

2018 Inductee Bios

Contributed by Connections Committee
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MR. HORACE FREESE

CLASS OF 1906

(POSTHUMOUSLY)

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In 1880 Mr. Egbert M. Freese began manufacturing clay work machinery in Plymouth, Ohio. In 1891 Mr. Freese brought his family - wife Rosina and three sons, Herbert, Arthur and Horace - and his equipment to Galion and established E. M. Freese & Co. (better known as the Freese Works). One of Galion's leading industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the company was "a foremost manufacturer of brick and clay products machinery" (Galion Inquirer March 27, 1963). In 1957 Starkey Machinery Inc. purchased E. M. Freese & Co. In December 1958 the Freese Works plant was destroyed by fire. Out of this series of events came one of Galion's leading philanthropists: Mr. Horace E. Freese.

Born in Plymouth, Ohio, Mr. Freese came to Galion at three, attended school and graduated from GHS in 1906. His Inquirer obituary described him as "a gifted automotive and radio engineer" and noted that "he manifested interest in engines and communications from an experimental standpoint as a young man" (March 27, 1963). He attended Case School of Applied Sciences in Cleveland where he was affiliated with the Kappa Sigma Fraternity. During World War I he served with Service Park Unit 388, AEF, in France. He eventually became associated with his father's business.

As a young man he was a bowler and golfer and was a charter member of the Galion Country Club, which was organized in July 1926. Freese was also a charter member of Scarborough Post No. 243 and an active member in the Galion Elks.

On August 21, 1961, Mr.

Horace Freese made a decision that would have a lasting effect on Galion and its citizens. On that date he wrote his will, and in it, he set in motion events that would lead to the establishment of The Egbert M. Freese Foundation. In the document Freese made bequests to community entities such as The Galion Mausoleum Fund and to a number of individuals, including four Galionites who would each receive a portion of the net income from the trust until they died. Upon the death of all four, the income was to be added to the principal of the trust and invested in bonds. Also, upon the death of these four, the trust fund was to become the property of the city of Galion and would be known as The Egbert M. Freese Foundation, memorializing Horace Freese's father.

Valued at \$900,000 dollars

in 1963 at the time of Mr. Freese's death, the trust grew to be worth \$8.7 million in 1998 when the last of the named recipients died. The Galion Inquirer reported in the April 28, 1998, edition that the Galion City Council passed an ordinance asking the Crawford County Probate Court to establish the Egbert M. Freese Foundation. The original will specified that the funds be used for scholarships for worthy students, for the upkeep or improvement of city parks or for any other purposes. Today the city sets aside 1/8 for scholarships and 7/8s for park improvements and the like.

In the 1998 Inquirer article announcing the foundation, longtime friend Joice Hayden, said of Freese: "He was a good man, a gentle man. A man who thought well enough of Galion to leave all of this to the people."

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MR. JOHN L. SWAIN

CLASS OF 1955

(POSTHUMOUSLY)

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â€¢ 2ND Lieutenant,
Ohio National Guard

â€¢ 1ST Lieutenant,
Army Ready Reserve

â€¢ Extra Patrolman,
Galion Police Department, March 1960

â€¢ Fulltime Patrolman,
Galion Police Department, June 10, 1960

â€¢ Chief of Police,
Galion Police Department, June 1971-1989 (Youngest in Ohio when he was
appointed)

â€¢ Graduate of the FBI
National Academy, June-September 1973 (First from Crawford County to attend the
academy)

â€¢ Chief Probation
Officer for Crawford County, November 1998-January 2004 (Established the
department when asked to Â Â do so by the
Municipal Court Judge.)

â€¢ Safety/Service
Director for the City of Galion, July 2013-August 1, 2016) (Appointed by Mayor
Tom O'Leary to fill the position)

The above items are just some of the
career accomplishments of John L. Swain. But his life is more than a "laundry"
list of jobs he held and things he accomplished.

Â Born in Wadsworth, OH, in 1937, John came to Galion during his elementary years, attended Galion schools, met and married his high school sweetheart and raised his three children (John II, John C. "Chris" and Julie) here. His wife Jo has described him as "Not a club person" and suggested he preferred to work before and after school rather than participate in school activities.

Â Â However, as an adult, Swain did find time to serve his community in numerous capacities beyond government-related work. He was an active member of the First Lutheran Church and established Boy Scout Troop #309 there in 1960. Swain also served as Webelos leader and Cub Scout Pack Master at Renschville Elementary School. In addition, John volunteered on many boards, including the Galion Center/Y, Galion Home Health Agency Advisory, and Crawford County Community Counseling. He was a member of the Galion Planning and Zoning Commission and the Freese Grant Advisory Board and represented Galion on the CIC Board. He held memberships in the American Legion, the Galion-Crestline Area Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Chiefs of Police Association (lifetime) and the FBI National Academy Associates (lifetime). Politically active, he chaired numerous campaigns at the local, county and state levels, including setting up Republican headquarters in Galion during presidential campaigns over a period of 30 years. Among his many honors are being named Policeman of the Year by the Eagles Club (the first to be so recognized) and the Crawford County Republican of the Year in 2006.

Â Galion lost a sterling example of what one can do to make his/her community better on December 15, 2016. John lived the advice he would have given GHS students today:

â€¢ Be honest. Your integrity is everything.

â€¢ Work hard. But take time to play!

â€¢ Love your family!

â€¢ Pay yourself first.
Save your money - and when you buy something, pay for it.

â€¢ And finally: Your life is what you make it!

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Â Â MR. MICHAEL J. JOKERST

CLASS OF 1975

(POSTHUMOUSLY)

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One of five children of Barbara and Ray (deceased) Jokerst, Michael was born and raised in Galion and graduated in the top 5% of his GHS class. While in high school, Jokerst was active as the football team manager (9-12), a member of the Varsity G Club (10-12), a page editor for the Free Press Society (12) and a participant in Junior Achievement (12). Jokerst was named the "Outstanding Young Businessman of the Year" of 1975 for his work with his company "Herclion IV." Mike was also a delegate to the National Junior Achievers Conference at Indiana University, one of only 2700 students nationwide. His academic success and his involvement in these various activities earned him the William F. Unckrich Scholarship. Jokerst continued his education at The Ohio State University where he graduated cum laude in 1979, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting. Soon passing the Accounting Boards to earn a designation as a CPA, Mike then began a 30-year business career in Central Ohio.

Â According to longtime friend Bill Mechling, "...Mike's business career has been viewed as highly successful and he is held in the highest regard throughout the Central Ohio business community as a business innovator and leader." Jokerst began his career as a CPA for Peat Marwick Mitchell (PPM-now KPMG), one of the world's largest accounting firms, and managed some large accounts such as Nationwide Insurance. "Ever an innovator" (Mechling), Mike used his intellect and innovative talent to help his clients to save millions and improve business practices. Seeking new challenges, Jokerst moved on to become the Corporate Controller of Automobile Club Insurance of America and CFO and Treasurer of American Benefit Life Assurance Company. He eventually returned to Nationwide, this time as VP for Productivity Optimization. In this role, Mike used his business knowledge and creativity to update and improve procedures that resulted in large savings to the company and improved efficiency and compliance. Jokerst ultimately became a Principal with CFO Leadership and assisted other companies with business finance, accounting and operations.

But helping others in business was only one facet of Michael Jokerst's attributes. Mechling noted that while Mike gave his all to business, "his true passion was in the helping of others - particularly children." To this end, Mike raised funds for The Hannah Neil Center for Children, a community-based outpatient, day treatment and residential center for disadvantaged youth. Mike also served as Development Board President for this non-profit organization and provided it with "...a valuable advocate with the Columbus business community..." (Mechling). Beyond his service to The Hannah Neil Center for Children, Jokerst held board/leadership

positions with The World of Children Governing Board, the Worthington Community for Schools, and Starr Commonwealth, an organization dedicated to creating positive environments for families. Starr President Emeritus Arlin E. Ness, LL.D, ACSW, called Jokerst a "Servant Leader" who demonstrated "...a sensitivity in considering the ideas of others with a commitment that the overall objective or mission be achieved rather than promoting himself."

Â Beloved by family, including his wife Cecelia, children Andy and Christina and his mother Barbara, friends and co-workers, Mike succumbed to pancreatic cancer after a 13-month battle against the disease. Yet even during his fight, Mike never gave up and "taught those around him...the importance of love, faith, courage and having a true appreciation of life" (Mechling).

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VAN
LEWIS WAGNER, M.D.

CLASS
OF 1979

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The journey of a
person's life must be full of amazing experiences and incredible adventures.
Always dream for the extreme and focus on achieving those goals.

- Dr. Van L. Wagner
2018

Â Words of advice to Galion High School
students that are illustrated by Dr. Wagner's life.

Â After graduating from GHS where he was
active in football and wrestling and earned induction into the National Honor
Society, Van Wagner went off to college and graduated from Case Western Reserve

University in 1984. His plan was to go into medicine. However, he says of himself, "I didn't have the grades to get into medical school, so I went to La Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara in Mexico for a few years until I could excel and transfer to New York Medical College." Obviously, he focused on "achieving his goal." His plan worked: He transferred and earned his medical degree in 1989. He then completed a general surgery residency at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark in 1994.

Â A board-certified general surgeon since 1996, Dr. Wagner opened his own bariatric surgery practice, Heart of America Bariatrics, in 2003. During his years as a surgeon, Wagner has performed thousands of laparoscopic weight loss procedures. He notes that the most common of these weight loss surgeries is "a sleeve gastrectomy, where Â¾ of the stomach is removed." He developed and trademarked a technique to perform this procedure through a single umbilical incision - PULS (Periumbilical Laparoscopic Surgery).

Â But what of the "amazing experiences and incredible adventures"? Dr. Wagner confesses a "passion for mountaineering." To that end, he has climbed the highest peak in 45 of the 50 states, including Denali in Alaska, and 4 of the 7 continents. As a member of the Highpointers Club, which has the goal of achieving "...as many highest points in each of the 3200+ counties in America," Wagner has completed 648 so far.

Â On a more "down to earth" level, Dr. Wagner has found an interest in massive jigsaw puzzles, only assembling puzzles of more than 5000 pieces. His count to date: 15 with a total number of pieces approaching 200,000. Included in his count are some of the world's largest puzzles: 24K, 32K, and 33,600 pieces. Also a reflection of "achieving a goal" and doing something "amazing" and "incredible." In addition, Wagner enjoys scuba diving, snowboarding and disc golf.

Â Married since 1988, Van and his wife Deborah, a physician's assistant, (about whom he said, "Of course, we don't work together!") have two children: Jacob, a senior at the University of Missouri, and Ariana, a freshman at Miami University in Oxford, OH. He proudly notes that "Both are interested in the medical field, possibly as doctors."

High school classmate
Mike Kleinknecht says Van is "an example of what hard work, dedication and vision can do to help make a difference in lives every day." Truly, his life is filled with achieving goals and having amazing, incredible experiences, whether helping people with weight loss or facing the challenge of a puzzle or a peakÂ

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Â DR.
PAUL KIM

CLASS
OF 1979

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In nominating Dr. Paul E. Kim for the Alumni Hall of Fame, friend and former classmate, Mike Kleinknecht, who has known Kim for 45 years, wrote that Paul was Â "...an exemplary student with incredible inspiration. He has always excelled at anything he decided to do...[and] has become very accomplished...in his field with national and global recognition."

Â Born in Warren, OH, Dr. Kim moved to Galion in 1965 and attended Renschville, Galion Middle School and GHS, graduating as Valedictorian in 1979. While at GHS, Dr. Kim was inducted into the National Honor Society and participated in Cross Country and Track, serving as captain as a senior. Following high school, Kim continued his education at the University of Michigan, where he was accepted into the Inteflex Program, which combined undergraduate work with his medical school program. He earned his B.A. (Biomedical Sciences) in 1983 and his M.D. from the University of Michigan Medical school in 1986. Dr. Kim then moved to California to complete his internship at Kaiser San Francisco Medical Center (1986-87), his residency in Diagnostic Radiology at the University of Southern California (1987-91) and a fellowship in Neuroradiology (USC 1991-93).

After being in private practice between 1994 and 1999, Dr. Kim was appointed Assistant Professor of Radiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, serving from 1999 to 2017. He is now an Associate Professor and the Chief of Neuroradiology at the USC Department of Radiology. His subspecialty within the neuroradiology area is epilepsy imaging, neurovascular imaging and spine imaging. Kim has authored/co-authored numerous articles published in various medical journals and has been an invited Speaker/Lecturer and Abstract Presenter at numerous national and regional meetings.

Dr. Kim and his wife Kristi, an RN who works as a Case Manager at Kaiser Permanente in Los Angeles, have a daughter Michelle, a sophomore in high school. His interests beyond medicine include family, golf (to which he says he devotes a lot of time "[too much probably]" and Fitness. He describes himself as becoming a "serious about fitness/weight training in college" and noted that he "transitioned from being purely a runner to a â€œgym rat." An "Absolutely rabid fan" of the Cleveland Browns, Dr. Kim is "Hoping that Baker Mayfield is the answer." He also describes himself as a "Cavs/Indians/Buckeyes fan."

In nominating Dr.

Kim, Kleinknecht said: "He's...the last person that would ever tell you what he has achieved" and finished his comments by noting: "I can hardly think of a better "role model" for current Galion Students."

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Â MR. MARK STEPPO

Â Â CLASS OF 2000

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Mark Stepro is a Los

Angeles based professional musician who has performed on every continent except Antarctica. He remembers as a toddler banging wooden blocks together in rhythm as his mother played the piano. This led to choosing the drums in 5th grade at Renschville Elementary school. He and friends Jeff Atwood, Gordon Dixon and John Diosi won the 8th grade talent show at Galion Middle School with their band, Blackwater. He graduated from GHS in 2000 (one of 4 valedictorians) having been active in the jazz and symphonic bands and cross country. Attending Capital University led to drumming with another band, Red Wanting Blue. After graduation he moved to New York City determined to start a paying career - which he has done.

Â Mark has toured the

U.S. with Butch Walker, Ben Kweller, Hayes Caril, and several others. AF Recently he opened with Leon Bridges for The Rolling Stones in Amsterdam and with Brett Dennen for Jason Mraz. He has also appeared multiple times on The Late Show with David Letterman, the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Conan O'Brien, Craig Ferguson, and Carson Daly. He has studied with Ed Soph, Steve Houghton and Glenn Kotche of Wilco and is very much in demand as a studio/recording drummer.

Â One of his proudest

accomplishments has been serving as a cultural ambassador for the U.S. State Department with Mary McBride Home Tours. Taking classic American Music (Ray Charles, Hank Williams, Aretha Franklin) to schools, orphanages, women's shelters, prisons and conflict zones around the world, he has performed in 23 countries including Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Indonesia. He once called this gig "as wacky and confusing and heart breaking and mind expanding and incredible as you can imagine."

Â Mark lives in

Atwater Village, Los Angeles with his wife, previous Hall of Fame honoree and television screenwriter, Nicki Paluga Stepro and their 3 year old son William. He enjoys reading, cooking and running. (Thank you George Guins.)

He credits his dad

with teaching him a valuable 3-step life lesson: 1) Find something you love to

do. 2) Get good at it. 3) Trick people into paying you to do it!

Now with these points
in mind, Mark's advice for today's Galion students:

The whole deal is to try out a bunch
of things and quit a bunch of things until you find that one thing that you're
so obsessed with that your parents tell you to stop for the night because it's
time to go to bed. Then spend 10,000 hours working on that thing which
theoretically won't feel like work because you're so obsessed with it. Then
figure out how to make that thing be your job.

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MR.
GEORGE GUINS

OUTSTANDING
EDUCATOR

1977-1999

(Continued coaching
until 2017)

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When George Guins was inducted into
the OATCCC (Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches) Hall of Fame
in 2013, Dave Kirk, wrote of him: "In the late 60's and early 70's, George
Guins was everything to young men and women entering the new sport of cross
country." In fact, Guins started the men's cross country program at Bucyrus HS
in 1967, the BHS women's program in 1970 and took over the GHS track and cross
country programs in 1978, adding women's cross country in 1980.

In the biographical sketch of Guins
for the OATCCC event, Kirk noted:

In a coaching career that has spanned
over 90 seasons of track and cross country, George's influence on young runners
and on coaches around the state has been great. He has served on numerous
District and Regional games committees and has been the District 6 Coach of the
Year on several occasions. George was the Mid-East Cross Country Coach for a
three year period. ...when there was a demand for qualified people, George became
an official and helped start meets for the next 27 years. Over the years, he
promoted running by found- ing the Bucyrus Bratwurst Festival "Brattie Run,"
sponsoring 24 Hour Relay running events for team fund raisers, and helping
found the Galion Invitational...

Guins' impact as a coach can be found in the achievements of his teams, which have won numerous NOL titles in both men's and women's competitions, several District titles and two Regional titles (Cross Country in 2005 and Track in 1995) as well as advancing to the State Championship eight times with the highest finish of 4th coming in 1995. Notable Galion athletes under George's coaching have included All-Ohio Jessica Strickler in cross country; Baldwin-Wallace All-American, Jessica Carmona; and nine time Malone College All-American, James Zeuch. Numerous other relays and individuals have also earned All-Ohio honors across the years.

Â Guins was himself an accomplished runner, participating in the Boston Marathon 30 times, 1969 and 29 years straight between 1971 and 1999. His best time was 2:34, making the 17th fastest American and 75th in the world in 1973. Guins has continued to work the Marathon in the years since he stopped running.

A 1961 graduate of Olmsted Falls, Guins was a soccer goalie for OSU before graduating in 1966. He began his teaching career at Bucyrus Junior High in the fall of 1966 and moved to Galion in 1977, where he taught primarily algebra and geometry until retiring in 1999. He coached track until 2014 and cross country until 2017.

Â George and his wife Ann have two adult children, Nicole and Rich. The Guinses winter in Florida but come back to Galion in the summer where George plays golf and bridge and continues to be involved in activities such as Meals on Wheels.

Â His advice to Galion students: "Do what you like and like what you do!"Â