

Don Gaynor



As a teenager and into his early 20s, Don Gaynor spent most of the 1940s decade playing football in town.

But his biggest contribution to local sports came years later when he helped make it possible for thousands of other local kids to begin playing the sport at a much earlier age.

Gaynor, now 71, was one of the charter members and organizers who founded the Norwalk Athletic Association and helped bring Pop Warner Football to the city's youth. In fact, Gaynor helped recruit Robert Callahan, a former Chief Justice of Connecticut's Supreme Court, as the first coach of the Norwalk Ramblers, while a member of that inaugural team was future NBA great and basketball Hall of Famer Calvin Murphy.

The NAA eventually grew to sponsor as many as five local Pop Warner football teams at different age levels, introducing the sport to many kids who would go on to play in high school and college. Even today, the local youth sports organization, which has since added baseball, basketball, and cheerleading, is one of the biggest in the state. People like Gaynor and a few others made it all possible in the beginning.

Football was a big part of Gaynor's life even before that, however. A product of the Spring Hill neighborhood, he was a running back on the Norwalk High School football team in 1941, '42, and '43. After graduation, he moved from the backfield to end and played for the Spring Hill Tigers, helping the team win back to back city championships in 1946 and '47. Then in 1948 he played for the Norwalk Tigers. Among his teammates during that decade were Mimi Lawrence, George "Bud" Moseley, and Casmir Staack.

The Norwalk AA wasn't the only thing that kept Gaynor involved in sports once his playing days were over. He served as co-chairman of the Oak Hills "Keep It As It Is" Committee, and for years was an active fund raiser for Norwalk High athletics.

But Gaynor didn't restrict himself to just sports. He has also served as First District Treasurer, fire commissioner, on the Zoning Board of Appeals, and was president of the Norwalk Association of Insurance Agents. He owned his own insurance agency in town for 24 years and is still a consultant with J.M. Layton, Inc.

In addition, the father of three and proud grandfather of one has devoted hours of his own time toward charitable organizations around the city such as the local soup kitchen. And for the past 12 years, Gaynor has been involved with a volunteer group he helped organize that helps clean up, maintain, and beautify Union Cemetery after years of neglect, raising nearly \$10,000 for the cause.