

CLIFFFORZIAT

Cliff Forziat was a three sport varsity athlete in high school, President of the Student Council, and played in the band. He played football on Fordham University's 1968 National Champion Club team. "I had excellent high school football coaches, but at 135 lbs it was really my high school wrestling experience that made this happen. Special thanks go to coach Ray Deren."

After college he went to work for Uncle Sam. He became a battalion S-1/Adjutant as a 2nd Lt. Later as Captain Forziat, while in command of an aerial surveillance detachment, he earned a unit commendation for his battalion from (at that time) Bird Colonel Colin Powell.

Cliff was hired at Herricks in September of 1972, three days before school started. "I taught Social Studies in the high school, any grade, any course, didn't care, had fun." At various times he coached football, lacrosse, spring track & field, and began coaching wrestling that year at Great Neck South. He added wrestling officiating to the mix, then, in 1976, when Al Muller stepped down from his high school wrestling position, Cliff shifted to Herricks (and hung up the zebra shirt). He assisted Bill Meisner for a year, then took over the helm in 1977-78. (Cliff retired from Social Studies in 2003, but continued to coach.

He became the NCWCA President serving 87-88 and 88-89. "It was a thrill to have a chance to build upon the organization that had been founded by Al Muller, Ted Peterson and Bob Bury." At the same time he was Section VIII Wrestling Coordinator serving for six years beginning in 87-88. John Thomas from Great Neck had just been made NCWCA Treasurer. "We had something like \$250.00 in a shoebox somewhere. To have been in disarray would have been an upgrade. Anyway, we persuaded some good people to help out. Neil Giordano (Lynbrook) and Ron Abatelli (Bethpage) became officers, and we tapped into the strength of our association getting input from many of our members." A great many changes were instituted, dual match championships, qualifying tournaments, tournament seeding procedures, and more. Section



VIII really started setting the pace for the state in many regards.

No matter what he taught or coached, Cliff stacked "the regs", found and implemented ways to legitimately maximize opportunities for students, athletes, and coaches. For the past 21 years Herricks has conducted six significant multi-team wrestling events each year (seven over the past four years). The Herricks Community Center became a Wrestling Mecca of sorts. "We believe that, man for man, wrestlers work harder than any other high school athletes. We believe that regardless of relative ability they all deserve meaningful opportunity. The lessons that they learn in wrestling become a significant source of strength and energy that shape the successes that they will

enjoy in all of their future endeavors.

As Head Wrestling Coach, Forziat's stewardship has resulted in 426 All-Conference award winners, 164 Conference finalists, 80 Conference Champions, 70 All-County award winners 17 County finalists, 12 County Champions, 4 New York State finalists, and 2 New York State Champions. Three went on to become All-Americans. His teams have won 14 Conference/League titles. When asked how many matches he's won he invariably says, "None. I sit on my box (an ancient black wooden medical kit that ought to be in the Smithsonian) and watch. The kids won all the matches." Those kids have amassed 138 League dual match victories and 323 dual match victories overall. He has been a four-time League Coach of the Year.

Over the years Cliff has been presented with several awards including in 1993 a NYSPHSAA Coaches Honor Award, in 2003 the LIWOA Sportsmanship Award, in 2011 the Nassau County Wellness Day "Community Champion Award", in 2012 an NCWCA Service Recognition Award. In April of 2013 he was inducted into the Jericho High School Alumni Hall of Fame, a prestigious distinction not specific to athletics.

Wrestling has been for him a fraternity of the highest order. He is proud to be a part of it, and he hopes that his efforts over the decades have encouraged others to feel the same way.