

Port Washington Youth Activities

PYA SPORTS HALL OF FAME

ED McILHENNY



Before he flew in the air, Ed McIlhenny soared on the lacrosse field. For more than 40 years Ed has “cranked the rock” either for high school, college or club teams and has been recognized as a leader in the sport.. And where did he get his start? At Lions Field with PYA.

As a fifth grader Ed fell in love with lacrosse. Why lax? He had played baseball, but everybody did that. Lacrosse was different – faster, harder hitting and requiring more precise teamwork. “It demanded from me -- and arguably instilled in others -- a measure of ‘situational awareness’ to see the whole field,” says Ed. “Through lacrosse I developed good peripheral vision that has helped me immensely in my flying career.”

After PYA, Ed played lacrosse (and soccer and ice hockey) at Schreiber High School and helped out PYA by reffing lacrosse games at Lions Field.

In 1971 he entered the United States Air Force Academy and -- no surprise -- played lacrosse there, in addition to receiving his military training. The skills he developed at Lions Field obviously paid off -- Team MVP in 1973, Team Captain in 1974, named an All Rocky Mountain League Player for three years and several team and league scoring records.

Following graduation from the Academy, his flying record was equally impressive. He graduated second in his fighter pilot class, flew F-4s for four years and while stationed in Iceland, intercepted twenty-two Soviet TU 95 “Bear” bombers. In 1981, after six years of active duty, he joined the Kansas Air National Guard as a full-time Guardsman and three years later he became a pilot for American Airlines. He is currently a Captain with American and serves as the commander of the Kansas Air National Guard with the rank of Brigadier General.

Ed and his wife Debs live in Wichita, Kansas -- a place more suited for college football and cattle roping, than an “East Coast” sport like lacrosse, yet he has never stopped “laxing.” Since the 1970s he has been playing for such outfits as the San Antonio Lacrosse Club, the Miami Lacrosse Club and is both a player and coach in the Great Plains Lacrosse League. In 2002 his Super Masters team went undefeated and won the World Games Championship in Perth, Australia and for 27 years he has played in the Rocky Mountain Shoot-Out in Vail, Colorado -- if Air Force fields an alumni team, he is there!

With all that he has accomplished in life, so much of his world centers around a sport he learned years ago as a 12 year-old in Port Washington. “Compared to other sports, the lacrosse universe is a small one steeped in camaraderie and tradition,” says Ed “and there's nothing better than belonging to such a group. If you're away from home and see a stick, you've found a friend.”