

*Special Award  
The Laurel  
Athletic Club*

**T**he Laurel Athletic Club was started in a small cottage behind the home of Mike Lombardi, who is considered the "father" of the club and was the first life member. These young athletes were first known as the Laura Street Giants and soon after the name was changed to what so many people now recognize — The Laurel Athletic Club.

Joe Palumbo was the first president and Ralph Caruso served as treasurer. Among the early members were the Cocchia family (Bill, Nick, Al, Tom), Joe Beres, Jim Forcellina, Frank Santorella, John "Carp" Downey, Bill Balogh, and Will Keri.

As the club grew they occupied quarters in various sections of South Norwalk and in 1968 purchased its present building on North Avenue. They are now in the process of adding space to accommodate over 300 members who hail from all parts of Fairfield County. They grew up from neighborhood type teams in baseball, football, and basketball to the present organization.

During the 1920s they made a mark for themselves meeting the best teams in the state. This was also the time when the great rivalry began with the Pastimes Athletic Club. Their greatest triumphs were probably in the early 1930s. Under the guidance of Louis "Duke" Yozsik they held the mighty Springwood Club team to a tie. This organization then leased the old Amusement Park and the greatest attractions in semi-pro football and baseball were brought in. These were the great days of Joe Beres who went on to the Eastern League and Joe Saverine who was sent to Georgetown University through the efforts of Dr. Harry Hefferan after witnessing the athlete from Darien, CT perform as a Laurel Athletic Club halfback.

The club continued its major role in athletic competition through the late '30s and '40s under the guidance of Joe Marino and Jeff Cimminelli, who are life members of the organization. Recently, Lou Mazarro was also accorded this honor.

The late John Redway, Williard Williams, and Lou Brodersen have the distinction of being honorary members for their efforts in behalf of the organization.

With the advent of the youth programs, the club was called upon for help. They immediately responded and for many years have sponsored teams in the American Little League, Calvin Murphy Bidy League, and Senior Babe Ruth League. The Laurel Athletic Club still maintains an interest in Recreation League Slow Pitch for older members. Led by Jerry McGee they won the league championship twice in the last three years. They have an unbroken string of more than 60 years of continuing participation in sports.

In keeping with its tradition of remembering past and present members of long standing, Old Timers Awards Night is held each year. The 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sports Award Dinner honoring all the teams of the year 1930 was one of the best affairs of its kind. Those who were in attendance are still talking about this great evening. The former athletes came from many parts of the country and were overjoyed with the reunion.

Under the direction of chairman John D'Amato of the Activities Committee, the club continues its many programs over the course of the year. The Dinner Dance and Cadillac Raffle is an event to which the members look forward during the month of May. The Christmas parties for the children of members has been going on for more than 30 years. Tony Covello was a member of this committee since its inception and is still going strong. A highlight of the pre-Christmas season are the dinners held beginning in October to raise funds for the Christmas gifts for the children. Another innovation during the past few years has been a Ladies Dinner from which the men are excluded. These events are a sellout.

Another activity that includes both men and women are the exciting Mixed Bocci Nights. Most important of all, many of their members have served the community in many ways while occupying responsible positions in civic and business affairs. Listed among its active members are Mayor Thomas O'Connor, State Assemblyman Lawrence Anastasia, and Probate Judge Alfred Santaniello, Jr. Don Shufelt and Lou D'Orso are former chairmen of the Recreation and Parks Commission while Joe Marino is presently a member of this body. The Laurel Athletic Club enjoys a fine reputation in the area for its efforts in providing social and sports benefits for members. They should continue along this path for many years to come. The officers of the club are Sal Amato (president), Nick Falcone (vice president), George Jacoby (recreation secretary), Joe Beke (finance secretary), and Pat Tomasetti (treasurer).