

CENTER COURT

June 2021

Newsletter of the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame

A Message from the Executive Director.....

What a year it's been!

We've all been dealing with the endless ways in which COVID 19 has affected our lives. Efforts to keep everyone safe resulted in postponements and cancellations that mounted daily, including our own thirty-third annual induction ceremony and dinner. Originally slated for April of 2020, I'm excited to remind you that it will finally take place on Wednesday, April 27, 2022! More good news - Did you know that a 2005 inductee of our own Hall of Fame, Carol Stiff, was named president of the Board of Directors of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Tennessee?

How about that 2021 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament?! I happily channel-surfed, determined not to miss a moment of the action! It resulted in me being a little short on sleep, but what great entertainment! The culminating games, including the Elite 8 through the Finals, were unbelievably exciting! From the amazing talent and drama of the competition to the unfortunate and disturbing inequities of the NCAA's treatment of the women's teams, the players and coaches didn't disappoint. Gritty, inspirational, incredible, unforgettable my words can't possibly do them justice! It was thrilling to see the women's game get more positive exposure than ever before.

Yes indeed, what a year it has been! I can't wait for next season!



What's Happening?

NEW WEBSITE! The CWBHOF is working to make our organization more "interactive." We are completely revising our website. The new website will have a crisp, new look and be more user friendly. www.cwbhof.com

NEW FACEBOOK PAGE! Like us on Facebook! www.ctwbbhof.com We are reactivating our Facebook account. Our page will provide an avenue for communication to our members and other interested people. We want to hear from you! Please share your promotions, job changes, and milestones with us.

INDUCTEES - WE NEED ACTION PHOTOS! We are also beginning an effort to obtain at least one "action" photo for each of our inductees. We request that inductees look through scrapbooks and yearbooks and forward your favorite "action" photos to us. Please send them to ljwooster@gmail.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

CT Women's Basketball Hall of Fame Ceremony will be held on April 27, 2022

Linda J. Wooster,
President/Executive
Director/Founder

Louise Albrecht,
Vice President/Treasurer/ Founder

Ann V. Fariss, PhD
Co-Banquet Coordinator/
Founder

Tony Candido,
Fundraising Chair/
Founder

Brenda Reilly, PhD
Founder (Posthumous)

Lee Franzman,
Nomination Committee Chair

David Strong,
Historian/Archivist

Marge Dolan,
Banquet MC

Sue Crisafi,
Secretary

Tracey Finer,
Creative Writer/Newsletter
Editor

Tina Gonyea,
Co-Banquet Coordinator

Pamela Moffo,
Program Editor

Elaine Piazza,
Event Promotion

Heather Smith,
Webmaster

Tracey Flynn,
Special Projects



The Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame

A Story of Our History as Recollected by The Founders

In 1986, five friends from various athletic backgrounds met to discuss the possibility of starting a basketball organization to honor those individuals who had made extraordinary contributions to girls and women's basketball in Connecticut. These five, who became known as "the Founders," were: Tony Candido, Women's Basketball Official; Louise Albrecht, Associate Athletic Director at Southern CT State University; Dr. Ann V. Fariss, Director of Athletics at University of Bridgeport; Dr. Brenda A. Reilly*, Associate Athletic Director at Central CT State University; and Linda J. Wooster, Associate Athletic Director at Quinnipiac University. At the time, there were no other women's basketball state halls of fame in the country, a fact which did not discourage this intrepid group. They set out to develop an organization which eventually served as a model for the softball, field hockey, and volleyball halls of fame in Connecticut.

The group met in Lordship at Ann's restaurant, Sign of the Gull, for two years, to establish a constitution for this new venture. They reviewed constitutions from other organizations throughout the country and eventually created the framework which would become the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame (CWBHOF).

The group would obviously need funds to move forward with their vision. Tony was acquainted with a man who sponsored baseball card shows -- fundraising events where vendors and professional baseball players were obtained to provide paraphernalia and autographs. Tony approached his friend about the prospect of our group conducting a show in return for a percentage of the proceeds. We would be responsible for obtaining the site, providing security and refreshments. Louise Albrecht was able to procure Pelz Gymnasium at Southern Connecticut State University as the site.

Several of us visited area stores to procure hamburgers, hot dogs, candy, soda and paper goods -- usually as a donation or at a reduced price. Others made signs, obtained coffee pots, portable grills, and electrical cords to set up along the hallway behind Pelz Gym.

The Founders, and every friend they could convince to help, conducted two very successful shows. Major league baseball players -- José Canseco, Steve Garvey, Reggie Jackson, Sam Horn, Ellis Burks, Mike Greenwall, Daryll Strawberry, several up-and-coming young stars, and manager Bobby Valentine, signed autographs and posed for pictures with fans.

More than 30 years later, the Founders still have vivid memories of the shows. We still remember the long lines and hundreds of fans who gathered outside the gym door, waiting to get into the show. Since there was no kitchen area, hot dogs were boiled in a 100-cup coffee pot (which had to be trashed at the end of the season because it reeked of hotdogs). These cards shows provided the seed money for our treasury.

Our Constitution was developed by gathering bits



The Founders Front: Brenda Reilly (*deceased), Ann Fariss
Back: Louise Albrecht, Tony Candido, Linda Wooster

and pieces from other documents. A mission statement -- to honor those who, in superlative fashion, have contributed to the enhancement of women's basketball in Connecticut -- either through participation, service, support, or achievement -- was created by former Shelton High School Coach, Bernice Nicolari.

A nominating committee of Founders was responsible for finding and ensuring that potential candidates met established criteria and that all candidates had demonstrated outstanding character, integrity, and sportsmanship. Our first Executive Director, Ann Fariss, led the effort for 25 years.

The CWBHOF was started with proceeds from baseball card shows and hot dogs boiled in a coffee pot.

The first induction ceremony was held in April 1988 at 500 Blake Street Restaurant in New Haven and remained there for 18 years until it closed. Connecticut television news anchor Diane Smith was our first toastmistress and returned for six years.

Brenda Reilly was the first emcee, and each of the Founders had several responsibilities on the evening of the banquet. Executive Director Ann Fariss asked Tony Candido to wear a white tuxedo as he escorted the inductees to the head table. Our induction banquet moved to Hamden at the Cascade banquet facility in 2006.

During more than three decades in existence, several events stand out. In 1990, we sponsored Kay Flanagan for inclusion into the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC -- Women in Military Service. Kay, a World War II and Korean War Navy veteran, taught physical education and coached basketball in Farmington and Woodbury. Ten years later, in 2000, we established the Brenda A. Reilly Youth Camp Scholarship which provided free tuition to a young female to attend a basketball camp. The following year (2001), we added five "youthful" past inductees to join the Executive Board as part of our succession planning. Each was assigned specific responsibilities. Lynn Spagnesi designed our first website. (Ctwomensbasketballhalloffame.com)

CWBHOF participated in three fundraisers (2001-04) at the Brenda A. Reilly Golf Classic held at Hunter Golf Course in Meriden. In 2003 a site was established for the CT Women's Basketball Hall of Fame and Brenda Reilly Gallery at Central Connecticut State University Kaiser Gymnasium. Large group photos of previous classes of inductees were displayed. John Molina, author and advocate for CWBHOF, displayed his historical collection of women's basketball artifacts and his work on the history of the game.

CWBHOF participated in and benefited from three silent auction fundraisers (2005, 2007-8), in conjunction with Central CT State University in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Linda Wooster published a commemorative newspaper program for our 20th anniversary in 2006 and in 2017, Wooster and an intern produced a pictorial booklet of CWBHOF with historical information, group and candid photos from 1988-2017.

As we begin approaching our fourth decade in existence, the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame is moving into the electronic age with a new website and social media platforms. And...four of the five remaining Founders continue to be friends and active leaders of the first Hall of Fame in the country to honor women's basketball players, coaches, referees, and advocate.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame expresses its gratitude to **Vickie Fulkerson** for her assistance in melding the many pieces of information about each inductee into a well-written, comprehensive biography for inclusion in the banquet program.



Vickie Fulkerson is the Scholastic Sports Editor at The Day in New London, currently in her 31st season as a member of the newspaper's sports department. Her coverage has also included the UConn women's basketball team, which she has followed to 10 Final Fours, including the program's first in 1991.

Vickie has been honored for her writing on several occasions by the Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists, including first-place awards for 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2017.

MEET THE INDUCTEES

Seven outstanding members of the Connecticut basketball community, originally scheduled to be inducted in 2020, will finally be inducted in our 2022 ceremony. Following is a snapshot introduction to those inductees:

HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS



Nadine Domond led the Bridgeport Central Hilltoppers to the Class LL state championship title in 1993-94. The following season she was named the Gatorade Connecticut Player of the Year. She was also a four-time all-state selection.



Ellen Geraghty is the all-time leading scorer at The Gilbert School in Winsted. She was a four-time All-Berkshire League and three-time all-state selection.

COLLEGE PLAYERS



Jaclyn Daigneault led her Amherst College teammates to the school's first-ever Division III national championship in 2011. A two-time State Team Division III All-American, she was named 2011 Division III National Player of the Year.



Queen Edwards Smith played her collegiate basketball at Quinnipiac College. She was named three-time Defensive Player of the Year by the Northeast-10 Conference and selected to the Quinnipiac Hall of Fame.

HIGH SCHOOL COACH



Ron Hanson began coaching the girls' basketball team at Ellington High School in 1975. During the 1979-1983 seasons, his teams captured the North Central Connecticut Conference four years and won the State Championship three years in a row.

REFEREE



Maggie Tieman has worked Division I, II, and III NCAA Basketball tournament games and was selected to officiate the Division III national championship game in 2010 and 2012. She currently works for 13 Division I conferences including the SEC, ACC, & The Big Ten; having worked the Division I NCAA tournament since 2013.

HONORARY



Brian Hurlock has led five different high school girls basketball teams to state tournament appearances - Terryville, Bloomfield, Brookfield, East Windsor, and Wolcott Tech. Brian is being inducted for the great variety of his contributions to the game.

ALUMNI NEWS



Jen Rizzotti (college player, 2001 inductee) was named president of the WNBA's Connecticut Sun this past April.

Rizzotti has attained success at every level of basketball: as a star on the UCONN first-ever, women's basketball 1995 NCAA Championship team; for the 1995-96 season was named the Associated Press Player of the Year; the Wade Trophy and Naismith Award winner and Big East Player of the Year. She was also selected first team All-American by Kodak, Associated Press and UPI. She played professionally, was on a two-time WNBA Championship team, and was the 16-year head coach at the University of Hartford.



Shea Ralph (college player, 2009 inductee) was recently named head coach for the Vanderbilt Commodores' women's basketball team. She was an assistant coach for the Huskies since 2008.

Ralph, who graduated from Connecticut in 2001, was captain of the Huskies' 2000 national championship team and was named MVP of that Final Four. She also was an All-American and the 2000 Big East Player of the Year.



Carol Stiff (honorary, 2005 inductee) will be inducted into the National WBHOF in August.

Stiff is ESPN's vice president for women's sports programming and acquisitions. She leads the company's efforts in NCAA women's basketball and the WNBA, as well as integrating women's sports content across all ESPN platforms. She is widely recognized as one of the most prominent champions of women's collegiate sports.