

The year was 1968 and the country was trying to decide whether Nixon or Johnson should be the next person to run the country. We were in the midst of the Vietnam conflict although it would be hard to convince the boys that were graduating from high school and being sent overseas to defend their country that this was any different than the World Wars that their fathers and grandfathers were involved in. On the local front, William Walsh was mayor and the Tipperary Hill machine ruled local politics. In the town of Dewitt, the new CBA was beginning to grow in leaps and bounds. In its eighth year of existence, enrollment grew from a graduating class of 58 in 1960 to 170 for this year's freshman class. It wasn't at a cost though as Brother Victor had to inform the incoming class of 1971 that the tuition had to be raised to 250 to meet costs and that he apologized if that caused undue hardship for the families involved. But even at that steep price, families made the sacrifice to send their boys to the best school in the area.

Frank Riccelli entered CBA in that year as a promising athlete. Having good size and being very athletic, it was natural that he play an important part in CBA's athletic program. He started on the basketball court, making the varsity in his junior year. As a senior, under new coach Bob Felasco, he had a great season. The team finished a surprising third in the league with a 11 - 5 record. Frank was selected as a second team all CNYCL selection and then a second team all Diocesan Selection

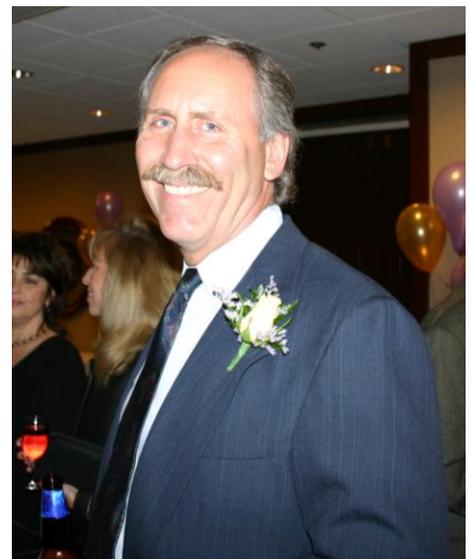
But Frank's main sport was baseball. Even as a freshman it was obvious that he had a special talent for the game. Pitching on a team that had a veteran pitching staff, it was difficult to imagine that that Frank would be anything but a star. The teams he played on did well, amassing an overall record of 33 -10 during his freshman and sophomore years. However the league championship eluded them. It was not until Frank's junior and senior years that the Brothers would regain their place at the top of the CNYCL standings. In 1970, the team finished with the league's best record of 14 - 2 and went 19 - 3 overall. And Frank certainly did his best to help the teams cause. His numbers at the end of the season were remarkable. He finished the year with 140 strikeouts in 73 innings. His 7 - 2 record was misleading because he ended up with an ERA of 0.74. For his efforts he was chosen as a first team, all city selection for the third consecutive year.



So at the beginning of his senior year, it was becoming obvious that Frank could have an opportunity to compete at the next level. He had already been awarded a four year scholarship to Ithaca College but Frank longed to take a shot at the pros. In order for that to happen he needed to show the parade of scouts that seemed to appear at each game that he was worthy of being selected in the free agent draft. So with that as his charge, he opened the season in Washington DC against St. Johns and hurled a no hitter. The rest of his season was even more impressive. He finished the season with an 8 - 3 record in the tough CNYCL. The record may not be overly impressive, but Frank was dominant. He had 15 strikeouts, out of a possible 21 outs in a two hit win over Grimes, 17 in a three hitter against Watertown and 10 strikeouts in a 2 - 0 shutout of Oswego, but he saved his most impressive performances for rival Bishop

Ludden. In the first game against the Gaelic Knights that spring, Frank struck out an amazing 20 batters and gave up one hit and two walks in a 7 - 0 win. The next time around he went one better. This time he not only struck out 14 batters but drove in the only two runs of the game. The final numbers, 65 innings pitched, 139 strikeouts and for the fourth consecutive year he was named to the CNYCL all star team. And this success did not go unnoticed. In the June 1971 free agent draft, the San Francisco Giants chose Frank Riccelli as their first pick, nineteenth overall. Drafted in the same round were future stars Frank Tannana, Jim Rice and Rick Rhoden: not bad company to be in.

In the professional ranks, Frank paid his dues in the minors and got his first major league win on September 15, 1976, for the Giants vs. the San Diego Padres. He gave up 1 run on three hits in his seven innings of work.. But since the Giants were loaded with pitching he was sent to the minors and then traded first to the St. Louis Cardinals and then to the Houston Astros. During most of this time, Frank was dominating Triple A. Pitching for the Phoenix Giants of the Pacific Coast league and then the Charleston Charlies of the International league, Frank helped lead his team to three division titles. In fact in 1978, Frank followed in the footsteps of Mike Cuellar, Tug McGraw and Dennis Martinez when he led all of Triple A in ERA with a 2.78 average. For his efforts, he began the 1979 season with the Astros. He started in the bullpen, striking out Willie Stargell twice in one week when he faced the Pirates. A rash of injuries put Frank back into a starting rotation and on May 6th he was earned his final major league win when he pitched a brilliant game against the Cincinnati Reds. In that outing he struck out Ken Griffey, Dave Concepcion and George Foster enroute to a five hit, 8 - 2 victory over the Red Machine.



But the velocity that he threw throughout his career finally caught up with him. In his next start he felt a twinge in his arm and ended up having the infamous Tommy John surgery. But Frank had no regrets. His professional career spanned 11 seasons, one and a half in the majors. He was a part of three Triple A championship teams and was selected twice as a minor league all star.

Frank, tonight, as we honor some of the best athletes to ever wear the purple and gold, it is only fitting that you take your rightful place among them. From the CBA Class of 1971, Frank Riccelli