



Historically Speaking

*With Town Historian
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Al Tarcinale: A life worth living

Al Tarcinale's generation survived the Great Depression, went off to fight in World War II, and upon their return gave themselves unselfishly to this community. In the Town of Eastchester, they filled the ranks of the many volunteer organizations like the fire department, the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They started brand new organizations like the Eastchester Historical Society, EVAC, and the Eastchester Little League among others. The values of hard work, discipline, respect for authority, and reverence have made this generation stand apart.

Who is Al Tarcinale? On Aug. 25, 2010 at age 99 Al Tarcinale threw out the first pitch at the Little League World Series semifinal game between Texas and Washington. Al was honored for 55 years of service to the Little League. Al first became involved with the Eastchester Little League in 1955 at the behest of his wife Erma who was president and one of the founders of the Ladies Auxiliary Club. Al began to volunteer his time, coaching the Red Sox, one of the league's four teams. He hasn't stopped volunteering.

Al grew up in nearby Yonkers. As a young teenager, he worked at a jewelry store in Getty Square. Malcolm Wilson, later governor of New York State, was a customer. Malcolm

gave the store seasons passes to the then-New York Giants and the Yankees. Al boarded the trolley and then went on the subway for a nickel to see the great ones play at the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium. A lifetime love affair with baseball had begun. He pitched two years in high school, but felt he did not get a fair shot because of his size.

Al went off to fight in World War II. He received his training in Camp Shelby, Miss. Because he could type and do shorthand, he took a course at Mississippi State College on how to be a company clerk. In reflection Al commented, "I soon realized that the company clerk was the most responsible person in the company." By the end of the war, he was promoted to sergeant. Then an event occurred that tells us much about Al's character. In an interview conducted in September of 2010, Al tells the story this way:

"I was once asked by a captain to do something that did not meet regulations – to promote one of his buddies from private to first sergeant. I refused and the captain

threatened to have me court-martialed. I told him that I had more important things to do and he should go ahead. The court martial never took place but the issue went to headquarters. The captain and the illegally promoted sergeant were transferred and the sergeant was demoted back to private."

For his entire life, Al has lived by the principle that, "A rule is a rule." He has always insisted on abiding by this principle throughout his 56-year involvement with the Eastchester Little League.

And what an involvement it has been. His amazing contributions are partially described in the booklet "The 25th Anniversary: Eastchester Little League: 1954-1978."

"Served as a coach, manager, umpire, player agent, Vice President of both the American and National League, and has served as chairman of various committees from time to time. In 1968 he attended the Little League Umpiring School at Saint Petersburg, Florida. [Before 1968 Al had never flown and he paid for the entire week] that same year he was appointed umpire consultant for district 20 of the New York State Little League. He has been responsible for conducting the annual the annual umpire clinic before each playing season and our umpire in chief for many years gaining the respect of everyone for being stern but just."

The most fitting tribute

to Al and his wife Erma in the booklet reads, "The Tarcinale team never had a child in the Little League program, instead they made a practice of adopting serving all the Little Leaguers in our group."

Al's most exciting memory of his involvement with Little League took place when he worked the Little League World Series in 1977. Al worked five of the seven championship games at every position including the no-hitter by the Taiwan team.

Al suddenly heard a voice behind him: "Hey, Mr. Umpire." It was Ernie Banks, the famous Hall of Fame shortstop for the Chicago Cubs with the sunny disposition. Al and Ernie then had a pleasant conversation about the art of hitting.

Al believes that the Little League is a great organization but when asked what his biggest disappointment was, he said: "Volunteerism is not what it used to be...When we started the organization was smart enough to meet regularly to find out what is right and wrong. There are still volunteers but they stay five to seven years. Sometimes there is a win-at-all-costs mentality."

This year Al will be 100 years old. Since 1957 he has watched young boys and now young girls play at the Little League field at Garth Road. Al Tarcinale's legacy is best summarized by Mike Smith, associate sports editor of this paper:

"Al is steadfast in his belief that selflessness and service are the keys to making organizations like Little League Baseball as successful as it has become."

Al then said, "Every day of my life, I preach to the younger guys that if they put in the time and you're interested in what you do, you get all the credentials that I have gotten."

Clearly, Al and Erma Tarcinale have had lives worth living.

"Historically Speaking" runs biweekly. This article is eighth in a series on the sporting legacy of the town



Al Tarcinale, 99, throws out the first pitch at a Little League World Series game in August last year.