes a village to run a track meet.”

Denise has remained athletically active since retiring from Ridgefield High School. She plays on softball and volleyball leagues, works out with cardio, weights, and yoga and loves to play golf. She also loves to travel and has been to France, Italy, Israel, and Costa Rica and spends much time in Sanibel, Florida. Denise also fondly remembers going with Joyce Flanagan and her chorus to the UK and Canada.

For sixteen years, Denise has been a volunteer chaplain at N.Y. Presbyterian-Hudson Valley Hospital. She has also been singing with the Westchester Women’s Chorus for over thirty years. The national sports team that she most strongly roots for is the Yankees.

When parents are unhappy about their child’s sporting event, Denise says, “have a discussion privately with the coach before it gets out of hand and always keep an open mind. Also remember to be as kind as possible, and even laugh.”

Denise has found that teaching and coaching has helped her in so many situations. She also believes strongly in physical activity as she finds that it helps build teamwork, relieves stress, and helps with mental health in not only young people, but in adults. ■



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POSTHUMOUS AWARD

Sally Sibernagle Ruggles

The Books on the Commons and Sally Ruggles were an institution in Ridgefield for over twenty years, starting in 1984. Sally and her first husband, Bob, worked together in a small 450 square foot building on Danbury Road to establish their dream, a bookstore. When Copp's Hill Commons was built they then moved into a 2,000 square foot space.

Books on the Common was so much more than a bookstore. It was like going to someone's home. The service was so caring and personal and you felt so comfortable asking questions. Sally got to know everyone by name, their preferences, and books that might inspire or challenge them. She also helped locate rare books, get exceptional deals on multiple copies, expose you in person to well-known authors, and never leave you without a good book.

When Bob Sibernagle died very early in life, Sally had to work doubly hard to keep the book store going. She had to fight online businesses like Amazon and the Killer B's (Barnes and Noble and Borders). When other book stores in town closed, Sally was able to stay open as her compassion and ability to address the needs of her customers was outstanding.

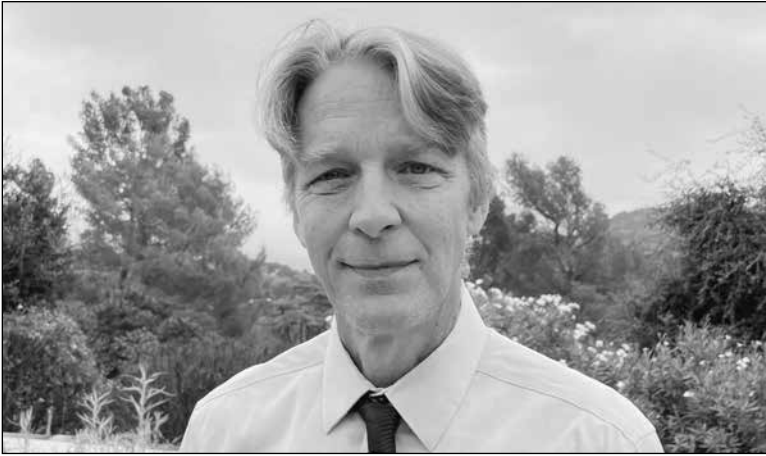


Sally was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Her father was a military officer and owned a fruit farm. The family moved to Michigan where at age 16 Sally became an area beauty queen. She was voted Allegheny County Harvest Queen and Michigan Apple Queen. She graduated from Michigan State University in 1965 magna cum laude and met her first husband while studying in London. Sally and Bob then attended Boston College together for their masters and dreamed of owning their own bookstore.

Sally was the mother of three children, Brian, Andrew, and Kristen who worked in the bookstore alongside their mother. Because of her children Sally was always an active volunteer in the schools, in her church, and at the library. She loved the town and felt that her expertise with books could help others no matter what the organization.

Later in life Sally married, Rudy Ruggles, a successful businessman/scientist in the biomedical field. With Rudy, Sally was able to travel to the most exotic places and even get married by a Tuarey tribesman from Mali and experience the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean in a Russian submarine.

With Rudy, Sally became a philanthropist. The family made large donations to Danbury Hospital where Rudy funded and started a biomedical research center named after the Ruggles family, to Ronald McDonald Houses in both Connecticut and Massachusetts for respite care and technology, to the J. Craig Venter Institute on Aging for research, to various arts organizations in town, and to the Ridgefield Library where the Fine Arts Reading Room is named in their honor. Sally's funeral reception was held at the Lounsbury House, Community Center, a very fitting place for people's final good-byes. Ridgefield is honored to have had both Sally and Rudy with such a strong civic interest in their community. ■



ARTS AWARD

Mark Salzman

Mark Salzman, Ridgefield High School graduate 1977, is one of the most accomplished people from our community. He is a novelist (with 9 books), writes memoirs, is a professional cellist, a martial arts expert, a calligrapher, a lecturer, an agnostic, an authority on Chinese culture, a screen writer, and an actor.

Growing up in Ridgefield led Mark to write a book about his experiences in town; *Lost in Place*, *Growing Up Absurd in Suburbia*. His father was a social worker/artist with a strong interest in astronomy and his mother was a music/teacher and a musician. He had a brother, Eric, and a sister Rachel, who died tragically at age 45. The arts were an important part of the Salzman family life.

At age 7 Mark began to play the cello seriously and performed with the Norwalk Symphony. He was accepted into Yale after his junior year of high school because of his academic career and his ability to play the cello. Mark has continued to play the cello; playing with YoYo Ma, performing at Lincoln Center, and for the movie, *Breathing Lessons*. Today Mark performs duets with his daughter on various stages

At age 13 Mark began to watch Kung Fu movies and was attracted to the martial arts, Buddhism, and the Chinese culture. Since Mark was shy, tiny, and seemingly unathletic, he also wanted to attract girls and being a Kung Fu master became a major goal for him.

CONGRATULATIONS!

2023
Ridgefield
Old Timers
Honorees

The Rowella Family



Two of Mark's favorite Ridgefield memories were running through Peterson Gorge to Ridgebury School each day, pretending it was a primeval forest, and the Guigui family. Dr's Armand and Christine Guigui were so cosmopolitan and magical to Mark. Christine was from war torn Germany and Armand was from French Morocco. The family spoke fluently in three different languages, ate exotic foods, and discussed politics, art, religion and philosophy in a

fascinating manner. Mark even dated their daughter Jackie for several years.

After a year at Yale, Mark changed his major from music to Chinese language and philosophy. He learned most of his Chinese from working as a dishwasher at a Chinese restaurant. Mark then became so immersed in Chinese studies, he decided to live and work in China. Mark got a job at the Huan Medical College teaching English and studied with the best martial arts trainers in the world.

It was not surprising that after spending two years in China and intimately experiencing Chinese culture, Mark would write a book based on his experiences. Mark's highly acclaimed, award winning, first book, *Iron and Silk* was made into a movie, with Mark acting and writing the screen play. The book was also part of the Ridgefield school curriculum for many years.

With such success with his first book, Mark went on to write; *Glimmer Train Stories*, *The Soloist*, *Lost in Place*, *Eisen and Seide* (living in China), *Lying Awake*, *Laughing Sutra*, *True Notebooks* (from working with juvenile delinquents), and *Man in an Empty Boat*. Mark also went on to win many literacy awards; finalist for Pulitzer Prize for *Iron and Silk*, Guggenheim Fellowship, the Alex Literacy Award, the Young Adult Literacy Award, West Hollywood Literacy Award, The NYC Library Award, Literacy Lions Award, and a featured article in *New Yorker* magazine.

Today Mark is married to Jessica Yu, an Academy Award winning movie producer, and has two daughters, Ava and Esme. Mark has appeared in one of Jessica's productions called the *Protagonist*. Mark is now satisfied teaching creative writing to middle school students at a local school, instead of producing more books. The Salzman family lives in California and continues to focus on the arts. "Life is good," is Mark's final comment. ■

The background of the image is a light-colored, marbled paper with a complex, organic pattern of veins and swirls. A large, white rectangular box is centered on the page, containing the text. The text is in a clean, black, sans-serif font.

Congratulations to the Beatty's

I wish you told me that
Rolling Rock
was a health drink.

Paul and Dewey McNamara



SPECIAL AWARD

Walter and Anne Beatty

It would be hard to find almost anywhere a couple in their early 80's who have excelled as much in athletics as Walter and Anne Beatty. This couple still competes regularly in golf tournaments, paddle tennis and tennis competitions, and are avid skiers. Competing in Connecticut, all over New England, on the Atlantic Coast, in Canada, South Korea, and Australia the Beatty name in athletics is a name to be reckoned with.

Walter has won both the Friendship Cup Tennis Competition with both South Korea and Canada for many years and in the Atlantic Coast Tennis Cub, Walter has been the undefeated number one singles player in his age group. He has also won several New England Grand Slam tournaments in both singles and doubles and won two national singles championships for men 70 and over. In addition to all this Walter has been ranked as high as number 2 in the U.S. in men's doubles over 75, received the Bronze Medal in the World Tennis Championships- men's doubles over 75 and won the National Platform Tennis Championship in 2014.



Anne is equally amazing. Starting out winning the Ridgefield Town Tennis Championships, the Justine Butler Tournament and the Silver Spring Country Club Championships (singles, doubles, and mixed with Walter) many times, Anne went on to do the same with her husband in the Gasparilla Island, Florida Championships. Anne is also proud to be part of the New England Senior's Team over 70 that competes in Florida and of being named the top woman golfer at S.S.C.C. at one time.

And what do Anne and Walter do with all these trophies? They give them to the special Olympics to distribute to their very special winners.

Part of the scoring game in tennis is LOVE and that component has certainly been part of Walter and Anne's lives. The two started playing tennis together in grade four in Middletown, Ohio and by grade six were both selected to be school crossing guards and had their first dance date.

Both Walter and Anne played varsity tennis in high school and in college. Anne played for Miami of Ohio and Walter for DePauw in Indiana. Anne was also on the same women's tennis circuit as Billie Jean King. She remembers Billie Jean telling the other women, "be more aggressive, rush the net, and get used to overhead smashes."

Eventually Anne decided to transfer to DePauw. After graduating and marriage, Walter got a job with IBM and the family moved to Ridgefield. Anne was now able to go to Yale Divinity School University to get her master's degree. Unfortunately, she could only get a degree, not be ordained as an Episcopal priest. For Anne it was just like in tennis, men had the upper hand in almost everything.

With a degree in secondary English, Anne went on to teach special need's English at Ridgefield High School and coach the school's ski teams. While coaching the girl's, they won the 1985 championship and the boys won the 1986 championship for FCIAC. Anne has said that having winning ski teams as well as winning a Hole in One contest at the Lemon Bay Gold Club in Florida was the most fun, she ever had.

Always looking for new challenges, Anne went on to get a further degree as a school psychologist and worked for many years in the seventeen different schools in Danbury. She enjoyed working with a diverse population, starting a peer counseling program, working with girl's empowerment, and helping to diffuse race relations situations.

In addition to their careers and athletics, Anne and Walter believe in a life of service. Anne is active in programs linked to her faith. She regularly gives workshops on forgiveness, living the question, bullying and self-esteem. Walter has been vice president of Danbury Grassroots Academy for 15 years. This organization is dedicated to improving the lives of under served students by emphasizing education, character, tennis and health. Both Anne and Walter are actively involved in the Englewood, Florida Boys and Girls Club.

Love of family also comes first in the Beatty family. Anne calls Walter the belt and suspenders person who makes everything happen. She is the puff and smoke person who comes up with the ideas. Walter and Anne are also proud of Paul and Beau, their sons, and their grandchildren. They are happy that their family has embraced the joys of competition, athletics, scholarship, service and their philosophy of life.

And what is their philosophy? Celebrate each day, be a bright light, do your best, listen to the Spirit, show up with courage, give your best with laughter, support friends in need, enjoy the autumn of your life, accept challenges as a part of life, and in the words of Teddy Roosevelt, Stay in the Arena. ■



Congratulations Coach Anne Beatty



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Former RHS
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SPORTS AWARD

Kristy Webster Liesegang '93

It is not often that ROTA honors a girl gymnast from the past. As a Ridgefield High School graduate of 1993, Kristy had a rich background not only in gymnastics, but in dance, track and field and soccer.

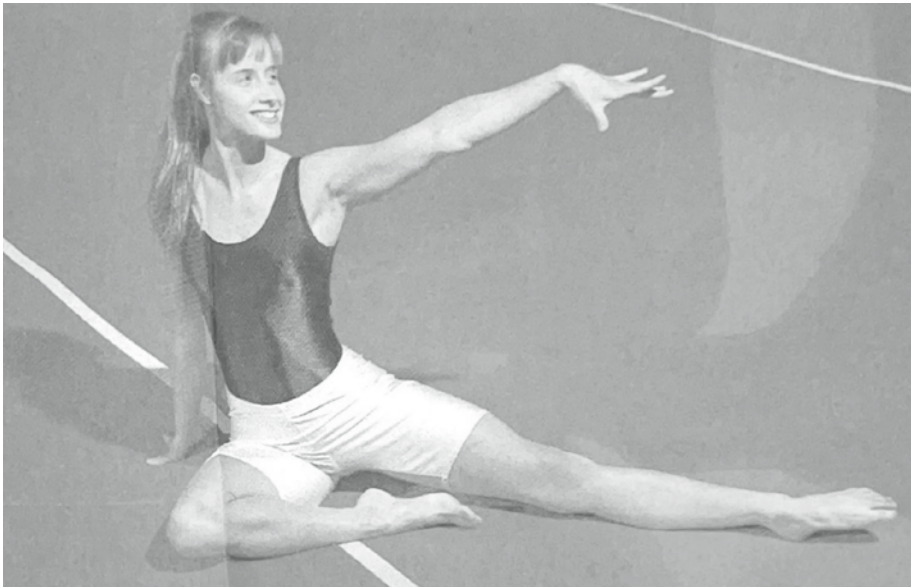
From 1989-1993 Kristy was on the varsity gymnastics team, serving as captain her senior year. In 1990, Kristy's gymnastic team placed 4th. in FCIAC and 6th. in the State CIAC M Division. Kristy made the All-State FCIAC first team that year. In 1991 Kristy's gymnastics team was all FCIAC, second team, and took 7th place in the State CIAC M Division. Kristy made the All-State second team that year. In 1992 Kristy's gymnastics team took third place in the FCIAC standings and first place in the State CIAC M Division, a first-time event for Ridgefield High School. In individual events in 1993 Kristy took FCIAC first place for vaulting (obtaining All-State honors), second place All State for bars, fifth place on the balance beam, and third in all around competition. In 1993 Kristy was named to the Ct. National Gymnastics Team and ranked 8th. place in vaulting.

As a young girl Kristy swam with the Mimosa Swim Team and then went on to play SCOR Travel soccer from third to seventh grade under the direction of Jeff Bryers and Bob Fazio. She played for the Raiders. Once Kristy realized how much time you must devote to a sport to become truly proficient, she went to only one sport, her first love, gymnastics. She trained with Steve Infante at the Olympic Gym in Brookfield.

In high school Kristy cross trained by taking part in track and field, running the short distance, the relay, and competing in the long jump. The coaches that she most remembers from her youth were Terry and Angela, her dance teachers at the YMCA (at Barlow Mountain) and her gymnastic coaches, Jim Bobletz and Becky Kaishian. Her memorable teammates were Sara Scofield, Amanda Payne, Shannon Barber, Julie Sanderson, Kerry Fiacco, and Beth Silston.



203-994-1658



Kristy went on to compete in gymnastics at Radford College in Virginia, but after a rafting accident ended her gymnastics career, she transferred to the University of Denver where she got a business degree and worked in early childhood education. She also obtained a degree in early childhood education from Norwalk Community College.

From her involvement with sports from a very young age, Kristy learned; discipline, dedication, problem solving, time management, teamwork, respect for others, compassion, camaraderie, and leadership.

When Kristy returned to Ridgefield in 1997, she worked for the RVNA and coached the Ridgefield High School gymnastics team with teammate, Amanda Payne. Later she went on to become a director in various pre-schools in town.

When moving back to town, Kristy reconnected with Rob Liesegang, a lifelong resident and contractor. They married and had two children; Robbie and Emily. Robbie is a rising sophomore at Sterns Business School, NYU. Emily, who is at Ridgefield High School, is an assistant youth coach for both lacrosse and field hockey.

When Kristy thinks back on her early days in Ridgefield, she remember the large families of Mimosa Circle; the Ruhl's, the Broidy's, the O'Brien's, the Markey's, etc. She remembers moving to town in 1982, going to Scotland Elementary School, East Ridge and the high school. Kristy also remembers being one of nine children who had a mother who was always looking to find something worthwhile for her children to do.

Today, Kristy, in addition to focusing on her family, is intent on teaching Yoga and having people experience Reiki. She is highly certified in both disciplines and feels that she has a great deal to offer. To keep in shape, Kristy continues to run and in her 40 – 44 age group she is usually a front runner.

Kristy enjoys throwing big parties for her family, yoga fests, Oktoberfests, Thanksgiving dinners, weddings and showers. When her children were younger, Kristy was actively involved in Farmingville Elementary School activities. Kristy is outgoing and sociable and with her husband participates in many fund-raising activities.

Her final words to us all are, “let athletics shape your life and enable you to be as active as possible while navigating your waters with both grit and grace.”

Kristy thanks her wonderful parents for keeping all her news articles and awards so that she could remember her accomplishments as an athlete for this article. ■



ALL SEASON COMFORT

Congratulations
Kristy Webster
Liesegang!



SPORTS AWARD

Darrell Diniz

Darrell Diniz grew up with soccer his whole life. How could you not if you were the son of Al Diniz, the legendary “father of Ridgefield soccer” who coached Ridgefield High School for 30 years - 1973 to 2003. You could say that soccer was in Darrell’s DNA.

Darrell’s family moved to Ridgefield in 1968. He attended Farmingville Elementary school and participated in many youth sports in town. In his final year of Little League baseball, Darrell was teammates with John Hughes ‘79 and Keith Kreisher ‘79. While watching their baseball games, their fathers - Al Diniz, Jack Hughes, and John Kreisher created a plan to start the first youth soccer program in Ridgefield.

In the Fall of 1972, Darrell, John and Keith would be part of a small group of pioneering soccer players that helped start and become the foundation for the Ridgefield soccer program. In 1975, Jack Hughes, John Kreisher and Darrell’s father would together create the Soccer Club of Ridgefield (SCOR) and for this achievement were honored in 2016 by the ROTA.

In 1973, Darrell’s father took on the huge challenge of being the head soccer coach at Ridgefield High School. Since joining the very competitive FCIAC program in the early 70’s, the high school soccer team had lost 39 straight games. However, the 1975 season would change that.



Darrell was a starting sophomore on the 1975 varsity soccer team. With help of freshmen John Hughes, Keith Kreisher, and a group of upperclassmen, the 1975 team went 8-2-3, and was the first team in RHS history to qualify for the state tournament. The '75 team would make it to the Quarterfinals, earning RHS's first state tournament win defeating Simsbury 1-0 with Darrell having the assist on the winning goal.

The success of the 1975 would not be repeated in Darrell's junior and senior years, but RHS soccer teams were competitive in the FCIAC and cemented Ridgefield's foundation for many successful RHS soccer teams and players in the future. In his senior year, Darrell was co-captain of the team. During one memorable game that season, Darrell scored 4 goals and an assist in a 6-0 win over Andrew Warde of Fairfield. Upon concluding his soccer career at RHS, Darrell held all of RHS's offensive records for most goals and assists in a season, most goals and assists for a career and most goals in a game. Darrell was the first soccer player in RHS history to be named All FCIAC First Team honors, but many more would follow in his footsteps.

After graduating RHS in 1978, Darrell attended the University of Rhode Island, and was a member of the U.R.I. Freshman and varsity soccer teams. He graduated with a B.S. in Business Administration and minor in accounting. Shortly after college, Darrell moved to Massachusetts and married his wife Barbara. They raised two children in Milford, MA - Christopher who graduated from UMass Amherst and lives in Medford MA, and Courtney who graduated undergrad and graduate school from Worcester State University. She lives in Mansfield, MA. Darrell was active coaching Christopher in Little League baseball, youth basketball and head coached in-house and youth Travel soccer teams for Milford. Darrell was employed as a senior commodity specialist by Raytheon Corp. for 13 years and Bose Corporation for 19 years.

Darrell is currently retired and resides in Milford, MA with his wife Barbara and will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary in October. Their daughter Courtney is engaged and will be married June 2024. ■



SPORTS AWARD

Kathryn G. O'Toole

An "Outstanding Scholar Athlete," Katie O'Toole distinguished herself in cross country and track at Ridgefield High School (class of 1991) and as a BS/MA education major at UCONN.

Starting as early as a fifth grader, Katie won the All-School Yearly Track Meet at Ridgefield High School for all elementary students. She was even faster than the boys. At ERMS, twice a year, a fitness test was given to all students. Again, Katie was the one with the best score. Doing outstandingly well in these two events, Katie knew she had something going for her and went on to run cross country and track at Ridgefield High School. She remembers well her two coaches, John Osborne and Rick Medve.

At Ridgefield High School, Katie was All FCIAAC as well as All State and All New England in track for her junior and senior year. She also held school records for distance running and other events. Katie was offered running scholarships to Georgetown, Boston College, Univ. of Virginia and UCONN. She chose UCONN as she liked the scenic terrain in Storrs, which reminded her of Ridgefield, the diversity of the school and especially the coach. Katie remains friends with UCONN coach, Betty Remigino-Knapp.

Four times while at UCONN, Katie gained the title of being the New England Distance Champion and an all ECAC and All-Big East performer. She was also captain of the UCONN track team for three years. With a 3.95 GPA at UCONN, Katie was named a UCONN New England Scholar, and was a three-year winner on the Big East Academic All-Star team. In addition to this, Katie was named to the 1994-95 U.S.A. Track and Field Association National Academic All-American Team.

Katie then qualified four times for the NCAA National Cross-Country Championships. She is most proud of the fact that she was the first UCONN woman to qualify for this event. Out of 184 participants nationally, she came in 64th. Also, for the NCAA Katie placed 16th in 5,000-meter indoor track and her registered time for the New England

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Championship set a new record. Katie specialized in indoor track in the 3,000-, 5,000-, and 10,000-meter distance events.

Today Katie still runs regularly, taking part in half marathons, but does not run competitively. She likes to run with her two sons, age 14 and 7. In addition to running, Katie loves to write poetry, read, take hikes, become involved with nature, cheer for UCONN teams, and travel. For two years after college, Katie used her education background to teach in orphanages, sports camps and health clinics. She taught in Kenya, Mexico, Brazil, Ghana and Colombia.

Born and bred in Ridgefield, Katie went to Veteran's Park Elementary School. Starting as a five-year-old in soccer, Katie went on to swim, take part in gymnastics, and play Ridgefield High School field hockey for two years. In high school Katie learned that her real passion was for running. She enjoyed working with her teammates, her

coaches, and training in such a scenic location with challenging runs.

Career wise, Katie has several educational degrees in special education. This makes it possible for her to work with disabled adults as well as students from kindergarten to twelfth grade. She has taught at Ridgefield Middle School, and in Darien, Bridgeport, Fairfield, Region 14, and in Westchester County. She has also worked in group homes, private schools, and in other special facilities.

Katie believes in herself and follows what her heart tells her to do. She feels that everyone needs a passion which will lead them to a positive future. When choosing a college, Katie did not take the school that offered her the most scholarship money. She chose the school that she felt was the best fit for her emotionally, educationally, and socially. Katie urges others to follow this philosophy as well.

“There was no better place to grow up in than Ridgefield,” says Katie. Her parents, her teachers and coaches, and the town provided her with a strong base on which to live a productive life. ■

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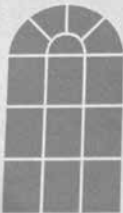
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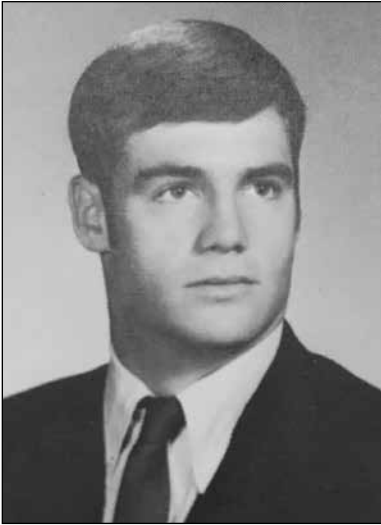
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**Katie O'Toole and the 1977 New England
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 Bob Plucenik, Mike Phelan and Mike Harris**

**For being recognized by the
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 many athletic achievements!**



SPORTS AWARD

Bob DeCosta

Bob graduated in 1968 from Ridgefield High School. He was known for his outstanding athleticism in football and track. In fact, he attributes many of his friendships today to when he played sports at Ridgefield High School.

Living in Ridgefield at three different points in his life, Bob went to St. Mary's School early on. His freshman year his family moved

back to Ridgefield from Los Angeles and Bob knew no one. But through football and track he made lifelong friends; John Pierandri, Jim Mulvaney, Jim Salvestrini, Gunnar Wilmont, Peter Cooper and many others.

Under the direction of Coach Marks for football and Coach Medve for track, Bob was able to play varsity football for three years and be honored for FCIAC and as an All-Area Fullback. He also remembers being on Ridgefield's only undefeated football team at the time. For a short guy, Bob did well in track. He represented Ridgefield's track team in the high hurdles, 60 yards, and was able to go to states. At age 71 now, Bob is no longer participating in high hurdles or football, but enjoys tennis.

For college Bob started at West Point, to please his father. It was the middle of the Vietnam war and Bob did not want to become a military officer. After a year and a half, he switched to Colby College in Maine where he majored in business which was much more to his liking.

His first job out of college was at Filene's Department Store in Boston as a buyer. He next went to work for the Peabody Company and became involved in sales of Arrow Shirts. Bob then decided to start his own company in 1992 and this took him all over the world. He was not only working in textiles but branched out into security equipment and many other areas. At one time he was also the CEO of a Chinese Company. While traveling the world, Bob found that the most fascinating countries in his mind were Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Australia and many of the small countries in Europe.



Bob DeCosta, #32 running against Wilby HS in Waterbury in 1968.

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While in Ridgefield High School, Bob met Barbara Wood and they started dating at the end of their senior year. They then dated through college. Barbara went to the University of Connecticut. After college Bob and Barbara married and have been married for 47 years. They have three children. Robert lives in North Carolina and is in hospitality. Kaitlin lives in Boston and works at Harvard University. Emily is in Philadelphia and works for an air conditioning company. All five of Bob's grandchildren are girls.

Today Bob and his wife are still working. Bob is in sales for a home improvement company and Barbara is a landscape architect.

As for advice, Bob says, "Stay active, Stay involved, Keep moving, and never lose your old friends. The friends that you meet through sports tend to be the closest friends that you will ever have in life." ■



RHS 1977 relay champs top: John Scott, Bob Plucenik, bottom Mike Phelan, Mike Harris. Coaches Rick Medve and John Osborne.

SPORTS AWARD

1977 4 x 110 relay team

In the early 1970's the Ridgefield High School boys track teams started to become a dominate force in the FCIAC as well as in the State. Lead by coach Rick Medve and his assistant John (Ozzy) Osborne RHS teams compiled wins at the league and state levels. One of the most impressive teams was the 1976-1977 team that featured several individual and team champions in both indoor and outdoor track. With so many outstanding performances within this exceptional team, the performance that stands out the most is the 4 x 110 relay team.

Each member of this relay team starred in other sports as well as track. The lead leg was run by junior Mike Harris, previous ROTA honoree, Mike was an All-FCIAC running back as well as a championship in indoor and outdoor track. The second leg was Mike Phalen. Mike was not only a captain of both the indoor and outdoor team, but was also was a standout and captain of the cross-country team. Phalen would hand off to fellow senior John Scott. Scott was an All-FCIAC running back on the football team and won the 300-yard state open, 200-yard state champion and the 50-meter FCIAC champion. The anchor leg was

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run by the final member of the class of '77, Bob Plucenik. Bob was a receiver on the football team at RHS and was on the golf team.

These four exceptional athletes worked together as a team to win the FCIAC, Connecticut State Open and New England Championship. To have four individuals with this kind of talent was rare for a town the size of Ridgefield. Competing and winning against larger schools such as Danbury and Greenwich in the FCIAC as well as the teams from the city schools in the state competition was quite an accomplishment by itself. Winning at New England's was even more remarkable when you consider not all the states sent a team from one high school. Some of the states sent an "all-star" team made up of the runners from multiple high schools. The combination of the talent of these four athletes and the exceptional coaching they received from coach Medve and Osborne made them the top team in New England and one of the best in the country in the spring of 1977. It should be mentioned that there were several all-state performances on this team and the class of '77 boasted an overall record of 58-1 in meets while they were at RHS.

All four men have gone on to exceptional lives after leaving RHS. Mike Harris attend Notre Dame and has just completed a career of teaching and coaching multiple sports at The Brunswick School in Greenwich. He and his wife Ellen have two sons, Chris and Pete, and 2-year-old twin grandchildren. Mike Phalen attended and ran track at Villanova, which at the time was one of the premiere college programs in the country. While at Villanova Mike was able to compete in the Millrose games, one of the elite track events in the country. Mike has recently retired after a long and successful career at Boston Scientific and along with his wife Terri has two daughters, Molly and Abbey. After a standout career at RHS John Scott went to Gettysburg College where he was a 4-year starter on the football team and a 4-year letterman and captain of the track team. John was the MAC (Mid-Atlantic Conference) 220-yard champion. John also has two children with his wife Marcia and they have 3 grandsons. Bob Plucenik attended UConn where he ran track as a freshman. While at Storrs he joined the rock and ice climbing club and was hooked. He has spent the rest of his life hiking and climbing throughout the western hemisphere. Bob is now retired after 33 years of teaching and coaching track in Brooklyn, CT, and he and his wife Michelle have two daughters, Alex and Andrea and four grandchildren. ■

TIGERS

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Linebackers and Defensive Backs: Mike Maiolo 64, Terry Collins 58, Marty McGarry 21, Chris Meyers 3, Tim Matteson 5

SPORTS AWARD

1983: A Year to Remember

“It was a dream that we made into a reality.”

Coach Guido Maiolo, 12/3/1983

For more than 20 years, Ridgefield High School Football has been a force to be reckoned with. However, after joining the FCIAC in 1971, the Tigers were perennially a conference doormat. This changed with the hiring of Guido Maiolo, who’s coaching style paid immediate dividends with a 15-14 triumph over New Britain in the first game of the 1980 season. The Tigers finished the year 7-2-1 and followed it up with another strong 7-3 season in 1981.

A disappointing 3-5-2 season in 1982 tempered expectations. During an interview prior to the ’83 season, Maiolo stated that he had two goals: instill a new positive attitude and finish above .500. A new approach would focus more on establishing a “team-first” culture where individual accomplishments were secondary to maximum effort, determination, and dedication. The expectations of a .500 season would quickly require an adjustment.



Offseason workouts culminated in an exciting Orange & White spring game highlighted by the addition of several talented student-athletes joining the team from other sports, adding depth and versatility to a talented roster. The Tigers got to work in the August heat during a grueling week of camp. A week-long endurance test proved to be the start of something big and

an experience that forged an unbreakable bond 40 years later.

Ridgefield's triple option offense that had struggled the previous fall showed improvement during preseason scrimmages, however, wins would not come easy as the Tigers faced a particularly difficult schedule. The Tigers traveled to Norwalk for the season opener and Maiolo's trademark 4-4 defense shutout future NFL QB, Todd Philcox, 17-0. The Tigers ran for over 350 yards in a 26-13 romp over Andrew Warde but stumbled to a disappointing 7-7 tie at Wilton.

Despite an encouraging 2-0-1 start, Ridgefield was about to run the gauntlet starting with a homecoming game against defending L state champion New Canaan. The Tigers struck fast, grabbing a 7-0 lead on their first offensive play. After the defense recovered a fumble, the offense stunned the Rams with a perfectly executed flea flicker for a long touchdown pass. The Tigers defense held the Rams in check to secure a 10-6 victory.

Next up were two pivotal road games. A 28-15 conquest of non-conference opponent and defending LL state champion Fairfield Prep continued the team's unbeaten streak. Week 5 would see the start of "never before seen" achievements with the squad finding themselves atop the State's Class L Division rankings.

Week 6 resulted in another historic achievement with a 17-7 win against powerhouse Trumbull. The Tigers had never beaten Trumbull since joining the FCIAC in 1971. Meanwhile, the Eagles were the top team in the FCIAC East, playing in five of the previous seven FCIAC Championship games, winning twice.

The unbeaten streak stretched to seven games with a 21-0 shutout of Ludlowe. Unfortunately, Staples dealt the Tigers their first loss of the season which set up a "must win" scenario at Darien. Ridgefield needed a win to punch their ticket for the FCIAC Championship game.

Darien struck first with a touchdown to end the first quarter, but the Tigers scored late in the second quarter to tie the game. After halftime,



*1983 Home Coming Game: RHS 10 New Canaan 6. Tigers carry Coach Guido Maiolo off the field in victory celebration. **Players of note:** Mike Riddell (2), Jeff Meyer (75), Todd Pedersen (63), Jeff Strite (50), Tim Jansons (88), Doug Liberta (79). October 15 1983.*

the Blue Wave never had a chance. The defense held the home team to negative six yards and the Blue Wave never crossed midfield in the second half. The win added two more firsts: an FCIAC East title and a spot in the Class L Championship.

In a Thanksgiving match up that featured the two best teams in the state, Ridgefield fell behind 21-0 at halftime to a Greenwich team that would capture the LL state championship the following week. The Tigers roared back to close the deficit to 21-13 behind an explosive running game, while holding the undefeated Cardinals to just 63 yards of offense in the second half. In the end, the 21-point deficit was too much to overcome but the loss was quickly forgotten as the focus turned to Hall High School

In the class L state championship game played at Southern Connecticut State University, Ridgefield once again fell behind at halftime. However, the resilient Tigers would not be denied. Ridgefield's triple option offense kicked into high gear and the suffocating Tiger defense dominated in the second half as Ridgefield captured its first state championship, 20-7.

The success of the '83 team was a collective effort. Long before phrases like "next man up" or "do your job" became popular, the Tigers embraced a team-first approach. The '83 team overcame injuries throughout the season. The offensive line was so decimated after the Norwalk game that one of the team captains, a starting running back as a junior, moved to guard to fortify the offense. In the end, Ridgefield won the state championship game decisively, despite playing without several key players lost to injury or illness, including two all-conference performers. More than anything else it was a series of selfless acts and heroic efforts at the heart of the '83 team that culminated in a state championship. ■



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THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Kathleen Vance Tebbe

Kathleen will be attending Trinity College in the fall. She graduated with a 4.5 GPA and scored a 4 on the U.S. History Exam. Kathleen was on the high honor roll and a member of the National Honor Society.

Kathleen's athletic career focused on lacrosse, field hockey, and indoor track. In field hockey Kathleen was a varsity starter for three years, making the FCIAC 2022 field hockey, second team. She was also awarded for MVP Defensive Player in field hockey. Because of her hockey skills, Kathleen competed in many different states and was an assistant coach for Ridgefield Youth Hockey.

For service to the community, Kathleen enjoys being a lead gardener at Cornerstone Gardens. Here she works with growing plants in order to deliver fresh produce to people with food insecurities. Her work experiences have been at Audrey Road, a clothing and jewelry establishment in town. She also works as a hostess at Luc's Café. Both of her paying positions help her to better understand and serve people from diverse backgrounds. ■



Henry Idone

In 2023 Henry won the FCIAC Winter Exemplary Scholar Award. In 11th. grade Henry won the varsity hockey "Team First" award for sportsmanship and the Hobey Baker Character Award. Playing center for the varsity hockey team, Henry was a member of the FCIAC Championship team in 2022. In

addition to being a member of the RHS hockey team, Henry became a USA hockey official and a skating instructor at the Winter Garden. Playing varsity tennis in 11th. and 12 grade, Henry won the Tennis Tiger Pride Award.



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THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

An accomplished cello player, Henry played with the RHS orchestra but also traveled to Italy to play with internationally known cello players. He had a solo performance at Carnegie Hall and won too many cello competitions to even mention.

Future Business Leaders of American was an important part of Henry's life. Here he made presentations nationally and prepared materials for the organization. Henry also won first place in competitions in sports management and entrepreneurs. Henry's service to the community was helping as a math tutor, working with the Appalachian Service Project, and working with the Community Cello Ensemble

Henry is proud to be going to Boston University this fall and majoring in data science and business. All of Henry's accomplishments will certainly lead to a successful college and future career. ■



Caroline DelGuidice

Caroline is graduating from RHS with a strong academic background. She has a 4.2 GPA, and honors work in biology, chemistry, physics, English, sociology and psychology. She has also won UCONN honors for individual and family development and English and has consistently been on the high honor roll.

Along with the honors listed above, Caroline has won the 2022 FinTron Stock Market Challenge, the Presidential Award for Volunteer Service – Lion's Heart Teens and music and artistic achievement awards for singing. She also won the Torch Club Youth of the Year for Compassion and Leadership.

Service, leadership, and compassion are at the heart of Caroline's work in the community. She is a camp counselor and Keystone secretary for the Ridgefield Boy's and Girl's Club, head of sound design for the theater arts department at RHS and works with the Torch Club. Caroline has held many positions with the Lion's Heart Service Organization and served as a religious leader in church. She likes to work with the people in Congregate Housing and Ballard Green, put flags on the graves of veterans in the cemeteries and works with elementary students on school musicals. ■

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THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Tyler Berman

Tyler is graduating from RHS with a 4.7 GPA., was on the high honor roll and a member of the National Honor Society.

As part of academics, Tyler won the Seal of Biliteracy passing proficiency exams in two or more languages. He also won the 2022 Profile in Courage Essay Contest, obtaining a Certificate of Excellence. As a part of academics,

but also service, Tyler established Saturn Technologies, Inc. For this project Tyler enlisted six others to organize a scheduler and social platform for students. His technology helped students better navigate key parts of their lives.

Tyler's athletic career focused on Taekwondo, where he got his black belt. From his sophomore year to his senior year, he was on the RHS track team competing in the 100m, 200m and pole vault.

In the fall Tyler will be attending Wake Forest University in North Carolina.



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Civic and Special Awards

1992: Richard Venus; 1993: Bob Tulipani; 1994: Beth Yanity; 1995: Aldo Tulipani; 1996: Ferdinand Bedini; 1997: Matty Pambianchi Family; 1998: Dr. Peter Yanity; 1999: Charles Coles; 2000: Kitty Rosa; 2001: Lewis Finch; 2002: Edith Meffley; 2003: Kay Ables; 2004: Chuck Dean; 2005: Doug Main, Renee Franks; 2006: Jack Sanders; 2007: Ancona Family; 2008: Maureen Kiernan, Dave Scott; 2009: Vincent Pannozzo, Jeanne Cook; 2010: Christine and Philip Lodewick; Chuck Camp; Reed Whipple; 2011: Mary and Nelson Gelfman; Terry Hastings. 2012: Martha and Dave Campbell; Joseph Consentino. 2013: Richard and Deirdre Aarons; George Besse 2014: Darla and Ben Shaw; Joy and Hank Kutcha; Joyce Ligi; 2015: Liz & Steven Goldstone, Bill Craig; 2016: John and Elaine Couri; 2017, Janice Pauly; 2018: Barbara Manners and Eugene Healy 2019: Peter Seirup, Mike Bedini; 2022: Denise Qualey, Amy & Scott Russel

Educator Awards

2013: Dr. Harold E. Healy and Dirk Bollenback; 2014: Dr. Philip Pitruzzello; 2015: Bob Cox; 2016: James Muraski; 2017: Joan Voss; 2018: Bill Monti 2019: Bob McDonald; 2022: Jean Jaykus

Arts Awards

2019: Kevin Briody; 2022: Tina Sturges

Sports Awards

1992: Tabby Carboni, Lynce Carboni, Leo Pambianchi, Tom Clark, Charlie Frattini, Joe Forcelli, John Carboni; 1993: Gene Casagrande, Bob Mulvaney, Vin Petri, Charly Stolle, Joe Tulipani; 1994: Lyman Anderson, Harry Bennett, Aldo Girolmetti, Evo Principi, John Tulipani; 1995: Peter Casagrande, Dino Cicolani, Joe Brunetti, Ray Eppoliti, Bud Mahoney, Reno Severini; 1996: Ben Bedini, Fabio Biagiotti, Jack Leary, Harold Mead, Romeo Petroni, Janalie Severini; 1997: Primo Baldaserini, Dante Brunetti, Frank Lancaster, Sr., Walt Evans, Navio Ligi, Fred Mazzi; 1998: Gino "Jinx" Baldaserini, Dr. Phil Martin, Dr. Joe Moylan, Andy Montanari, Julius "Bugsy" Santini; 1999: Dick Bellagamba, Si Bellagamba, Gene Lavatori, John Lavatori, Gene McMahon, Harry Pierandri; 2000: Glen Anderson, Bill Elliot, Booker Jackson, Tom Mitchell; 2001: Ned Carboni, Paul

Carboni, Jim Costanzi, John Fossi, Artie Frattini, Nick Reid, Gloria Sharkany; 2002: Ed Dowling, Jack Jones, Jack O'Keefe, Jim O'Keefe, Mike Ryba, Aldo Travaglini, Harry Zandri; 2003: Aldo Biagiotti, Chip Bliss, Bob Carboni, John Forcelli, Jim Mullen, Vince Paccadolmi, Fred Romeo; 2004: Faust Verna, Lou Bellagamba, Chip Salvestrini, Alley Frulla, Rudy Marconi, Jim Tulipani and the CYO Girls Championship Basketball Team; 2005: Tom Cesca, Tom Santini, Richard Polverari, Bob Pambianchi, Gregg Hutchings, Carol Torcellini, Dave Campbell, Bill Polverari, Renzo Falcinelli, Jimmy Bacchiochi; 2006: Larry Bossidy, Jr., Isabel Caporale, Frank Lancaster, Jr., Carl Scala, John Stolle, Dave Sturges; 2007: Dave Landers, Jay Contessa, Chip Dean, John Devendorf, Marie Frulla, Steve Martin, Alan Wallace; 2008: Richard Lavatori, Judy Laslo, Craig Saltzgeber, Frank Serfilippi, Paul Vaughn, Chip Wilson; 2009: Robert Leary, Robert Lewis, Patricia Girolametti, Richard Miller, Peter Santini, Michael Principi, and Dr. Richard Scala; 2010: Abe Morelli, Tom Fossi, Michael Bowman, Amy Fredericks, Christopher Winnes, Janel Jorgensen, Michael Dell'Aquila, Tony Wilmot; 2011: Lee Pasquarella, Harland Brooks, Janet Yanity, Harry Geary, Thomas McDonald, Joseph Korczynski, Lea Ann Schmidt, Gary Bellagamba; 2012: Michael Conroy, Anthony James Forcelli, Beth Ondrick Gattey, Terence Hughes, George R. Mulvaney, Phil O'Brien, Walt Valentine; 2013: William 'Sandy' Allen, Paul Bossidy, Dorene Almgren DeCecco, Mike Harris, Mike Maiolo, Ed Stone, Nicole Colanari Twomey; 2014: John Lorenzini, Peter Stuart Jongbloed, Brian Sullivan, Thomas Scala, Sandy Beal Carpenter, Nicole Muschett DiAntonio, Neil Ringers; 2015: Don Innamorato, Richard Dingee, Susi Mang McDonald, Guy Welton, Karen Dingee Leibowitz; 2016: Al Diniz, John Kreisher, Jack Hughes, Jim Croce, 1967-68 Football Team, Chip Wood, William Van Orman, Cliff Onolfo, Kate McMorrان Leavey, Sue Ellis; 2017: Dr. Joseph Connelly, Nancy Ruhl Hurley, Bo Beatty, Danny Geary, Amy Walter Hillenbrand, Dr. Theodore Librizzi; 2018: Stan Engelhardt, Bob Phalen, Mike Bossidy, Lena Onyshkewych; 2019: Bridget Stearns, John Hughes, Kevin Morris; 2022: A.J. Martinich, Sarah Townsend Pomposello, Pat Cozens, Miles Tullo, Mike Bellagamba

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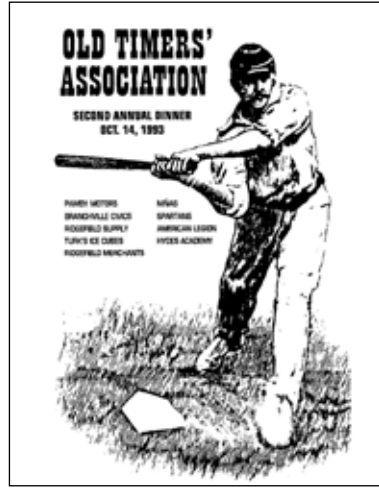
Ridgefield Old Timers Association:

Honoring Ridgefielders since 1992

About 30 years ago, a group of friends got together with the idea of forming an old timers group for Ridgefield. Paul Baker, Julie Petrini, John Tulipani, and Joe Brunetti met at a dinner and decided to model the new organization after old timers groups in Danbury and Norwalk, which had honored several Ridgefield athletes over the years.

The original purpose of the new organization was to honor great athletes who were unable to continue their education past their school days, and set up a scholarship to assist current athletes. The organizers held several meetings and drew in 18 other supporters. They elected a board of officers with Paul Baker as the first chairman. Walt Evans was elected treasurer, and Julie Petrini, the first secretary.

The Ridgefield Old Timers Association began to have awards banquets in October 1992. Seven Ridgefielders were selected to be the honorees and the first Special Award went to Richard E. Venus. The first scholarship recipient was Thomas B. Gareau. He had been accepted at the University of Virginia.



The 1993 dinner program's cover.

The guest speaker at the first banquet was Spec Shea, a pitcher for the New York Yankees. The advertisement book for that first gathering was only 20 pages, cover to cover. The event was a success and money was put into a scholarship fund.

The first award of the scholarship to a female Ridgefield High School graduate occurred in 1996. Janine Murphy was involved in three sports and many civic endeavors. A year later, it was decided to annually award scholarships to both male and female recipients, and the winners in 1997 were

Charles Bliss and Kerry Bennett. The amount of the scholarships has grown over the years as a result of the advertising placed in this book, as well as other fundraising efforts — especially the annual golf outing and pig roast, which took place in June at the Ridgefield Golf Course.

In the association's second year, it introduced the Civic Award, and the first recipient was Bob Tulipani. The next year, Beth Yanity became the first female recipient of the Civic Award. In 1999, Sandy Pierandri Warner became the first female member of the board of directors; she was also the association's third secretary.

The motivational guest speakers, once thought necessary for a good event, began to make the banquets stretch late into the evening. Members and guests wished to hear more from the award winners. After the event ran until 11:10 p.m. in 1999, the association decided to drop the guest speakers and to feature the honorees, as well as the emcee, often founder Paul Baker, who had a long career as a radio and television broadcaster. In many later years, Tom Belote was emcee.



The Ridgefield Old Timers Association has continued to meet annually in October to honor athletes and others, and to award scholarship. In 2006, the bylaws were updated to allow Ridgefield residents who have lived here at least 25 years to become members. Before this, members had to be natives and/or graduates of Ridgefield High School. And to paraphrase the United States Marine Corps, “we are always looking for a few, very good, hard-working new members.” ■

**You don't have
to be old
to join the
Old Timers.**

**You just have to care
about Ridgefield.**

*Interested in ROTA?
See any of the folks listed on
page 4.*



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