

HALL OF ACHIEVEMENT

2010/2011
Journal

Major Rudolph J. Purificato

Class of 1970

Rudy credits Italian immigrant grandfather Angelo Ancona for instilling values of hard work and the importance of education that has guided his life. Copiague Public Schools also played a significant role by nurturing his gift for writing. Copiague High School English teacher Mrs. King encouraged Rudy by reading his fictional short stories in class. Mr. Grimaldi guided him toward a journalism career when he made Rudy assistant editor of the high school newspaper The Maverick.

Copiague Public Schools' legacy of encouragement to Rudy culminated in 2005 when ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson presented him the Defense Department's Pulitzer Prize, the Thomas Jefferson Award, for his 10-part series commemorating the centennial of powered flight. Rudy's professional journey began after he graduated from Texas Christian University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and history, and an Army ROTC commission as a Signal Corps officer. Rudy's Army, civil service and journalism careers include duty as Public Affairs media escort to ABC News in Saudi Arabia during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Military History Detachment commander supporting a special Panama Canal Treaty mission, and war correspondent in Bosnia.

Participation in Copiague High School's senior play "Li'l Abner" inspired Rudy to continue acting. His resume includes performances with the Fort Worth Opera, work with Academy Award-winning sound effects wizard Ben Burt on the movie "The Empire Strikes Back" and a cameo role in the film "Lone Star" with Kris Kristofferson. Rudy's work as an Air Force journalist, science writer and historian has led to interviews with astronauts John Glenn and Sally Ride, DNA structure co-discoverer and Nobel Prize recipient Dr. James Watson, and Dr. Edward Teller, the Father of the Hydrogen Bomb.

Rudy is completing a master's degree in military science from the Air Force's post-graduate school, Air University, and has produced/written a PBS-bound Air Force documentary on aviation, aerospace and space medicine innovations. Rudy's greatest achievement is having married his soul mate, Emily, an educator.

"Life provides clues to what direction you should take, if only you are willing to listen."