

Mike Errico Award
AL PALUMBO



This year's Mike Errico Award recipient followed up an outstanding athletic career with years of service to the Norwalk community.

Al Palumbo was honored by the Norwalk Old Timers 30 years ago on the night of Nov. 9, 1983 in the very same room he's being recognized again tonight. As an athlete in the 1940s, he starred in football, baseball and track during his three years at Norwalk High School, earning first-team all-conference and second-team all-state honors as a running back in football.

As a senior in 1946, Palumbo was selected the school's outstanding athlete. He went on to play baseball in the Senior City League, capturing the batting crown in 1948 with a .459 average while posting a .324 lifetime average.

But the 86-year-old Palumbo is being honored tonight for what he did after his playing days. He was one of five local sportsmen to start the Pop Warner Football program in Norwalk. Palumbo, who coached the running backs on the Norwalk Ramblers, is the lone surviving member of that quintet.

He also coached Small Fry, Little League, Junior Babe Ruth and American Legion baseball.

In addition, Palumbo was one of the three original employees for the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department hired by Supervisor Joe Andrews to maintain athletic fields in the city.

Then in 1981, Palumbo was vice president and treasurer on original board responsible in the formation of the Norwalk Mariners women's softball team with the purpose of giving high school and college players an opportunity to play locally in the summer months. Those efforts earned him a place in the Connecticut Scholastic and Collegiate Softball Hall of Fame in 1997.

Palumbo also served two years as president of the Strawberry Hill Athletic Club—for whom he played for and later coached—and another two years as president of the Norwalk Old Timers.

He even painted helmets for the Central Catholic High School football team for several years.

His community contributions went beyond the parameters of the local sports community, however. For 31 years, he hosted a citywide Christmas party at his home which was open to any child. He arranged to have Santa Claus appear on the roof of his house and then come down and distribute gifts in the front yard to each child in attendance while everyone enjoyed hot chocolate. For more than three decades, this became a Palumbo tradition in Norwalk.

Giving of himself for the betterment of the Norwalk community was nothing new for Al Palumbo. In the 1960s, he painted the bus used by the Norwalk Hot Shots Drum and Bugle Corp Marching Band red, white and blue. And for many years he was an active member of the Norwalk Exchange Club, whose primary mission is service to the community.

Palumbo was a Fairfield County football official for 18 years and is now an honorary life member. He also officiated baseball, basketball and fast-pitch softball. He spent a quarter of a century as a Norwalk Firefighter, retiring with the rank of captain.