

## *Earl Bellia*



**E**arl "Lala" Bellia, who won five state championships in diving, and who starred in all three major sports during an illustrious athletic career, will be honored by the Norwalk Old Timers at their annual banquet on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

Bellia won his diving crowns as a member of the Norwalk YMCA team, diving from the one-meter board. He also won the city championship at Calf Pasture three times on the two-meter board.

At Norwalk High School, Earl played football, baseball, and basketball under the three coaches who dominated the period of the 1930s — Mike Wilson, Ferrol B. Green, and Perry Bean.

He was a hard running tailback on the high school football teams of the pre-Ike Kern era and was always a threat to break a long run. Among his teammates were

Jack Cronin, being honored this year, and the Buschbaum brothers, Jo and Johnny, who were honored earlier by the Old Timers.

Earl had an uncanny eye on the basketball court. Short in stature, he made up for his lack of height with speed, agility, and aggressiveness. In addition to his exploits in the three major sports at Norwalk High, he was a member of the swim team as well as a shotputter and broad jumper on the track squad.

Before enlisting in the service Bellia played basketball with the YMCA team, under Coach Aurelius Ghiotto, and football for the Laurels and Pastimes. He also played basketball with the YPHA five.

Joining the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineers Battalion, Earl was at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941.

Earl attended NYU for one year following his separation from the service, and earned his BS degree in physical education at Arnold College. He received his Masters and his Sixth Year Certificate in education at Bridgeport University.

He is retired after a career as coach and teacher of physical education in the Fairfield school system, and lives with his wife Thelma in St. Petersburg, FL. In retirement he is active as a volunteer at Bayfront Medical Center Hospital in rehabilitation of amputees.