



## TED PETERSEN

Ted Petersen, former varsity wrestling coach of Section 8's Island Trees Bulldogs, was inducted into the New York State Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1989, and The National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1998. "The Coach" as he was simply referred to by the many friends and athletes whose admiration and respect he earned, was a community leader in his home town of Levittown during the course of his 33 years as a dedicated family man, physical education teacher, football, baseball and wrestling coach and the director of a summer camp for school children in the Adirondack mountains.

Wrestling evolved into Coach Petersen's favorite sport. As a graduate of Cortland State University in 1958 and having no previous experience with the sport, Petersen took a job coaching the junior high wrestling team of his local school district "because they needed a coach." He read books, pursued knowledgeable coaches for their advice and even listened to his own young wrestlers to learn the rules and techniques. He quickly developed his own theories and sought out some of the finest clinicians in the Country in a continuing effort to keep abreast of the best and latest skills emerging in the rapidly advancing sport of amateur wrestling. In his early years at Island Trees he often scheduled dual meets with some of the toughest teams in Nassau County even though he knew that these meets usually meant defeat for his squad. He believed that the way to improve was to test yourself against the best.

This theory soon began to pay dividends, because in 27 years as the Island Trees High School varsity coach, he compiled a team dual meet record of 325 wins, 70 losses and 4 ties. His team won 20 conference championships, 3 section 8 championships, produced 22 individual section 8 champion and 6 NYS champions.

Coach Petersen died at age 55 in March 1989 after a two-year struggle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. Despite the numerous awards he received and championship teams he coached, Petersen shunned the spotlight and preferred focusing his attention on the many children and athletes whom he inspired and helped guide into responsible and caring adults, living humbly and teaching his own personal standards of excellence which are summed up by his favorite motto, "Seek the highest"!