



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Remember When? The St. Patrick's Championship Basketball Team

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO January 22, 2015



Now that we are well into the New Year, the sports seasons run into each other and add a wide variety of options for our viewing pleasure. The college football championships have been completed, the teams who will play in the Super Bowl have been determined and the basketball and hockey seasons are beginning to be defined.

Just a couple weeks ago, on New Year's eve, as I watched my two alma maters, Cornell and Syracuse University, challenge each other on the basketball court, I thought of what a great way it was to end 2014. Even though they were clearly outmanned by the great athletes from Syracuse, the Cornell team hustled and played hard throughout the entire game.

I have strong ties to these two wonderful colleges. At Cornell, I was fortunate to earn both undergraduate and graduate degrees and to participate in two great sports, football and crew. Even though I was very, very far away from being a star athlete, I enjoyed the camaraderie of my teammates as well as the opportunity to compete. In my freshman year at Cornell, I rowed against the Orangemen. A few years later, I would earn a law degree from the Syracuse University College of Law.

Thinking back on those times, and those teams conjures up many fine memories. But 2015 marks an anniversary of another team I played on, the 1964-65 St. Patrick's basketball team. That team, against significant odds and playing against a number of much larger schools, became an undefeated Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) diocesan champion.

The St. Patrick's basketball team of 1964-65, took on all comers and bested schools from both larger and smaller communities in competitions that stretched from Auburn on the east to Rochester on the west at a time when virtually every city and village had a Catholic school and the Catholic Youth Organization in our region was bustling with active participants from many age groups.

The St. Patrick's Panthers '64-65 basketball team was the combination of good, young athletes, a patient and talented coaching staff, helpful parents and a supportive student body and school administration.

Memory recalls us playing and defeating teams from much larger schools from Auburn, Geneva, Canandaigua and Rochester, as well as teams from Clyde, Newark, Waterloo, Penn Yan and the Rochester suburbs.

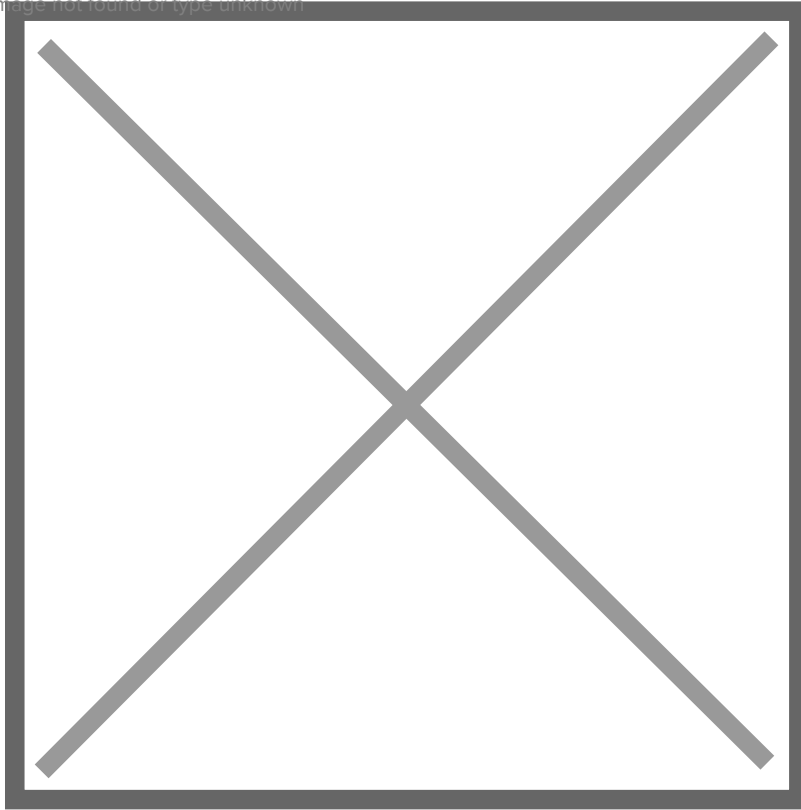
My best friends, Joe Lawson and Mark Piscitelli, were two great teammates, and by unselfishly working together with all on the squad, our team produced over twenty five victories that championship season.

Those fond memories of the 1964-65 CYO Champion St. Patrick's basketball team have endured, even though the school and many of the schools from that era have had to close because of enrollment challenges.

The team photo, along with a brief sketch of each player, manager and coaches are listed below:

Pictured left to right (top row):

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Joe Pagano: Joe was a very good athlete in high school, and played football for SUNY Cortland. We even scrimmaged against each other head to head in football during college. He was teacher for many years, and lives in Liberty, New York.

Mark Piscitelli: Mark was an outstanding football player, a high school All-American and star athlete for Cornell University. Mark was a senior executive for the Nestle Company, and lives in Baldwinsville, New York;

John Caratozzolo: John is a Senior Sales Representative at Holophane Lighting Systems and lives in Phoenix, Arizona;

Mike Nozzolio: Played football and rowed crew for Cornell; NY State Senator and attorney-at-law;

Joe Lawson: Joe was a standout athlete in baseball and basketball, and went on to play professional baseball. He is a Registered Nurse Practitioner at Interlakes Orthopaedic Surgery and lives in Prattsburg, New York;

Coach Al Suffredini: Suff was a legend around Seneca Falls. He was an outstanding basketball player in his own right. Al worked for the United States Post Office and is now deceased;

Pictured left to right (bottom row):

Mark Suffredini: Mark worked many years for the Seneca County Probation Department until his untimely passing.

Peter Sandroni: Pete is a paralegal who lives in Baldwin, New York;

Pete Saracino: Pete is a teacher, and currently a professor at Finger Lakes Community College, living in Phelps, New York;

Mike Ferrara worked for Goulds Pumps, and lives in Seneca Falls;

Dale Marino is an engineer and lives in Fairport, New York;

Paul Sandroni, worked for Ferrara Lumber for many years and lives in Seneca Falls;

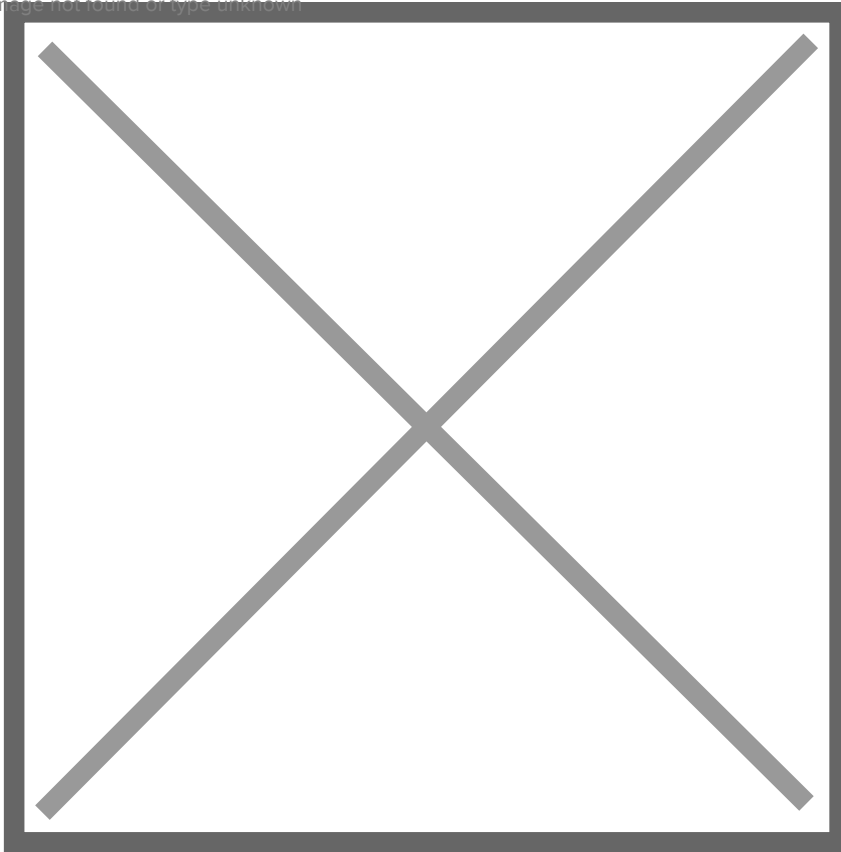
Not pictured: Louie Ferrara, served as the team manager. Lou worked for Goulds Pumps, and lives in Seneca Falls; and

Not pictured: Tony Ferrara, who recently retired after serving the Seneca Falls School District for decades. He was revered as the principal of Mynderse Academy.

Not pictured: Nick Netti: Nick served as an assistant coach, scout and general manager. Nick was a long-time contributor to youth sports in Seneca Falls and Auburn and is now deceased.

Pictured below is the team's outstanding cheerleading squad:

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Pictured left to right (top row): Diane Starek; Lynn Matteson; Gail Ranaletta; and Joanne Pocai.

Pictured left to right (bottom row): Barbara Winthrop; Martha Youngs, Terry Lee Giovannini; and Paula Bellardino.