

HONORABLE RICHARD J. CONNERS

Lawmaker, civic leader, veterans advocate, businessman, baseball enthusiast, raconteur, friend. All of these words describe Richard J. Conners, but it is the last – friend – that explains why so many people joined together to establish the Honorable Richard J. Conners Memorial Scholarship at The College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York.

Born in 1910, Dick Conners can be called North Albany's favorite son as he never strayed far from his Irish-American roots there. His formal education took place in Public School 20, Christian Brothers Academy, Albany Business College, the University of Buffalo and Siena College. But Dick never stopped learning. The breadth of his knowledge reflected his diverse life experiences.

An army veteran of World War II, Dick served as a Signal Corps cryptographer in the Philippines and the United States. He was the announcer at Hawkins Stadium, home of the Albany Senators (a Class A Eastern League baseball team of the Boston Red Sox). He also was a baseball columnist for the national sports publication, Sporting News. By profession, Dick Conners was an insurance broker.

But politics was in his blood and, for 20 years, Dick represented North Albany in the City Common Council. Then, in 1960, he ran city-wide and was elected Common Council President. He led the Council for 15 years. In 1976, he was elected to the first of eight terms in the New York State Assembly. One of his greatest successes in the State Legislature was leading the drive for the creation of an Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He was appointed as its first Chairperson in 1983. He retired from public life in 1992. He died in 1995.

Woven into Dick Conners' professional and political careers was his lifetime commitment to community service. After 31 years as New York State Chairman of American Legion Baseball, he was officially declared its Chairman Emeritus. He also was an active member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, North Albany American Legion Post, Albany Area Chamber of Commerce, Albany Kiwanis Club and the North Albany Limericks. Dick served as a trustee of the Albany Public Library and as director of the Empire State Institute for Performing Arts. In 1985, The College of Saint Rose recognized his dedication to public service by awarding him an honorary doctoral degree.

Last, but certainly not least, Dick was a devoted family man. Dick and his late wife, Margaret Egan Conners, had four children: Mary Alice, Margaret (Peggy), Maureen and Michael, and eight grandchildren. Dick's three daughters are Saint Rose alumni.

In all of his endeavors Dick Conners gave generously and selflessly of his time and talent. During his public life he was famous for attending virtually every community gathering to which he was invited. But Dick Conners went not just because he was invited, but because he genuinely cared about the people there. It is this gentleman of principle and honesty that the *Honorable Richard J. Conners Memorial Scholarship* at The College of Saint Rose recognizes. It is his legacy of community service that this scholarship perpetuates.