



# Historically Speaking

With Town Historian  
Richard Forliano

## Fields of Dreams

In 1956 an Eastchester team went all the way to the Little League World Series. But the next year the Eastchester Little League faced the problem of not having a field of their own.

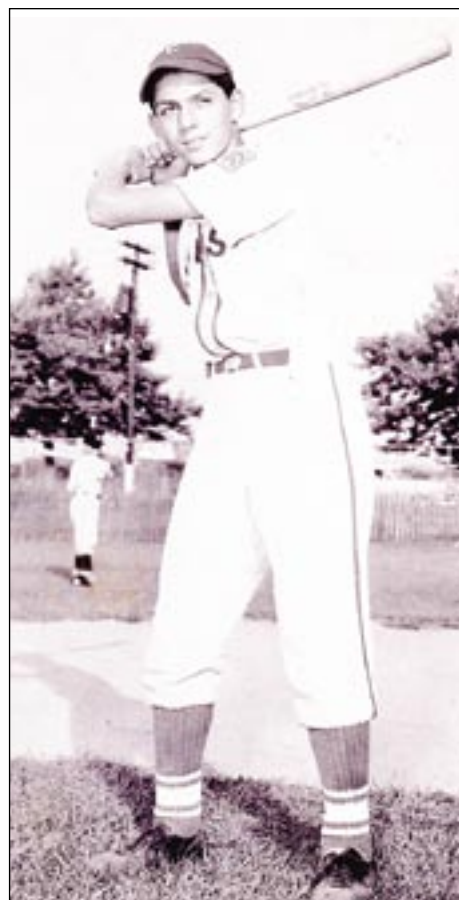
In the 1940s, the old Wilmot School on White Plains Road across from Lord and Taylor's was taken over and converted into a makeshift Town Hall. For the first three years the Little League played their games on the field of the Wilmot School. But in 1957 the field house of the old Oakridge Golf Course on Mill Road was officially dedicated as Town Hall.

Vincent Bellew, the town recreation commissioner, notified the Little League that the property they were playing ball on had been sold for commercial property and that they would not be able to use the field anymore. He wrote a column in *The Eastchester Record* about how the present field, that today's Little League plays on, was started.

"John Iaciofano...came to the recreation office in town" and stated that the Little League wanted a field of their own. There was a piece of property at Garth and Harney Road reserved for recreational purposes. It was covered with giant stones which had been dumped there when the town was excavating Garth Road for sewers and drains."

According to John Arrigo, who wrote a book on the start of the Little League, the job of getting the area ready for play went to two of the founders of the Little League, Frank Bianco and David DiRubba. In his book, John describes how the two men went about their work.

They went to see the lot and, "Found it had a large hole in the center, and it appeared that the town was using it to dump broken cement blocks and other masonry wastes. What was needed was a lot of dirt



Ballplayer Jimmy Ciarlo

to fill the hole."

Frank Bianco told Dave DiRubba that he had an idea of how he could fill the hole. His dad, Jack White, worked for the county and was dredging the Bronx River down by Parkway Oval. Jack White told them, "You get the trucks, and I will give you all the dirt you can use." The trucks were obtained



Little League team photo

from Lawrence Labriola, John Bracarella, the Dirienzo brothers, and the Town of Eastchester. Lawrence Labriola had his compressors on the field breaking the giant stones to size and hauling them away.

In the spring of 1957 the field at Garth Road was opened. The first batter on opening day was a young Bill Cade. Bill, a lifelong resident of Eastchester, served a long time as president and is still active in Little League today.

But the work of the founding fathers of youth baseball was not over. At the end of the Little League season in 1957 Dave DiRubba went up to his old friend Frank Bianco and said, "We have to do something for the older boys who graduated from Little League. They have nothing to do." Again a committee was formed and after weeks of discussion, they realized that the only solution was to build another field.

Phil White, who had been elected president of the fledging Pony Colt, spoke with Vincent Bellew, the recreation commissioner. Vince stated that the only available property was the old marble quarry located

on Dunwoodie and Woodruff streets. The property had to be filled and leveled off. Phil arranged for the trees to be cut down and used them to fill the hole. Dirt was brought in to fill the hole, grass was planted, an infield cut out, dugouts and refreshment and spectator stands were built.

In 1942, the town rallied behind the young men of the town who readily went off to fight our fascist enemies. It would be that same civic and patriotic pride of the greatest generation that in the 1950s prodded the citizens of the town to set up organizations like Little League, Pony Colt, the Eastchester Historical Society, and the Eastchester Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

This strong sense of community permeated the civic and service organizations, filled the positions on the many volunteer boards in the town, and filled the ranks of the volunteer fire companies.

Without this unselfish civic pride and commitment we seriously diminish ourselves.

"Historically Speaking" runs bi-weekly. This is the seventh in a series on the sporting history of the Town of Eastchester.