



**Joe McNulty**

**by Jane McNulty, Class of '75, Miami Coral Park Senior High School**

My father was a great and humble man. He grew up in the depression outside of Boston. He played football, basketball and baseball at Lynn Classical High School and was a hero for throwing a 60 yard pass during the annual Thanksgiving Day football game. Recruited by legendary Frank Leahy, he went to Boston College on a football scholarship. He left college and along with his 3 brothers, he entered WW II as a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy, headed for North Africa and on up through Italy. When he came back from the war, he finished college at the University of Miami.

He worked for the Miami-Dade County Public School System for 40 years. He was Head Basketball and Assistant Football Coach at Jackson High School in 1948. He coached some legendary sports figures including Lee Corso, College Football Sports Newscaster on ESPN (FSU: quarterback, Coach: Maryland and Louisville) and Joe Brodsky, Defensive Coordinator with Jimmy Johnson, first at UM, then with the Dallas Cowboys (coaching Emmitt Smith and Herschel Walker) and on to the Chicago Bears with Mike Ditka (UF-Football Hall of Fame). [Lee and Joe presented the first scholarship award.] He opened Southwest High School in 1957 as Head Football Coach and named them the Eagles (after Boston College). His assistant coach, Don James, went on to coach the University of Washington Football Huskies. During his time at Southwest, he was promoted to a position of Assistant Principal.

He came to Miami Coral Park Senior High in 1968 where he influenced the lives of thousands of young men and women for twenty years. Whether from hallowed hallways, the parking lot, the Westchester neighborhoods, the beach on Senior Skip Day, on the roof with binoculars, or in his office, Joe McNulty made an impact. Everywhere we went from Dadeland to the Grand Canyon to the L'ouvre in Paris, we met grateful alumni wanting to shake his hand and thank him for what he did for them and for the profound influence he had on their lives.

Daddy passed away from lung cancer in 1999 just 4 short months after his diagnosis. He fought hard with dignity and without complaint. His wake was filled with friends, colleagues and family. People spoke of his acts of kindness, firmness, the impression that he left and how he made a difference in their lives. After the wake was over and we were picking up items to take home, there was a young man still standing in the room with tears in his eyes. My brother-in-law engaged him in conversation because the young man looked so distraught. I did not recognize him even though I had been working at Coral Park and attended there as well. My brother-in-law said something like – “oh, did you know Joe McNulty well?” In a voice that was barely audible and shaking with emotion, the young man answered, “That man saved my life.” He quietly turned and left.

Daddy was all about changing lives and helping students make a turn-around in their lives – sometimes when they were ready and sometimes when they were not. Sometimes it was in dramatic fashion and sometimes it was quietly behind the scenes, allowing others to take the credit. He believed “kids are basically good and just need some good guidance.” He lived the Golden Rule, practiced “tough love” and was always fair. He was loved and respected in people’s lives. He did just that and his legacy lives on in the people that he helped mentor, not by words but by how he lived his life.

To each student who is awarded this scholarship in his name, I know that my father, had he met you, would be proud. You overcame adversity and in spite of circumstances, you didn’t use it as an excuse to give up or quit. You made a choice to change your life. His advice and mine are the same. Live your life to the best of your ability. Never forget what you have learned, give thanks for those who helped you along the path and most importantly, pay it forward to others – to honor his life and memory.