

# 2013 Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame



**Harold M Wilsey**

In celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame continues to evolve as an organization with the formation of its new Veteran's Committee. This committee, consisting of five of our most senior members, considers nominees who are no longer on the main ballot and can select a nominee for enshrinement into the Hall of Fame. They operate in a similar fashion to the way the National Baseball Hall of Fame's Veterans Committee does. The result is the first new inductee to be honored by the Committee. This man needs no introduction to local sports enthusiasts. He is the late Harold M Wilsey, who passed away on January 21, 2012.

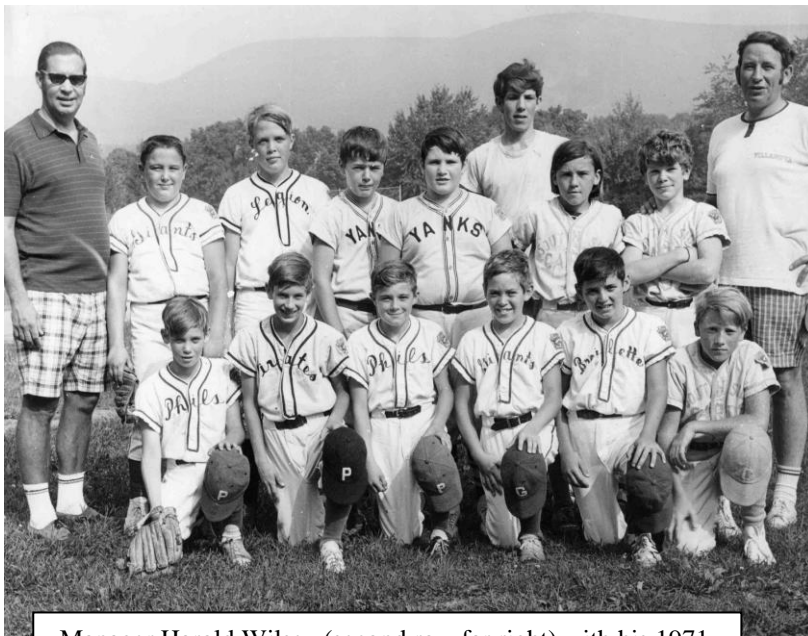
Anyone who knew Harold was better for the acquaintance of a man who lived his life to help others. Family commitment, service, community involvement, and volunteerism are the

hallmarks by which he lived his life for all of his 85 years. Born in Copake, New York, in Columbia County, on February 24, 1926 to Herbert and Susan Miller Wilsey, Harold was one of three children, including his sister Jane Miller and predeceased brother Jack. He graduated from Roeliff-Jansen High School in Hillsdale in 1944. While in high school Harold was a three-sport letterman, participating in six-man football, basketball, and baseball. A member of a Columbia County Plus League championship team as a center in football, he also won a title in 1942 as a sophomore catcher for the baseball team.

Harold proudly served his country in World War II as a member of the United States Army Air Force from January 1944 to October 1945. After the war ended, he was briefly enrolled at SUNY Cortland as a Physical Education major before choosing a career in the funeral profession. Graduating in 1948 from the Renoard School of Embalming in Manhattan, Harold was a Licensed New York State Funeral Director for 62 years.

The former Peggy Ann Holdman became Harold's bride on September 20, 1952 in a ceremony held in Scarsdale. The newlyweds moved to Saugerties in 1953, settling in the house on Market Street that Peg still calls home. In 1955, Harold and his business partner, Willett Overbaugh, purchased Seamon Funeral Home, moving it to the present day location on John Street the following year. An avid landscaper, Harold could often be seen on the riding mower or tending to the immaculate grounds of the renamed Seamon Wilsey Funeral Home.

Helping friends and neighbors through times of sorrow was just a part of what made this man so beloved in his community. He was justifiably proud of the fact that his sons Jack and Mark, and grandson Eric, have followed his lead in running the family business. The broad scope of his decades of volunteering and service in and around Saugerties is mind-boggling, considering the



Manager Harold Wilsey (second row far right) with his 1971 District 15 Champion Saugerties Little League All Stars. Also notable in photo; son Tom Wilsey (second row 4<sup>th</sup> from right) 2013 fellow inductee Jim "Lenny" Hackett (front row 1<sup>st</sup> from left) and past inductees Steve Schaffer (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) and Jay Harris (3<sup>rd</sup> from left). Second row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left is Hall of Famer Joe "Iggy" Maines.

fact that at the same time Harold and Peg were busy raising seven children at home, instilling their values of love and respect in their kids. He used his talents and experience in a variety of ways to help in a multitude of organizations, making life better for the people of Saugerties.

Harold served as a Village Trustee under four mayors, helping to shape village policy and growth. He was a past Commander and Life Member of Saugerties American Legion Post 72. A past Commander of the Ulster

County American Legion, as well as County Adjutant for many years, Harold began his association with the American Legion in Copake before coming to Saugerties. He served there as Past Commander of Post 1160 and was also a Charter Member of the Clausson Raught Community Rescue Squad.

A Charter Member of the Saugerties Jaycees, Harold was instrumental in the beginning of the spectacular July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations we have in Saugerties today. He was an officer and member of the Saugerties Lions Club, as well as a member of R.A. Snyder Hose Co. Also a life member of the Exempt Fireman's Association, Harold found time to serve on the Board of Directors of Diaz Ambulance and Saugerties Senior Citizens Housing on Main Street. He was a member of the Saugerties Dartball League and the Saugerties Drum Corps, as well as a Charter Member of the 398 Club. For the Knights of Columbus, Harold attained the ranks of Grand Knight of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree and Past Faithful Navigator 4<sup>th</sup> Degree. He was a longtime sponsor of youth athletic leagues and bowling, and was a member of the Mum Festival Committee, as well as the New York State and Dutchess/Ulster/Putnam Funeral Directors Associations. Harold served as an usher and was a parishioner and Holy Name Member of St. Mary of the Snow Church.

Such a long and varied list of community service accomplishments is no doubt impressive, and par for the course, for a guy who came here at an early time in his adult life determined and willing to become entrenched in his new environment to help make life better for all Saugertiesians. One would be hard-pressed to find the equal of this quintessential volunteer. However, two facets of his life always took precedence over everything else – his love of family and his desire to coach and teach in the local youth sports leagues, particularly basketball and

baseball. Harold loved vacationing with his family and celebrating the traditional family functions, and the larger the family grew, the more celebrating there was to do.



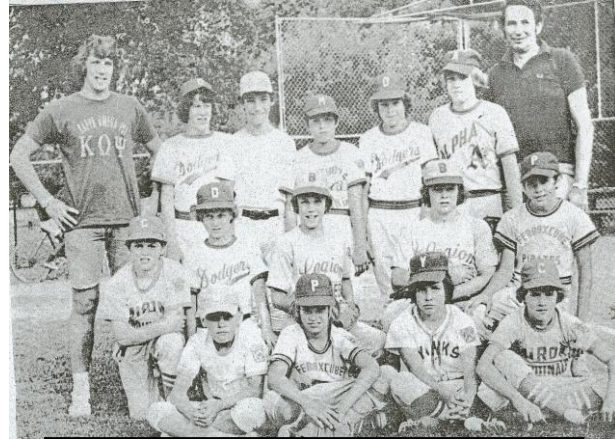
Wilsey Family Photo: l-r; Son Jack, Harold, son Peter (sitting), wife Peg, son Tom, daughter Mary Kay (Riley), son David (sitting), daughter Anne Marie (Schulze), and son Mark.

Harold and Peg were blessed with seven children, five sons and two daughters. The girls are both married and living in Massachusetts – Mary Kay Riley and her husband Pat of Mashpee and Ann Marie Schulze and her husband Jim of Plymouth. All of the five boys are married, but are much more spread out around the country than the girls.

Tom and Debbie live in the Spackenkill section of Poughkeepsie. Peter and Ann Renee are in El Paso, Texas. Jack and Juanita live here in Saugerties, while Mark and Mary reside in Phoenicia. Finally, David and Dawn call Alexandria, Virginia home.

Harold's family meant the world to him and he was so proud of the accomplishments of not only his children, but of all of his 15 grandchildren as well. Partrick Riley and Frank and Hannah Schulze, his daughter's kids, brought great pride and joy to Harold and Peg. The boys' children, Danielle, Jeffrey, Eric, Karin, Briana, Matthew, Kate, Claire, Andrew, Grace, Sarah, and Emily Wilsey all carry on the Wilsey family legacy. All of the kids are proud of their father and grandfather and wish he could be here to enjoy the honor himself.

Coaching and teaching kids of the fundamentals of basketball and baseball was Harold's true passion in sports. Since he had five sons, it stood to reason that he would have a long career as a coach and mentor to not only his boys, but their teammates as well. He preached teamwork and team success above individual accomplishments as a coach for many years with the Lakers in the Biddy Basketball League. It was in the Saugerties Little League where Harold carved out a 21-year career of excellence as a Manager of teams which had success both at the local and district levels and beyond.



1974 Saugerties Little League All Stars. Manager Harold Wilsey (top right) and assistant coach, son Tom Wilsey (top left).

He started out in 1963 and 1964 as Manager of the Minor League Orioles. An expansion team began play in the Majors in 1965 under the sponsorship of the South Side Men's Club, the very



LoDOLCE MACHINERY CARDINALS were honored at the recent banquet of the Saugerties Little League as champions of the major loop. Squad members shown above are (front row, l to r) Ron Gambino, Teddy Lorenz, David Lanzl, Mike Miller, Robert Francello; (second row) Dan Cavanagh, David Krein, Rudy Firmbach, Chris Caporale, James Carroll, David Wilsey; (back row) Paul Blair, Manager Harold Wilsey, Coach Charles Cavanagh, Sponsor James LoDolce, Randy Dodig, Steve Fryling and Coach Tom Wilsey. (Saporito Photo)

Harold Wilsey (top row second left) with his 1979 Saugerties LL 18-0 Cardinals. Standing to left of Harold is former Baltimore Oriole, NY Yankee, Cincinnati Red and multiple Golden Glove recipient Paul Blair. Harold's ever present assistant coach, son Tom, standing far right.

entity which launched the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame in 1963. This team was called the Southside Cardinals and Harold was named its Manager with Bob Schnell as a coach.

In 1970, the Cardinals won their very first Division and League titles. As a result, Harold was named the League's All-Star Manager for 1971, winning the first District 15 Championship in League History. From that first league title in 1971 until 1983, Harold's Cardinal teams would win nine Division and seven League Championships. His son

Tom, Charlie Cavanagh, and John Tyburski were coaches during this amazing run. It was truly a family

affair for Harold to be coaching his sons while being ably assisted by Tom in the dugout.

Seven League titles meant seven chances to coach All-Star teams for the League, and again Harold delivered, winning five District 15 Championships in his seven attempts. The really special season was 1978, when Harold, Tom, and young Joe Martin Jr. (still coaching in the league today) swept the District 15 and Section 2 titles, coming within one game of the New York State Championship. Harold finished his All-Star managing career with a stellar 25-7 record. Then in 1979 his Cardinals rolled over the league with a perfect 18-0 record.

Harold's greatest joy at the ball field was all the friendships that developed with his players and their families that lasted a lifetime. He loved being able to watch these boys become men, coaches, and fathers themselves. Typical of Harold's giving personality was the fact that he stayed an extra year than he planned to manage, just to make sure he could leave a better team behind for his successors. His All-Star teams included several Hall of Famers. Iggy Maines, Jay Harris, Steve Schaffer, and 2013 Inductees Jim "Lenny" Hackett and John "JD" Dodig all played All-Stars under Harold.

When you consider the demands of running a family business dealing with helping others cope with sorrow and loss of loved ones, raising a family of seven children, and all the volunteer organizations aided by his expertise and experience, you have to wonder how could one man have done all of this and still coach in Little League and Bidy League on the side? The prevailing and simple answer is that Harold Wilsey was a man who cared. He cared enough about his family, his business and what it stood for, his community and its youth, to put everything above himself; to go forward and accomplish things that any man would have been proud of. Harold did love golf and sailing, but with his other interests, he probably did not get to do either as much as he would have liked to.



Harold and Peg Wilsey

One common sight through the years was Harold and Peg tooling around the

Village on their 2-seat bicycle. How fitting for a guy who was always a team player, to spend time with his wife in a way most men would not even think of doing. For all he did with his life for everyone who came into contact with him, it's nice to see that an organization like the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame, with its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and new Veterans Committee leading the way, has truly gotten this one right.

The only downside is that Hal could not be here to, for once, bask in his own glory and enjoy this honor himself, as he becomes a member of yet another iconic Saugerties tradition. Harold's family is rightfully proud that he is being enshrined this year as a member of the Hall of Fame's 50<sup>th</sup> class. The anniversary became even more special with his election, bringing back so many memories of a man gone from this world, but never to be forgotten by his family, friends, and the Saugerties Sports Community. Saugerties is clearly a better place because of his life's work in his adopted home town, and we are thankful for his efforts throughout his life. Congratulations to Harold M Wilsey and the entire Wilsey family. Peg, the kids, and grandchildren always have thought Hal was a Hall of Famer husband, father, and grandfather. Now, thanks to his being honored with Induction into the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame, they can be sure of it. The proof is on the plaque which will be proudly presented at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary banquet on May 4, 2013 at the Glasco Fire Hall.