

Dear NOMINATING COMMITTEE,

It is that time of year when nominations to the Hall of Fame are due.

I am writing in hopes that you will join with me in support of my nomination of Russell Digati, class of 1960. Please submit promptly the enclosed nomination form accompanied with a brief write-up on Russ.

Enclosed is a biography which I was able to put together after talking with Many of Russ's friends and family members. I am also inserting my own knowledge of Russ, based on his accomplishments, long hours of hard work on his own time and dedication to all of You alumni as a BFHS/HACI board member.

This is what I was able to find out:

1. Born on Buffalo's west side to Alfonso & Mildred Digati. Russ has 2 younger sisters.
2. Attended St. Theresa of the Little Flower Seminary for one and a half years before Transferring to Bishop Fallon.
3. Enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves in his junior year. Upon graduation, he served His active duty aboard a U.S. Naval warship (Destroyer). Was voted "Sailor of the Month" twice during his tour of duty.
4. Met his wife "Franny" in the Anchor Bar in May of 1964. Franny is the daughter of Frances & Joseph Vacanti, both deceased, and sister to Anthony Vacanti. Russ and Fran married in 1965 and have three daughters and Five grand children.
5. Russ began a thirty year sales management career in 1967.
6. He enrolled in Bryant and Stratton Business Institute in 1970, to further his education, and majored in Sales Management. Russ maintained a 4.0 GPA and graduated "With Highest Distinction".
7. With his career skyrocketing, Russ was promoted to the position of North East Regional Sales Manager. He maintained a local sales office in Elma, NY where he employed office support staff, sales personnel & sales merchandisers. His position put him in the "Inner Circle" of management where he rubbed elbows & socialized with Farrah Fawcett, Ryan O'Neil, Joe Namath, Debbie Reynolds, Cary Grant and Jose Ebare - hairdresser to the stars.

Russ, from what I learned, led the entire country in sales numerous times and never finished less than third overall. Russ retired in 1995.

Nominee Information:

Name RUSSELL DIGATI School: (circle) BFHS or HACL Class Yr 60
Address 2301 BULLIS RD. ELMA N.Y. 14059
Phone 655-1398 E-Mail Address _____

Nominator's Information:

Name CHUCK SYRACUSE School: (circle) BFHS or HACL Class Yr _____
Address 715 DICK RD #2 CHEEKTOWAH N.Y. 14225
Phone 684-5110 E-Mail Address _____

A written Biography of the nominee supporting his/their nomination MUST accompany this form.
All nominations to be considered for 2006 must be submitted by March 15, 2006
Nominations are to be sent to: Hall of Fame Nominations
BFHS/HACL Alumni Assn. • PO Box 371 • Orchard Park, NY 14127-0371

This is where I personally began my acquaintance with Russ:

In October of 1999 Russ and I became charter members of the new Bishop Fallon High School Alumni Association Board of Directors. Russ was elected Vice President, Secretary and Chairperson of the Hall of Fame. How he juggled all of those duties would baffle most people. But I could see that he was deeply motivated and driven to do the best job possible for YOU the alums. Russ labored almost independently for twenty-two months to bring to fruition the first Hall of Fame. He was instrumental in getting the Holy Angles Collegiate Institute (HACI) to merge with Bishop Fallon High School to form the current alumni association.

We needed a venue for those monies we would raise through our All Years Reunion. In 2001 Russ suggested a tuition Assistance Program which he has chaired since its inception. I know that he makes appointments with principals of the catholic elementary schools throughout the diocese, visits with them, garners information on indigent students, parents and single parents who are struggling with their tuition obligations. He then makes his assessments and gives the board of directors his recommendations. Russ does not take one penny for his travels such as gas, tolls or phone calls for his work. If you stop and think about this, Russ spends many hours traveling and has never once complained about it.

When the board voted for tax-exempt status and Non-Profit status, Russ was the one who vigorously pushed for it. He suggested and visited with other board members and a local bank to secure information on "annuity programs" for which we could begin building funds for future events and tuition assistance. Our Alumni Mass, which is held on the same weekend as the Hall of Fame Dinner was also Russ's idea. Following the mass there is a presentation of the hall of fame plaques (Located in Holy Angels Church..run by the OMI's). Once the ceremony is over, everyone is invited to a continental breakfast held in the church reception room.


Russ is an active member of the Butler Mitchell Boys Club of America Alumni Association. He is associated with "The Holy Face of Jesus Society. Was a member of the Elma Business Association for five years. In his spare time Russ assists local catholic schools interested in forming their own alumni association. In 2005, Annunciation Parrish, in Elma, NY saw his hard work produce an alumni association, which boasts of over three hundred members, in less than one year.

Russ has also started a grass roots program which will encompass the alumni associations of all catholic high schools (For both schools in operation and those that have been closed), plus the associations of catholic universities to come under one umbrella for the expressed purpose of promoting and funding tuition assistance for all catholic elementary schools within the diocese. With God's assistance and guidance, maybe we can bring this concept to fruition over a state wide level.

My nomination of Russ Digati is not for his athletic abilities or academic genius, but rather for his strong dedication to OUR alumni association and catholic education in ll of Western NY. In, after reading this, you feel as I do, please return the nomination form along with information from above to the address shown on the form. Please include any information that you have that you feel may be useful or helpful in support of Russ Digati's nomination.

There is a deadline so please be prompt. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chuck Syracuse". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Chuck Syracuse
Class of 1955 and Alumni Board Member