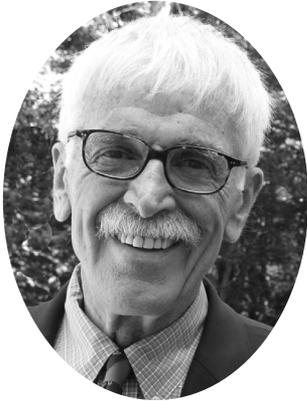


## *Franklin Melzer*



Franklin Melzer began participating in sporting events back in the 1940s, launching an athletic journey that would last an amazing six decades.

In fact, he actually got better with age.

Now 79, Melzer was 12 years-old and living in South Norwalk when he got his first taste of competitive sports. From 1946-49, he played baseball and basketball at both the Washington Village Boys Club and Benjamin Franklin Junior High School.

His passion for basketball continued at Norwalk High School where his teammates included Reggie Spears and Russ and ‘Pinky’ Dennis. Some

of his opponents were just as notable, like the legendary Frank ‘Porky’ Vieira and future Bridgeport Mayor Len Paoletta, both of whom played at Bridgeport’s Central High School.

Following his graduation from NHS in 1952, Melzer attended UConn and played club basketball and softball for his fraternity, and then from 1955-59 he competed in both sports while serving on the U.S.S. Skylark in Groton. He helped his softball team finish runner-up for the Fleet championship.

He was 25 when he completed his tour of duty and returned home. But Franklin Melzer was just getting started as far as his athletic career was concerned. His best days in sports were still ahead of him.

He soon added racquetball and running to his repertoire while continuing his basketball exploits on the hardwood. An attorney of law, Melzer played in the highly competitive New York Lawyers League, which included an array of former college players.

His 1981 team, for example, included Charlie Grantham, a former president of the NBA Players Association, and Ernie Cobb, former standout player at Stamford High School and Boston College, who was enrolled in a paralegal program at the time. That team won the league championship and two more summer league titles in 1982 and ‘83.

A resident of Stamford, Melzer also played in the annual 3-on-3 tournament at the Stamford YMCA where his team—which included the great Wilky Gilmore from New Canaan—won five straight crowns, including 1984 when Melzer was named MVP.

The Connecticut Senior Olympics was another competition Melzer found great success in as he helped his basketball teams win eight straight age-group championships. Advancing to the National Senior Olympics, one of his teams finished sixth in the 55-60 age group in Louisiana while another came in fifth in the 60-65 division in San Antonio.

Success followed Melzer onto the racquetball court where he won the state singles championships in Connecticut, New Hampshire and Maine, as well as a pair of Connecticut state titles in doubles. He also has a few New England championships to his credit.

Meanwhile, his running resume includes five New York City Marathons, four Stamford Marathons, and 10 half-marathons in addition to numerous road races over the years.

But perhaps the highlight of Melzer’s athletic career came when he was 59 and was selected to the team representing the United States at the 1993 Maccabiah Games, an international Olympic-like competition which was the world’s third-largest athletic event at the time.

Melzer also found time to coach youth league and AAU basketball teams in Stamford. In 1997, his PAL basketball team won the Stamford Youth Basketball Prep Division championship. A member of that team was his nephew Danny Melzer, now the head boys basketball coach at Stamford High.

Franklin and his wife, Dr. Sondra Shanen Melzer, still reside in Stamford. Their son Mark, who passed away, played football at Rippowam High School, while daughter Melissa was an all-state volleyball player at Westhill.