

2014 Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame



Andrea Ungvarsky

How does one measure the impact of a person's life on others? Is it how long they have worked, coached, or taught? Is it by the profession they chose? The resounding response is NO. What matters is the "dash" in between the two dates of birth and passing. How one spends that "dash" is what is important. That "dash" in Andrea Ungvarsky's life, albeit short, meant her pursuit of perfection in execution in all of her life's endeavors and most importantly how this concept extended beyond her own life. This was readily apparent in her never-ending efforts to communicate her knowledge to everyone she taught and by doing so became the quintessential coach/teacher/trailblazer.

Andrea J. Ungvarsky was born on June 2, 1945 in Elmira, New York to Agnes and Andrew Ungvarsky. Andrea was the oldest of 15 children. Her siblings are: Janet, Andrew, James, Barb, Mary Ann, Gary, Joseph, Edward, Annette, Eugene, Nadine, Marie, Peter (deceased), and Yvonne. She grew up in Horseheads, New York and attended Horseheads Central School District.

It seems having 14 younger siblings enabled her to practice and hone her skills. She had a readymade team. One story they recounted was how she "stole away" with her younger siblings to the Rod & Reel

Club by the Reservoir where they lived. Her brother was amazed at how straight-faced Andrea was when she responded with a sincere "No Ma'am" to her Mom's inquiry - "Did you kids go over to the Rod and Reel Club where I told you never ever to go!?" They remember times when she would come home from college and organize the "army blanket toss" where she would toss the younger siblings high into the sky. Her siblings' also state how to them she was their unsung hero running towards danger while others would run the other way. They remember with smiles and laughter how she gave one unsuspecting rattlesnake a terminal headache and another slithering serpent a quick exit from the panic-stricken girls' shower. Then there was the time she rescued her tree-bound siblings from the impending "stampede" of hundreds of cud-chewing dairy cows which from their tree top vantage point were seen to be hastily darting about as they frantically parted as she made her pathway towards them. Picture this: Andrea with a rump-prodding pitchfork in one hand, coupled with a collection of rather large "high-and-tight fast ball" rocks at the ready in the other and the wide-eyed cows moved aside as though their very lives were at stake, knowing full well who the leader of the pack was then... and still is today. Andrea laughed at the younger siblings who were scared and stuck up in the tree. As eloquently as she could be, she chuckled "what were you guys thinking?" As the younger siblings would state their excuse was that there weren't any cows around at the time they set out on their tree climbing quest. They remember they followed their older sister back feeling as safe and confident as she once again parted the endless sea of sweeping tails. So yes, it seems she had much practice in leadership and the art of communication long before her arrival in Saugerties.

So as you can see, Andrea's love of the game began long before she started playing sports throughout her school years. She was even known to have played football with her brothers and neighborhood friends at night, even though the consequences resulted in a fractured wrist. As her siblings fondly stated, "if it was round and it rolled, Andrea played it!" Andrea's brother Andy stated that "back when Andrea went to high school women's sports were intramural. Andrea played guard on the women's basketball team and was taught to dribble 3 times and then pass the ball." According to her siblings she also played field hockey and tennis after school; sports which were all started by Andrea's gym teacher on her own accord.

Andrea went on to attend SUNY Elmira and SUNY Cortland. She participated in field hockey for 4 years; basketball for two years, volleyball for four years and one year of tennis (her and her doubles partner played at Forest Hills) it was a "club" sport since there weren't any conferences back then for women. In 1968 she was awarded her Bachelor's degree in Physical Education. Upon graduation, Andrea went on to teach Physical Education at Oswego High School for one year (1968-1969). Luckily for Saugerties and most importantly the young female athletes, in 1969 Andrea was hired by the Saugerties School District. She went on to teach and coach in Saugerties for the next 29 years. During these 29 years Andrea accomplished much, both on and off the field or court. Remembering the practice she had with her siblings and her education, she was irrefutably prepared to lead the young girls and women she would soon teach and coach; this was her calling – to mentor all of them.

Andrea then became known as “Miss U.” She inspired and encouraged many through her teaching and coaching over the years. She was the first women’s varsity coach in the history of Saugerties High School and started as well as coached the girls’ volleyball team.

Andrea’s accolades in her years of coaching are unmatched. She coached varsity girls Volleyball from 1973-90. During this time her teams had an overall record of 218-54. She had 80% winning percentage! The teams won 6 League and 3 Sectional Championships. She also coached varsity girls softball from 1977-85. Her teams had an overall record of 135-42. Again, this represents an unbelievable winning percentage of 76%. She coached varsity basketball in 1974 -75 and again in 1983-84 as well as junior high girls basketball in 1988-89. She was recognized in 1982 as Freeman Coach of the Year. What is important in all of these brilliant sport accomplishments is that Andrea was the utmost professional. She was never one to seek the limelight, no, instead of words her actions and those she coached spoke volumes. Her methods of coaching were organized and efficient; she instructed with clear and candid instructions. One look from her was all it took; her athletes readily knew what to do.

Andrea’s coaching opponents and colleagues highly respected her. Hall of Fame inductee Ron Buzon was a colleague of Andrea’s. He stated “I admired Andrea’s dedication she brought to the Saugerties girl’s athletic program. She was always teaching and coaching. Not only was she interested in the Saugerties athletes but all athletes. She always put the student and athletes first, not winning or losing.” Val Cally, Arlington High School former volleyball coach, fondly remembers Andrea and her teams. Cally stated, “I knew that when we played against Saugerties, it would be a great battle between two good teams. She was the consummate teacher of the skills necessary to cultivate outstanding players of the game of volleyball and as a coach had a keen understanding of the strategies, rules, and intricate aspects of controlling the flow of a match.” Cally indicated, “I highly anticipated our matches and she made me be certain that I had prepared my team to the best of their abilities.” On Andrea’s induction into the Saugerties Hall of Fame, Cally stated, “It’s an honor Andrea well deserves, I’m only sorry she isn’t around to appreciate how well she was respected professionally by her peers and personally by her former players.”

Andrea’s legacy lives on in many of the athletes she coached. Many of those she coached state “they would not be where they are today if it hadn’t been for her.” She instilled in them a belief that they could do anything, become whatever they wanted to become, and most important, be a person of integrity. Her teams were not always the tallest, strongest or fastest and yet she managed to get every ounce of being from her athletes. She was always pushing them to take risks knowing she was there to encourage and praise their efforts and more importantly be there if needed. This relationship went beyond the years of high school, with many staying in touch as they went on to pursue their own careers.

Andrea was probably most remembered for her accomplishments on the field, her fierce competitive spirit, and her ability to get the most out of her athletes. However, it was this same

drive and fighting spirit that led to her most noteworthy accomplishment off the field which was “creating the need for change” at Saugerties High School. Stepping out of her comfort zone in the mid to late 70’s, Andrea joined forces with Terrie Rosenblum (Saugerties Teachers Association Union President) to demand “equal pay” for female coaches and teachers. Title IX influenced this pursuit and although it was signed into law by President Nixon in 1972, many high schools and universities in the country were still not enforcing it. For several months, Andrea and Terrie met with district officials to oversee the enforcement of Title IX in Saugerties schools. According to Rosenblum, “although the process was not an easy one, Andrea was determined to see it through to the end.” Some may say what Andrea did was courageous, she would say it was the right thing to do.” Andrea was not one to publicize her achievements, yet all those teachers and coaches who have followed in her footsteps have Andrea to thank for blazing that path.

In Andrea’s later years, she participated in a variety of sports: golf, tennis, cycling, hiking, cross country skiing and rock climbing. In addition to always being active in sports, she began to write poetry and draw. She approached those two endeavors just like everything else she attempted, striving for perfection.

While Andrea was with us for only a short “dash,” those who were fortunate to cross paths with her are forever grateful she taught them more than just sport, she taught them to persevere in pursuit of excellence until the final whistle is blown. Andrea blazed the trail so that those who followed had a path to walk down, just like she did early in her life for her siblings that were trapped in the tree. She wanted and dreamed of equality and opportunity. Therefore, in recognition of all of her accomplishments in sport and life, her far-reaching and awe inspiring efforts that have left an indelible mark on all those she impacted; your family, friends and your community congratulate Andrea Ungvarsky on her 2014 enshrinement into the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame.



1984 Mid-Hudson Athletic League Softball Championship

Coach Ungvarsky with Championship trophy.



1991 Anna Maria Island, Florida – week long Family reunion.

Front Row: Janet, Mom (Agnes), Andrea & Yvonne

Back row: Eugene, Ed, Annette, Barb, Joe, Nadine, Gary, Andy Mary Ann, Jim, Marie



A young "Miss U" while attending SUNY Cortland.



Andrea posing for SHS Year Book photo



Andrea takes a healthy cut during 1980's SAA Softball contest.