

# Veteran area educator a father figure to many

**NORTH HAVEN** — Richard Belfonti, a longtime educator in New Haven and North Branford, was a member of Notre Dame High School's first graduating class in 1950 — and the scholarship fund he set up at the West Haven school, the Richard Belfonti Endowment Fund, will help promising students further their educations for years to come.

But Belfonti's greatest joy was his family.

"We always were together as a family," said Belfonti's niece, Dorian Sette Bauknecht of Hamden. She said Belfonti and his wife, Connie Esposito Belfonti — Bauknecht's late mother's sister — were like second parents to her and her brother.

"Every Friday night they would be here for dinner and every Sunday we would go there," Bauknecht recalled.

"I just remember my uncle always having a smile, being extremely reliable. ... My uncle was just a strong man who just loved us. He lived for the family.

"Essentially, I grew up with two fathers and two mothers," she said. "He adored me, and I adored him. He only had one son. I was like a daughter to him, and my brother was like another son. We looked at (Belfonti's son) Michael like a brother."

Richard Belfonti, 75, was born April 24, 1932, and died Sept. 29 at his home on Old Farm Road.

He was a former principal of Jerome Harrison School and before that of Stanley T. Williams School, both in North Branford.

He and his wife celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary June 30, 2006.

"He was everything to me," said Arnold Belfonti of New Haven, Richard Belfonti's younger brother by six years. "We used to get together on holidays and various occasions."

Arnold Belfonti's wife, Jean, said Richard Belfonti "was just loved by everyone. He was just so special. He cared for everybody. He was always there if anyone needed anything — he didn't have to be asked. He was just there."

Belfonti attended grade school at Saint Anthony's in New Haven, where he served as an altar boy for several years.

After high school, Belfonti earned a bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University, then went to the University of Connecticut, where he earned a master's degree and a sixth-year certificate in administration.

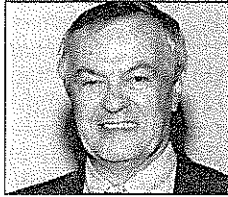
Teachers who worked under his leadership remember him as a man who invested all of his energy and concern in every staff member and student, according to his family.

Belfonti retired from the school system after a 35-year career — but didn't stay retired long. He and his son founded MCR Property Management Inc. in 1990.

Outside of work, Belfonti was a member of the Marchegian Society, the Lions Club and the New Haven County Retired Teachers Association.

Besides his son, Michael of North Haven, and brother Arnold, he is survived by a sister, Marie Shannon of Miami, and another brother, John of Orange. Burial was in All Saints Cemetery.

— Mark Zaretsky



Belfonti

A LIFE  
*remembered*

