

April 26, 2022

Report of the Ossining Village Historian

RE: Honorary Street naming application for Neil Woolf

My research into the contributions made to the Village by Neil Woolf was conducted by consulting the following individuals/sources: Matthew Gullotta, Founder and President of the Gullotta House; Dr. Gayle Marchica, President of Greater Ossining Chamber of Commerce; John Girolamo, Brd of Directors, Greater Ossining Chamber of Commerce; Lindsay Farrell, President & CEO - Ossining Open Door; The Ossining Children's Center FB Page, and the Citizen Register newspaper, and River Journal.

Residency in Ossining:

Bob's Army and Navy Sports Center has been in business in Ossining for 76 years. The establishment is generationally owned by the Woolf family. Neil's father, Robert "Bob" Woolf, and Aunt Helen Woolf founded the store in 1946. The Store has seen multiple locations, including 12 Spring Street where it first opened; in 1973, the building at 12 Spring St. was taken for urban renewal. Bob's Army and Navy was the first store to relocate during Urban renewal when they moved to their current location at 159 Spring Street. The family not only moved to this location but also purchased the building. In 1978, Neil Woolf took over the reins of the store. The store has been a staple in the Community as was Neil who was coined the unofficial "Mayor of Main Street"

Contributions to the Community

Town of Ossining

The Town of Ossining wrote, "The Town was just one of Neil's many loyal customers, with our Highway Department, Parks Department, and Senior Nutrition Program staff relying on his store for uniforms and work clothes. Neil was always ready to help, and order what you needed if he did not have it in stock. In addition to his business, Neil was actively involved in the Greater Ossining Chamber of Commerce and served for many years on the board of the Ossining Children's Center. So many in the Ossining community and beyond will truly miss Neil. As the hearse drove by the store yesterday, and his family followed, we all deeply felt the vacuum Neil's loss has created. We know he was watching us all from above!"

Neil was a beloved member of the Ossining community, as a business owner and friend to many local organizations and businesses.

Ossining Children's Center

Neil Woolf, as described on the Children's Center FB page was a "wonderful friend to the Children's Center" He served on the Board during the 1990s, including serving a term as president.

He welcomed the children to visit the store always. He generously provided t-shirts for the summer program and took special care to ensure the sizing was just right for each kid.



Ossining Chamber of Commerce

Neil served approximately 10 years on the Board of Directors of the Ossining Chamber of Commerce. "He was the conscience of the Board. He would take great care in making/questioning decisions to ensure the results would be fair and equitable to all." Said, Dr. Marchica

John Girolamo recounted how Mr. Woolf was always the first person to step up to the plate when needed, exceeding expectations and going far and beyond the call of duty. The store meant a great deal to the Community because of Neil, and how he gave of himself to others. Always offering to help, lend an ear, or share an anecdote or two when you stopped by. He was never too busy for anyone. He was the embodiment of the charm and personalization you dream of in a local mom and pop retailer. Many of his customers have shopped at the

store generationally as many of the current customers are the grandchildren of the store's first clients.

Neil not only served the community but he employed from within the community. You would always find in his employ youth from the community. Neil offered more than a "job", he offered a chance for growth, learning, and apprenticeship under a great business person.

Neil was integral in helping bring the businesses on Main Street together. He had a great rapport with the businesses and the local municipality. The Board of the Chamber said they often say, "What would Neil do?" His knowledge, quick wit, and presence are greatly missed by all.

Gullotta House

Neil was a great supporter of the Gullotta House for six years. At its inception when still raising money to help flood/fire victims Neil allowed families to shop for clothing and shoes without immediate payment and huge discounts. He never pressured for the money (although he received it), his concern remained in helping the families. Even during the COVID pandemic, as his business suffered, he still offered the same huge discount to those in need. A testament to the community-minded, generous man that he

was. His care for the well-being of others surpassed his desire to make money. It can Neil was kind, generous, professional, thoughtful, fair, and honest.

Neil Woolf's benevolence had no boundaries. He never turned away the opportunity to help or contribute. When a sock drive was coordinated for veterans, Neil not only participated but also donated the socks from his store.

Signage history of the proposed street:

Currently, there is no honorary street signage at the proposed street (Main St and Central Ave). The applicant request the honorary street name, "Neil Woolf Street"