



Edmund Anthony Franchi Jr.
ROBS History Project
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Ed's father's name was Edmund Anthony Franchi, which also became Ed's given name and establishing his identity as Edmund Anthony Franchi Jr. At the time of our interview he'd been married to his wife Barbara for forty six years They were living in Port Jefferson and were the parents of two grown children, a forty-three year old son residing in East Islip from whom they got one grandchild, with one on the way. Their daughter who was then forty years of age was living in Ashville, North Carolina and was the parent of their three and a half year old granddaughter. Ed's wife Barbara owned a nursing school business in the Port Jefferson area from which she retired when the grandchildren arrived. She indicated she had no intention of babysitting all week. At that point she was commuting to East Islip about three days a week. Their life has been full of surprises yet they try to visit family in North Carolina for one week out of every month.

Ed's son is in the mortgage industry where he has been working for Wells Fargo for the last fourteen years mostly in the Long Island area of East Islip. Ed's daughter is Director of the Western North Carolina Health and Wellness Council. She has been in NC for twelve years, loves the area and has expressed no intention of ever moving back to NY. She is an adjunct professor at NC University in Nashville, She attended Penn State for her BA, and on her way to becoming an actress attended American University in Washington for her Masters after changing her major. Edmund is proud of both children for their accomplishments and for the close relationship he and his wife both enjoy with them and very much enjoy spending time together. Having grandchildren came late to Ed and he is enjoying this chapter of his life with a 3½ year old who he describes as going on thirty three. She's a very intelligent young lady says grandpa. His grandson is 22 months now and will be two in December. Their names are Jacob Edmund and Kia Jade (perhaps

from a Cherokee Indian tribe for whom his daughter had been doing consulting in western North Carolina when Kia Jade was born).

Ed was born at Southside Hospital in Bay Shore. He spent most of his young life in Central Islip back when it was a very small community of 2,500 people. There he attended Central Islip High School and had a wonderful experience as a student who participated actively. He was born in 1937 and had just turned 69 when we talked. He wishes he was younger seeing how fast his life was flying by.

Growing up, his was one of the few Italian families in Central Islip. In order to work at the hospital, being Irish was for many years, a prerequisite. Eventually both his mom and dad worked there in different capacities. During his college years he would work at Pilgrim State Hospital during summers to earn money to put it toward his tuition during the upcoming school year. His earliest memory at five or six was when he came down with polio and was paralyzed for a period of time. He was fortunately able to regain full mobility unlike some of his classmates who were not so fortunate. They required rehabilitation at St Charles Hospital for periods of time. His parents were very family oriented. His mother who originally came from Kingston, NC had come from a family of four children who because of economic conditions spent the early part of her life in an orphanage. After she moved to Long Island with a sister she went to work at Pilgrim State Hospital where she met Ed's father in the area shortly after. She was a convert to Catholicism from the Baptist religion. Her happiest moments were when she was with family, because she had experienced so much separation from her own. His father's relatives lived in Queens and eventually all moved out to Long Island and to Ronkonkoma where they would be close to the rest of the family. His mother's maiden name was Harriet Grady. She knew the identity of her birth parents. On her side there were two other sisters and two brothers. On Ed's father's side there were two sisters and three brothers. All came from moderately large sized families. Ed's father's family experience was similar. When they migrated from Italy they lived in Hell's Kitchen which at the time was a poverty stricken area. Eventually they moved out to L.I. where they spent the rest of their lives. He has recollections of both his grandmothers but not his grandfathers. While we talked he touched upon memories of the Great Depression and the WW11 years that followed in its aftermath.

Touching upon those who besides parents impacted his life the most, he shared the name of his uncle Bill from his father's side. He had never married and had devoted himself to his mother, He's always been there when anyone in the family needed help. He gave Ed and his bride the deposit of \$16,000, with which they purchased the farm they bought in Ronkonkoma.

Edmund had a wonderful experience in high school and formed a relationship with several teachers he never forgot; a Social Studies teacher and the band director /music teacher he was able to locate, and spend an afternoon with a few years ago in order to thank him for the help he had been given so many years before.

He attended State University at New Paltz in 1955 and matriculated in 1959 with a BA in Elementary Education. He did his student teaching at Island Trees in Nassau County (small district before Levitt build his homes there.) There he taught history at the elementary level before going back for his graduate degree at Hofstra University to be provisionally certified to teach Jr High by 1959.

Ed spoke about all his other attempts to support himself in the teaching profession which only paid him \$4,300 per year at Island Park. In addition there were paid coaching positions in soccer, basketball, track, he drove a school bus over the summer, taught driver education and adult education in summer program, "We all did it, I was not alone" he said.

As a teenager he favored the summers growing up on L.I. as it was idyllic for a young person. Although he loves the fall with memories of going back to college in upstate with the changing of the leaves and seasonal sports, having to turn the clocks back with the approaching darkness and knowing what was to follow did have unpleasant associations for him. His memories of traditional Italian family gathering around the bocci court with the proverbial kegs of beer on summer nights still bring a broad smile to his lips.

He came to Brentwood in 1966 or 1967. He had heard it was a rapidly expanding multicultural school district and an exciting place in which to work. It was at the time when he was making a decision about changing the direction of his career. There was an opening here as a attendance teacher (truant officer). The program was run by George Klein. He replaced Guy DiPietro who had a life and plans of his own to fulfill.

Ed talked about the Brentwood school district being unique in that it was the largest and most diverse of any place he had ever taught. There was an emphasis upon “the Brentwood family.” That may have sounded cliché, but it wasn’t. He remembered a saying that circulated at the time to describe the district. “If you can make it in Brentwood you can make it anywhere”

Dave Martz was singled out as being the single most influential colleague Ed drew upon for example and as role model. Edmund Franchi retired in 1992. He came to the District in 1966 but arrived at the high school there in 1970. He remained for the next ten years when he became Director of Security and Transportation until 1992. During those intervening years major changes took place in the way the district handled security. In 1976 they expanded the role district wide and increased the number of employees from eleven to a little over fifty. He built a prototype for district wide security systems that was responsible for establishing twenty-four hour surveillance until his decision to retire. He continued to work part time for Brentwood maintaining the system he had built and sharing its’ efficiency with districts who acknowledged their need for change. He continues consulting with other Districts up to and including the present when they come now to his company with questions. His last official position had been as the Coordinator of Security and Transportation for the District. He’d worked in the field of public education for a combined total of thirty three years by the time he reached fifty-five years of age.

We spoke of the visit by Robert Kennedy to BHS and Ed’s admiration for his brother the President John F. Kennedy. Then we spoke of the tragedy he had witnessed up close on the day many here will never forget, May 16, 1983 when East Middle School became the scene of a hostage takeover by former student Robert Wicks that resulted in his taking his own life in front of a class of student hostages.

What would he like to forget? Those days when bad weather required him to be at school at 3 am to begin collecting data and information the Superintendent would need by six am to decide if the districts busses should be dispatched to begin picking up students from the areas public and private schools once it was decided schools would be officially open. When schools were closed it was a good thing for Ed, for he would be in the car and on his way home for the

day by 7 am. Otherwise, he would remain on duty all the rest of that day until about 10 or 11 pm that night when the last bus returned to the lot. No, he responded, not once on his watch was any student from Brentwood ever forgotten or left behind and alone in an empty bus once it returned to the parking lot.

Ultimately, he wishes he'd been able to teach a college course for aspiring administrators of large school districts so as to prepare them for experiences he'd lived through and they in all likelihood could possibly have to face. One reason for his retiring when he did was this: Every time his phone rang at the end of his career it was either because there was a problem about to surface or a complaint needing to be handled immediately. There were 150 buses on the road every day with no end of possible headaches that would fall directly into his lap. His advice to those who would pick up where he left off was this *"It's not a job. It's a commitment."* When asked what his favorite or best year was, he said, *"John, they were all good!"* *"The thing that I want most is to be remembered as a good family man and a good father. That's more important than anything else in life. From a career standpoint, I'm one of many good administrators who have come into public education and have done an outstanding job. Whatever you do in education you have to do to the fullest of your ability. I want to be remembered as a person who did a good job and helped the process along, because it's a never ending process"*.

Ed's story ended with his death in early March of 2020. We last spoke when Barbara and he had moved to an Atria Assisted Living extended care facility in Bayshore. While there, one evening a month Edmund Anthony Franchi Jr. and a group of friends, all former Administrators and educators met to play a game of cards they continued to enjoy. Barbara passed away one week after Ed died. The family had intended to hold a memorial service in a few months but as of April 29, 2020 and because of the continuing threat posed by the ongoing pandemic and Covid19 Virus and social distancing, they have so far been unable to finalize family plans.