

DEDICATION CEREMONY  
November 10, 2019

*Celebrating Our History*  
The Sculpture Project

MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT



Manchester's Greatest Runner

Joe McCluskey

**JOSEPH P. (“JOE”) McCLUSKEY**

**June 2, 1911 - August 31, 2002**

**Manchester’s Greatest Runner**

**OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDALIST (1932)**

**FOUR-TIME MANCHESTER ROAD RACE CHAMPION**

**WINNER OF 27 NATIONAL TRACK TITLES**

**U.S.A. TRACK & FIELD HALL OF FAME MEMBER**

*“A race only has one finish line”*



*Photo courtesy of John Long*

# Program

## **Welcome**

Lynn Sottile, The Sculpture Project

A few words from the Sculptor, Michael Keropian

## **Introduction**

Rick Dyer, Archivist for the Manchester Road Race

Jim Balcome, Race Director

Tris Carta, President of the Manchester Road Race

## **Original Song**

“Shufflin’ Joe”

Written & performed by Town Troubadour Bill Ludwig

## **Unveiling of Statue**

### **Remarks from Family Members**

Joseph McCluskey, Jr.

Mary Cotard

James Rafferty, President of the New York Athletic Club

### **Presentation of Statue to the Town of Manchester**

Remarks from Jay Moran, Mayor

By Rick Dyer

## Manchester Celebrates Hometown Olympic Hero

Joe McCluskey was born in Manchester, and graduated from Manchester High School in 1929. He was the state champion in the mile at M.H.S., and a 13-time All-American runner at Fordham University. New York City sportswriters dubbed McCluskey the “Fordham Flash” and “Shufflin’ Joe.” He earned the latter nickname because of his unusual lock-kneed running gait, and the way his arms moved from side to side as he ran.

Joe began running the steeplechase while he was at Fordham. The 3000 meter event is run on a track, but has some of the elements of a cross country run. Competitors are required to vault four wooden hurdles and to jump over a water pit during each of the seven laps they run. It’s a tough, gritty race, that requires the speed of a miler, the endurance of a marathon runner, and the skill sets of a long jumper and hurdler. Manchester’s Joe McCluskey was very, very good at the steeplechase.

In 1932, while he was a junior in college, McCluskey set an unofficial world record for the steeplechase. Later that summer, when he was 21 years old, McCluskey won an Olympic bronze medal in the event at the Los Angeles Olympic Games. He should have received the silver medal.

Olympic officials miscounted the number of laps the athletes ran during the steeplechase finals. McCluskey was in second place at the end of the regulation distance. But Tom Evenson, a British runner, passed McCluskey for second place at the end of the extra eighth lap.

A protest was lodged. Olympic officials offered to untangle the placement controversy by having the two men compete in a run-off race the following day. But in a memorable act of sportsmanship, McCluskey conceded the silver medal to Evenson. “A race can only have one finish line,” he said.

Joe McCluskey captured 27 national track titles, more than any other United States runner. He won the Manchester Road Race four times---in 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1947. He was 19 years old when he broke the tape on Main Street for the first time, and he was 36 years old when he won his last Thanksgiving Day victory here in 1947. He regarded his final MRR championship as his favorite one.

Joe served four and a half years on active duty as an officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He spent two of those years at the submarine base in Groton, where a sailor named Yogi Berra worked for him in the morale, welfare and recreation department. But from 1944-1946, Lieutenant Mc Cluskey was at sea in the South Pacific, aboard a troop attack ship named the USS Bracken.

The Bracken was only 426 feet long. The Olympic medalist who was accustomed to winning long distance races spent two years floating on a vessel that was 130 meters in length.

Shufflin' Joe returned to Manchester following in his discharge from the Navy in 1946 and ran in the Thanksgiving Day road race that year. He finished in third place behind Charlie Robbins and Tommy Crane. It was a solid showing by a war veteran who hadn't been able to train very much during his time at sea. But McCluskey was fiercely competitive, and he especially hated losing before a home town crowd.



*Coach Weber and Joe*

Robbins, a Manchester native who was also a nationally ranked distance runner, said that McCluskey was “loaded for bear” when he showed up at the Manchester Road Race the following year. At age 36, Shufflin' Joe won the 1947 road race with a gutsy and blistering finish kick down Main Street. He still holds the record as the oldest athlete ever to win the race. “I’ve never had a greater thrill than winning today,” McCluskey said after the race.

Joe competed in the 1932 and 1936 Olympic Games. He was selected to represent the United States at the 1940 Olympics, which were canceled due to World War II. And in 1948, when he was 37 years old, McCluskey missed qualifying for an Olympic team berth in the steeplechase by just two yards. A magazine published a photo of the exhausted McCluskey lying on the ground after that qualifying race. He would later tell a reporter: “When you can’t stand at the end of a race, you know you’ve given everything. I ran a lot of races when I couldn’t stand at the end.”

Joe McCluskey lived in Queens, New York after the War and was employed as a stockbroker. At age 42, he married his wife, Anne Conger. They had eight children. McCluskey coached the New York Athletic Club Track team for many years and was inducted into the United States Track & Field Hall of Fame.

When he died in 2002 at the age of 91, an obituary in the New York Times noted that he had continued to compete in track events until he was well into his eighties.

CALENDAR 1931						
JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10	10	10	10
11	11	11	11	11	11	11
12	12	12	12	12	12	12
13	13	13	13	13	13	13
14	14	14	14	14	14	14
15	15	15	15	15	15	15
16	16	16	16	16	16	16
17	17	17	17	17	17	17
18	18	18	18	18	18	18
19	19	19	19	19	19	19
20	20	20	20	20	20	20
21	21	21	21	21	21	21
22	22	22	22	22	22	22
23	23	23	23	23	23	23
24	24	24	24	24	24	24
25	25	25	25	25	25	25
26	26	26	26	26	26	26
27	27	27	27	27	27	27
28	28	28	28	28	28	28
29	29	29	29	29	29	29
30	30	30	30	30	30	30
31	31	31	31	31	31	31

I spent \$38.32 for the first six months of this year!!

# STANDARD

REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE

## DIARY

Joseph P. McCloskey  
Fordham University  
New York City  
U.S.A.



1931  
1111  
44  
44

Jan 7 - ...  
Jan 8 - ...  
Jan 9 - ...  
Jan 10 - ...  
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Jan 27 - ...  
Jan 28 - ...  
Jan 29 - ...  
Jan 30 - ...  
Jan 31 - ...

Thursday, January 1, 1931

This is a really day as went to church and received. I changed around all morning and did some reading and writing. I spoke (privately with the say) at the high school on Interscholastic Athletics. I told some jokes and gave the prize hand part of my athletics. There was a lot of love afterwards which was a good failure. I took a walk to Carter Springs with Bill Conway and watched them spar. We got cold feet standing around the pond. I turned to the radio.



Photo courtesy of John Long

A 7145 20 B 10133  
Monday, June 1, 1931

I washed my cuts again but the dirt is still in there.

I mailed six letters today. I wrote four this afternoon.

I finally finished my copy on the Society of Friends.

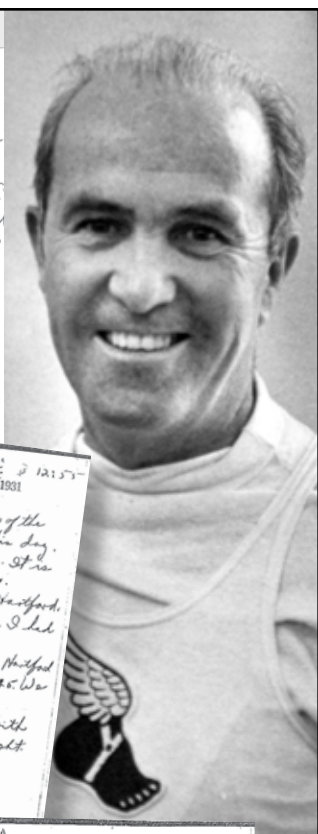
I got four letters today, or three and a telegram and a newspaper. Three were for letters. One man calling my exhibition the "funnest one he ever saw".

A 8220 53 B 12150  
Tuesday, June 2, 1931

I received another nice letter from my aunt for in Flushing, Long Island.

I went downtown after washing my cuts a long, long time and saw Doug, Frank and Peter's uncle in Flushing for the Moon at Lewis State.

I worked all night on B.A. tonight



A 8145 # 102 Mon B 12135  
Thursday, November 26, 1931

Ran the Rec 5-Mile Road Race. Won by 3504 ards. over Hubbard & Conn. Aggies. Cleveance DeNar the former winner was 7th in 26:51. I broke the record by 11 seconds by doing 24:42. I hit a stiff, cold wind hard and missed the record before 10,000 home turn 60k. They were pleased as was Jake. I won two Jiving cups and a medal. Did and Mon etc. were delighted. We ate a hearty Thanksgiving dinner and then set off for Hartford where Jake took a train home. Played bridge a while. Pete Singer came in for a while. My legs are tired. South Pic win a basketball game 44-14. I was introduced to the crowd amid my thankfulness. X 2. 11. 31

A 11:55 2.10 Mon B 12157  
Friday, November 27, 1931

We got our first snow of the season in the Cat this day. About two inches fell. It is much colder now also.

Packed and went to Hartford. Bill Conway drove me in. I had a good feel first.

Took the 5:05 bus from Hartford and reached Foshom at 11:05. We made good time.

I took some Saturday with me and ate after midnight.

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## How It All Began

The Manchester Road Race was born in 1927. "Francis" "Duke" Haraburda had the enthusiasm, Manchester Assistant Recreation Director Frank Busch had a willing ear, and his boss, Recreation Director Lewis Lloyd, was in a position to do something about it." Francis Haraburda had been captain of the Manchester High cross-country team in 1927. The season ended in mid-November and, in his opinion, much too quickly. He thought it would be fun if Manchester held a Thanksgiving Day cross-country race after the scholastic schedule was completed. Haraburda mentioned his idea to Busch, who then proposed the race to Lloyd. Lloyd and Busch took the idea to Charles "Pete" Wigren, Manchester High School's first track coach, and he took it from there. Joe McCluskey



The major problem they encountered was choosing a course for the race. Cross-country racing suggested running off road through a natural environment. In the late 1920's such a route did not exist in an up and coming town like Manchester, which was already covered with paved roads. The idea of a road race did not seem practical. Road running, other than 26.2 mile marathons, was not popular at that time. They settled on a course that had the start and finish at the High School, which at the time was at the bottom of Main Street. The route followed Main Street to Mt. Nebo to Charter Oak Street, down Highland Park to Porter Street and finally East Center Street back to Main Street. This combined trail running with some road running. The five and a half mile course was much more difficult than today and included territory now occupied by Interstate 384.

Lloyd, Haraburda, Busch and Wigren mustered a few local runners. "There were 12 starters in a steady drizzle of rain which continued until the finish." A few Manchester residents also went out to stand on the edge of the course and support the runners. The winner of the first race was John McCluskey, who completed the course in 29:36 and was awarded a silver loving cup for his effort.

A local newspaper, the Manchester Herald, said the Manchester Road Race was "a big success." Ninth place finisher, Bob Dougan saw it differently. He commented, "The first year didn't really amount to much. The reaction of most people in town was 'So what? So a couple of guys are going to run five miles. Big deal.' We had no idea whether the race would survive to see its second year."

Not only was the race held the next year, in 1928 it became an annual tradition. Jim Gwin won in 1928 and Walt Bennet in 1929. Thanks to the presence of Joe McCluskey, John's younger brother and a quickly rising champion high school runner, the Manchester Road Race took off in 1930, with crowds of 10,000 in downtown Manchester on race day. McCluskey won with ease in 1930, 31 and 32, but decided to pass up the race in 1933 and give someone else a chance. McCluskey's absence and the ongoing depression would soon bring an end to the Road Race.

As the race had begun to claim a name for itself, local businesses started to take an interest. They promoted the race in their shops, and donated prizes for the winners. However, the depression hit and put this to an end. The race organizers could not ask for donations when these businesses were barely surviving themselves. In 1934, 38 racers crossed the finish line, led by John Turley. Turley, a Yale student, won the race with a time of 24:43. This marked the end of the first chapter in the race's history, as the continued misery of the Great Depression followed by the coming of the Second World War, led to cancellation of the event until its revival in 1945.





1925 Barnard Junior High basketball team. Joe, middle row left (with "X" on his shirt).



SMHS '28-'29 CAPTAINS-Ernie Dowd, baseball; Joe McCluskey, track; Bob Treat, football; Les Buckland, swimming; Danny Renn, basketball; Bob Smith, tennis.



JOSEPH P. McCLUSKEY, B.S.  
South Manchester High

Track 1, 2, 3, 4, Captain 2, 3, 4;  
Cross-Country 1, 2, 3, 4, Captain 2,  
3, 4; St. Vincent de Paul Society 4,  
President 4; Panhellenic Society 1,  
2, 3, 4, Representative at Chicago 1;  
Glee Club 1, 2, 3.

ANY introduction to this son of Fordham would be superfluous for he is known to every man on the campus because of his athletic conquests. "Joe" is cheerful, ambitious, a hard worker and quite a talker. He believes in using nerve and initiative, and the cultivation of some pursuit by everyone in which they can become particularly proficient. He has read history constantly throughout his four years and declares it is his favorite study. "Joe" is not certain of what field to choose as his life's work, but is inclined toward business or politics; at present his one ambition is to break Paavo Nurmi's record in the next Olympics. Extra-curricular activities have held much of his attention, and as a result of observation in the various societies of which he is a member, he believes that students should have greater authority in college affairs. Life in the present era is quite suitable to "Joe," as it supplies plenty of color. We shall hear much of him later on, and if at any time you wish to know his whereabouts consult the latest sports sheet.

CALENDAR 1932														
	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
JAN.	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
FEB.	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
MAR.	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
APR.	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
MAY	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
JUN.	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
JULY	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
AUG.	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
SEP.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
OCT.	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
NOV.	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DEC.	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

THE  
**STANDARD**  
— REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE —

**DIARY**

A 2:55  
CR  
Thursday, June 2, 1932  
B 10:55

Then we little more for the occasion. Touching up on my Philosophy and then returned to my 102 Rm. Fr. Helgerson asked me about Testimony. I went first to get 780. They treated me fairly but confused me with all questions. I was shopping today. Picked in 40 minutes. I returned - and had riding. Cap. Howell's special bus to Job Coffey gave me a ride. I took 780. John went on home. We were home from N.Y.

A 10:50  
CR  
Friday, June 3, 1932  
B 10:40

Did 3 miles at the West Side Playground. Found a pretty good pace. This is a great town all right - except for a few. We went to one in Billie car and the place was small but.

A 11:50  
CR  
Friday, January 1, 1932  
B 8:45

I attended the 5:30 mass on this New Year's morning in the newly building chapel with about 30 other. Then Campbell Brown of Brooklyn and I left after attending Frank Davis New Year party. I was with Marie Clemen of Long City, and we had the best time of all. I developed a wonderful cold and soon throat so I stayed in today and tried to sweat it off. This year started with unity all day - in a short.

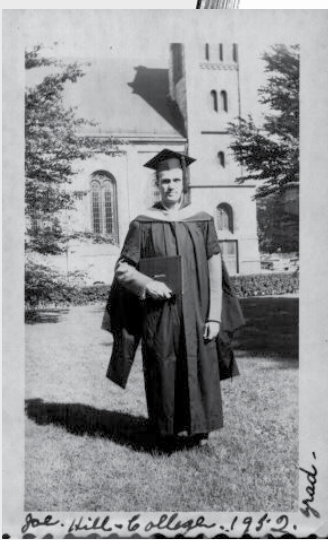
A 2:00  
CR  
Wednesday, November 23, 1932  
B 10:10

Murphy sprung an atom on 26 definition and I only did fair - only fairly well. I don't like him course. He doesn't look well - or he doesn't impress me & interest me yet. Took a special bus to Hartford. Left at 12:35. Got home at 4:55. Fitzgibbon gave me a lift to the door from Hartford.

A 8:11  
CR  
Thursday, November 24, 1932  
B 12:47

Ran in the 6th Annual Rochester 5 mile (200yds) run around town and won by 250 yards in 24:17 1/2 for a new record. Broke my old record by 245 seconds. Boston of 1928, Hubbard, C.R. 1929, Turkey. This 3rd, last 17th. 1930. 26 Run 4 finished. Took lead at mile mark and then opened 48. 200,000 saw the run. Got a big cup.

**THANKSGIVING DAY**  
What a fun. Wonderful.





1930?  
Penn Relays : 92  
15  
Joe McCluskey - winner  
3000 m. Steeplechase  
9.25.6 (record)

*Joe McCluskey Doing His Bit*



*Photos courtesy of John Long*

CALENDAR							1933						
	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	
JAN.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
FEB.	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
MAR.	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	
APRIL	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
MAY	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
JUNE	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
JULY	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
AUG.	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	
SEPT.	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
OCT.	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
NOV.	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
DEC.	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	

# THE STANDARD

REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE

A 2:05 7.43 010:35  
 Monday, January 2, 1933

Took the Pines down canyon Hotfoot and reached for the 2 1/2 hours later.

Ran 4 miles and am 3 tired. I gave up a party to go to bed.

Partly the cook and I played checkers. I beat him once for the first time in a long time.

P 2:55 .30 B 10:10  
 Tuesday, January 3, 1933

Ran a dandy two miles in half hour pace - 9:20 1/2 in one 1/2 hour track. Did a mile pace. That makes 7 miles in 2 days which makes the legs tired.

Saw the Tracy in "Washington Navy's 30 Round" - a very interesting political picture starring Louisa Cummings.

The boys are returning from their vacation with haggard looks & plenty of colds.

A 6:45 .20 B 10:10  
 Sunday, January 1, 1933

Did double quick time in around 30 minutes the previous year off according to my gunner, date etc.

Road party the day. And it's very cold. It looks like anything but January.

Went to Thomas and had myself a meal. One of the collegial just with a lot of witticism & became the games very well. I cold.

A 10:30 B 2:10  
 Thursday, June 1, 1933

It feels good to be able to get up. But I feel like going to sleep all the time for I feel droning.

A 11:00 B 2:10  
 Friday, June 2, 1933 Birthday

Got a telegram from the Bureau wishing me luck & a couple dollars. Judge Morgan sent me a swag and.

Some Birthday!!

Ya Kid!

Ran around in little park which I planned. It looks very good.







CAPTAIN JOSEPH P. MCCLUSKEY

### VARSITY TRACK

**H**EADED by Joe McCluskey, Fordham's hope and pride as well as Olympic star, Jake Weber's track team experienced the most successful season in Maroon history. As usual, McCluskey excelled, leading only two races in sixteen, including victories in the National cross-country championships, National indoor steeplechase and the intercollegiate two-mile races and setting records in the last two.

McCluskey kept Fordham before the eyes of the nation last summer when competing for Uncle Sam in the Olympics. He really placed second in the steeplechase race, but the runners were forced to run an extra lap, and in so doing, Joe was passed by Evenson of England.

Returning to school in September, Joe kept in trim by leading his cross-country mates to a decisive victory over City College—with "Red" Mulvihill and Connie Oxinn following him. Next McCluskey placed second to Barker of N. Y. U. in the Intercollegiate hill and dale run with both men shattering the record. However, Joe redeemed himself by winning the Metropolitan and National titles.

The Maroon track squad then concentrated on the indoor campaign. In the first meet of the season,



Manchester celebrated Joe McCluskey's accomplishments with a parade.

1932 Photo by John Knoll

Steeplechaser Joe McCluskey is the subject of this parade. He is seen passing down Main Street. The former Park Theater appears in the background.



Governor Wilbur Cross

Manchester Plans McCluskey Welcome  
Special  
The Montreal Gazette (1932-1993), Aug. 12, 1932, Photo  
Pg. 13

### Manchester Plans McCluskey Welcome

Manchester, Aug. 11.—(Special.)—The committee organized to plan a welcome for "Joe" McCluskey, Manchester's hero of the Olympic Team, met Thursday to start plans for his reception here. It is expected that McCluskey will arrive here August 22 from California. Tentative plans include a parade from the railroad station, a reception in Cowey Park, a soccer, a hotel concert and presentation of a medal from the town to the star runner.

Unexpected honors came to the Freshmen, when Joe McCluskey, former New England two-mile champion, easily captured the Freshman Intercollegiate Cross-country championship. Although Fordham had no full team, the victory of this new "flash" set the college prominently forward in the track world. This victory was followed by his splendid showings in the A.A.U. Championships and the Pastime A.C. games.

## *Remembering My Dad...*

Bob McCluskey

My Dad served as a Lieutenant Commander in World War 2. Given his athletic background, he was often retained as an Athletic Director for his sailors, whether it be on the ship or at the Naval Base. When the war ended, sailors from my Dad's boat ended up at the New London CT Naval Base where they would need to wait until officially discharged. This was not an overnight affair as there were far too many servicemen needing to be discharged at war's end. I am sure sailors often waited days, if not weeks at the naval base before they got discharged. My dad told me one of his sailors approached him and requested he pull strings to get him discharged as early as possible. Mt father approached the base commander and was successful in getting the sailor discharged early. The sailor's reason for requesting early discharge was on account he had been signed by the New York Yankees three years earlier to play on their team. He had not yet played in a Major League game before the war arrived and so he was shipped out to serve in the U.S. Navy. This sailor explained to my Dad he was anxious to play and so he was discharged earlier than expected. The sailor's name was "Yogi Berra!"

I recall hearing the story differently. I thought my father had told me Yogi had not yet been signed by the Yankees and that his chances of being signed by the Yankees depended on him getting home from the war as early as possible. I was mistaken in my recollection of the story. I realized my mistake when I met Yogi Berra at one of his book signings at his stadium near his home in Montclair, NJ a few years after my Dad died. I told Yogi the story as I recalled it.

He remembered my father well. He recalled my father got him discharged early but the fact was that he had already been signed to play for the Yankees before the war started. Getting discharged early resulted in him playing in his first major league game earlier than expected, and for that he was extremely grateful.

Mom and Dad on  
their wedding day.





Group picture on graduation day from Fordham University, Bronx, NY.

Dad, my grandma, and my brothers/sisters:

*Top row from left to right: James, Joseph Jr., Katy, Mary, Dad*

*Middle row from left to right: Richard, Robert, grandma*

*First row from left to right: Martin, Susan*





Joe McCluskey, his father, his mother, and his brother John.



Joe + Mother - 1939.





Dad in 1967 in front of our childhood home in Rego Park, NY.  
Family car in background.



Summer 1975, *Standing from left to right:* Mary, Rick, Katie,  
John Jr., Aunt Helen *Front:* Dad, Robert, Grandma McCluskey

## *Joe McCluskey's Children Remember...*

Presented here are a few collected memories of the children of Joe McCluskey.

### Drive, Drive, Drive

Our father was born and raised in Manchester, Connecticut. He loved the town and its people all his life. His sister Mary lived there until she retired, and his mother lived there until her 90's. As children, we made many trips there. Often on a Saturday morning before the crack of dawn, we, the 8 children and our parents would pile into the car for a road trip to Manchester. Our grandmother, aunt, and uncle lived there on Winter Street, where we would arrive and enjoy a freshly baked Irish soda bread, before leaving to explore the neighborhood and to go down to Center Springs Park to see the brook, looking for polliwogs. The weekend visit would consist of visiting Grandma, Aunt Mary, and Uncle Bob, and our cousin Marcia and her husband Jack, playing checkers, attending Sunday mass and then exploring the neighborhood again. We had a grand time. After retirement, my father often expressed the desire to return to Manchester. He did manage to go to the Manchester Road Race on Thanksgiving some years, if only to cheer on those braving the November weather.

As an adult, I have a much better understanding of how daunting it must have been to raise eight children. In a span of seven years after that 42-year old man and his much younger bride, Anne Conger, were married, they had eight children. Imagine this, when the twins were born, there were eight children under the age of seven living in our lovely house in Rego Park. There were plenty of challenges of all kinds, and not always with happy endings. But I have to say, there was more of a fuss over the little things. When there was something more serious, Dad was there for us. Katy remembers one time when "I thought I would be in big trouble when I wrecked my bike. I was so surprised when Dad didn't get angry, he was very sweet. Of course, now I get it—he was probably feeling very thankful. You see I rode my bike into the street without looking both ways, and was hit by a car. Really, my bike was hit. I was fine, but the bike was ruined, and instead of the scolding and punishment I was expecting, I was lovingly embraced."

When we were growing up, school was the most important responsibility we had. All of us attended our Catholic parish school and taught by nuns, the old-school way. We were all expected to get good grades and have perfect attendance—which didn't always happen. I can remember getting a dime for straight A's—which meant a lot, because you could still buy something for a dime, like a candy bar or a Popsicle. Maybe the award went up to a quarter by the time I was in eighth grade. But it was a wonderful feeling to go to Dad when he got home from work, present him with the report card and he would shout 'Hooray, raise the flag!' and I was just bursting with pride at his delight in my achievement."

After parking his running shoes with marriage and busied by his eight little ones, he still loved to travel and we did. He loved taking auto trips and loved to drive. Nothing was better than a sunny day travelling on a newly repaved road. With eight children, our car was always a station wagon. During the 1960's we had a red Chevy wagon that fit our family's needs perfectly. There were three bench seats with the rear one facing backward. The three rows each sat three plus a space between the middle and last seats making a cozy space for one of us to sit in. Mom and Dad sat in the front seat with one of us children between them. There were no seat belts, child car seats or laws against in those days. The rear hatch door had a power window that we'd send down and the three of us would sit on the door hanging out with our arms on the roof and the wind blowing in our faces. My dad never seemed to object. Things were different back then.

*Continued*



Getting ready to leave on a trip was always fast and efficient. He had lots of experience getting unruly packs of sailors, runners or children moving. He'd load up the mountain of our luggage on the roof rack and we'd set off for someplace near or far. As the New York Athletic Club track coach, many weekends had a track meet somewhere not too far away that he'd have runners in. Frequently it was either the athletic fields at the NYAC Travers Island retreat or Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. Track meets were fun with all the hubbub of activity. He always brought along a big cooler of sodas that he had me running all over giving out to the sweating athletes who were happy to get one.

On Saturdays when there were no track meets, Dad would make it a big shopping day. He prepared by combing ads in Wednesday's newspaper, finding the best sales at a few different grocery stores so that we all ate well, but economically. He would grab one or two of us as helpers, coupons in hand, and hop in the car to four different grocery stores. He'd put down the rear seat of the wagon to fill it with grocery bags. There could easily be 20 of them. Sometimes our "help" was no more than hanging on to the cart, thinking we were pushing it ourselves. Other times, we would be sent up an aisle to fetch an item. There was always a bit of adventure when Dad would pick out a few canned goods for about a dime apiece—they had lost their labels, so you could be getting anything. This would make for some interesting surprises at a Saturday night meal. That unmarked can could be anything at all, maybe canned chili, beets or applesauce. Even though there were many times that we couldn't leave the table until we finished everything on our plates, I don't remember having to stay there for some of the less savory surprises.

We loved our trips to Rockaway Beach in the summer. Much preparation took place before the ten of us could pile into the car and head to the beach for the day. Sandwiches had to be made, a big thermos of lemonade or Kool-Aid mixed together, maybe a few cans of soda if we were lucky, buckets and shovels, towels and a big blanket spread out for our picnic. Dad would lead us in silly songs during the drive, and we'd all shout at certain landmarks that we would look for, like the Big Bow Wow ("yay") or Pizza City ("boo.") When we got there, Dad would take us into the waves and teach us to swim, and Mom would "count heads" the whole time. Just once I remember was one of us left behind. Somewhere along the 15 mile ride home, she looked back and suddenly cried out, "Where's Richard?" Dad quickly turned the car around and raced back to the beach where we found him happily playing in the sand. He never missed us!

One memorable trip was to Niagara Falls. It is a six-hour drive we probably did in twelve with an overnight stop. Motel stays were always risky. Often, the proprietor would see the eight of us kids and refuse to take us in. So whenever we stopped at a place to stay, half of us would duck down and hide, then quickly run into our room once he had registered. We passed what was probably one suitable place that was dark and we loudly objected. The next place called the Waldorf Motel was covered in bright green neon and we clamored to stay there.

*Continued*



June 1984  
*From left to right:*  
Rich, Mom, Dad,  
Susan, Jimmy and  
Robert

Aug. 1984  
Dad and  
Robert



Nov. 1985  
Susan's Wedding



Reaching Niagara Falls after the long drive, we parked and were let out to see the falls. Ten minutes later he was hollering for us all to get back into the car and we were off to the Buffalo track meet. Mom was astonished by the short visit, but more so, I think she thought it hilarious. We spent the day at the track meet but my memory is only of the falls.

We had only a few pets growing up. Our father never understood pets. We have speculated that came from his growing up in the Great Depression where food was scarce and pets another mouth to feed. Katy tells the story “When I was in seventh grade, Mom and Dad finally gave in to my begging for a cat of my own, and we adopted a beautiful black Siamese cat named Suki. Dad disapproved of the cat, and would chase him off chairs saying ‘Get that black panther out of here.’ But then, when he thought no one was around, we’d find Dad with the cat curled up on his lap purring away as Dad petted him.

Ah, Christmas. It was so wonderful. We weren’t showered with gifts, but everyone got something they really wanted, even if it was just a board game! We didn’t put stockings up but Dad always provided some “stocking stuffers” — like a flashlight, batteries, or a brand new toothbrush! Another Christmas memory of Dad. He loved to sing. I’m not sure if this was an annual, but I remember him gathering all of us into the living room, passing out these little booklets of Christmas Songs, and having us all sing Christmas Carols with him.

Between his day job as a Wall Street broker, his night and weekend job coaching and the monumental task of raising a family with eight children, he was always on the move. He had boundless energy and there was no task that would daunt him. Our house in Queens was on a 40’ x 100’ lot. We were getting too big to keep in the house but not old enough to be allowed free rein of the neighborhood. So he fenced in our property with a chain-link fence, digging all the post holes, pouring the concrete footings and installing the wire fencing all by himself.

Dad never got the Christmas tree farm that he always talked about, but he did make his dream of going back to Connecticut come true after the kids had all grown up when he and our mother moved to Madison CT. The location was a compromise being midway between Manchester and NYC. Mom wasn’t crazy about the idea of leaving New York, but then they made a very nice life and made some wonderful friends. He loved being back in his home state for almost 20 years before he died. After Dad passed away, we thought Mom would come back to New York. But, she said, after being there for almost 20 years, she didn’t want to start over again. I think it was partly because she didn’t want to leave her friends, but also because she didn’t want to leave Dad behind in a different state.

Growing up knowing that our father was a champion athlete and track star was a central part of our daily lives. Our father always wanted us to run. In fact, he wanted us to always do more – study harder, work more around the house, do

sports – we would hear “drive, drive, drive”, his endless chant. In addition to being a stockbroker, my father was also a coach - track & field was truly part of his DNA. Many of his runners would stop by the house, and we met many more when would go to the New York Athletic Club with him. My brothers and sisters and I spent a good part of our weekends at track meets with him until about our teenage years, and we would follow the events all day long.

Mary says “My father always wanted me to run. I saw the children of other coaches run, and much to my dad’s chagrin, I just didn’t run. He said what a shame, with those long McCluskey legs. Then in college, I ran around the track for fun, but if there was a track team, I somehow missed it. Then in the late 70’s when jogging and running started to become extremely popular, I would run around the Central Park reservoir once or twice, and that was it. I was out of breath. Despite many failed attempts at running easily, 8 years ago I discovered a women’s race, only 6.5 km long. It was finally the perfect starting point, and I have since managed to run a marathon. I think I finally realized my father’s dream when I ran the Manchester Road Race. What a wonderful experience. His spirit still seems to be there with me each year. My father’s insistence finally paid off.”

There was one upcoming Manchester Road Race that our father was pushing Joe Jr. to run in. “I knew how much he wanted me to run in it but I would not. The reason was that never having run before, I was afraid to embarrass him. Later when I started at Syracuse University, I remembered that and felt I had disappointed him. With all my exposure to running at the track meets I grew up with, I never caught the running bug. However rowing sounded interesting and so I joined the SU crew team. I loved it and my Dad was thrilled. He didn’t care what the sport was, he just wanted to see one of his children as a college athlete. He and my mother made the long drive up to Syracuse to watch me row in the annual intercollegiate championship IRA races on Onondaga Lake. We did not win our race, but he was so happy anyway to see my boat cross the finish line.”

With all the hoopla of the fame of our father in his hometown of Manchester since his passing, I am only now finding out how much more our father was to his hometown and everyone else he had contact with. Besides being a hard worker which he taught to all his children, Dad was an unlimited inspiration to everyone around him. Anybody that knew him was grateful to have ever met him. He never had a bad word of anyone, even if he didn’t like them he would be diplomatic in his opinion of them.

Rick says “I don’t know how it got started. One of my friends Brian was over to the house and had a short conversation with Dad, something during a sporting event on TV. To this day if I saw him on the street, my friend would state, ‘The ball scores Rick, the ball scores’, referring to something Dad said in their short conversation. I only have an idea of what this means, but this one short statement is one example of how Dad was able to connect with people

*Continued*

and leave a lasting impression. Just because of that conversation my friend had a strong respect and admiration of our Father, something that our father was able to do, to be a leader & fatherly figure without even trying. This was the secret of his success as a father, as a coach and as a human being. This is why Manchester is honoring him, not just because he was a champion in Track and races, but he was a champion in life and with people.”

Looking back now I understand what an enormous task it was managing to support such a large family, but he did and did it well. All of us have succeeded to live full and rich lives and remember our childhood fondly. I am so grateful for having grown up when we did and in such a wonderful family. Our parents were completely devoted to raising their children. Dad had his coaching commitments, and Mom would have an occasional meeting at church with the Rosary Altar Society. But other than that they were always there for us. The only trips they took were with all of us, on family vacations. Nothing lavish, but it was always a treat to drive to different places. Our father was a great traveler. As an Olympic medalist, he competed in track races across the world. Travel was very expensive, slow and disorganized and amateur athletes back then were required to pay all their own expenses. Communication was non-existent with only a telegram to connect. Yet he got it all together and won many races.

There were four true loves of his life our father had; his family, his running, his church and his hometown of Manchester. He had an easy way with all things and was fiercely driven to win. Joe McCluskey never met a challenge that he did not know he could win against. It was all just a matter of drive. Drive, drive, drive. That was the mantra we heard all our lives. Whenever facing a tough situation, just keep at it with drive, drive, drive.

*Lovingly submitted by the Family of Joe McCluskey*

*Thanks to the tremendous help of Joe Jr., Mary, Katy, and Rick in putting this together. Each of them contributed a different and important perspective to the piece. Together, we have prepared a thoughtful insight into the character of the man our father was, beyond the champion people know.*





June 1986  
Dad's 75th Birthday



1988, Susan, Dad, Dan McElroy, Katy

## **Things our father liked to do:**

Coach track

Read the funny papers to his children

Read the Bridge column to his children

Float in the backyard pool and see how long he could hold his breath underwater (about 3 minutes, a little stressful for Mom)

Encourage his kids to run

Run the Manchester Road Race on Thanksgiving (his disappearance went unnoticed until dinner time)

Jog around the neighborhood with my sister Sue

Sing “Danny Boy”

Celebrate New Year’s at home with his family on December 31st

Help his children pick out a Mother’s Day present for Mom

Write letters to his mother

Visit his mother and sister Mary along with her family in Manchester

Visit his brother John and his family in Massachusetts

Have a cup of tea with dinner

Play checkers (he was excellent)

Be on the debate team when in college

Work (he certainly instilled the work ethic in us)

Chat at home with his father-in-law, our “Poppy”

Watch his children open presents on Christmas morning

Take his family to Howard Johnson’s on Sunday afternoon for ice cream

Take his family to the beach in the summer

Read the stock market page

Plan on getting a tree farm

Watch the Olympic Games on TV

Take pictures of his family for the photo album

Take his kids to work on Saint Patrick’s Day to watch the parade on 5th Avenue

Coach the local high school track team, well into his retirement years

Spend time in Manchester, just for the pleasure of being there



Summer 1991  
*From left to  
right: Edwina  
McCluskey, John  
McCluskey, Dad,  
and Ellen Custer-  
McCluskey*

Dec. 1991  
Dad and  
granddaughter  
Emily McElroy



May 1994, Dad at Fordham University Alumni 5-mile run

1978 Christmas Letter

Dear All,

Tis a few weeks to Christmas, and the whole family bounds  
Into miriads of activities, with many lofty crowns.  
Their spirits rise, so it seems, as the sun sets in the West,  
And they glide into the night, with frolic as their quest.  
When the sun of the morn shines, we hope all is well  
From the glories of work and play, as the funny stories might tell.

The long year goes near a close, with bounties mostly shown  
As the Lord looks over us, giving on balance to us, a very lofty tone  
We had some griefs, with our lovely Mother gone, to rest,  
Knowing tho that her life was one of the best.  
Our prayers for our parents will always be given by us, each day,  
Knowing that their devotion for great family life was here to stay.  
We'll must meet in the future, and hold this family trust,  
For we've learned from her that love is a fine family must.

With the colder weather coming, and the snow beginning to fall,  
We know that the Xmas season is again giving us the call.  
Our spirits grow with the season, and our wishes are so bright  
We extend our merriest greetings, for love and health and might.  
May the new year bring glowing forecasts, and all that is good to hear,  
As we endowed with courage and drive feel no course to fear.  
The changes in life make new courses to steer,  
So tis careful preparation we need to make our progress clear.  
Fortunes will show a steady gain as we plan a careful glide,  
Seeing our ship make progress, instead of a slovenly slide.  
Faith in ourselves to prosper is an attribute we must show,  
To overcome our hardships, and lead to a merry glow.

As our children are growing and learning, improving by leaps and bounds  
We've endeavored to help their progress, to make it certain & sound.  
Happiness and good fortune is something we want them to seek  
With bountiful benefits and fruits, to make their lives hit a peak.  
Our own recollections of misfortunes, we transmit to avoid falls,  
Striving to aid their progress and to easily pass over the walls.  
A feeling of delight comes to parents when reports start to come in  
Showing success in offsprings movements as progress does begin.  
If remorse from no forward movement puts us to a test,  
Then we must steadily push e'en harder in order to give them our best.  
For working to do better, and winning in the end,  
Gives our minds great comfort, which is the way we must trend.

So the joyous season is here and may our moods be good,  
To bring delights and pleasures, as the Xmas time should.  
May the glowing Christmas lights reflect your impressions right,  
and bring pleasant satisfactions of our eyes, sights.  
So the best to all in season, may these days be full of cheer,  
And May Santa be good to all with his plentiful trinkets so dear.  
We give you our best, our joys of the day & hope for a finer life,  
May the world relish in bounties, and avoid all the strife.  
Tis the time for peace and joy, so make your spirits bright,  
We send you MERRY CHRISTMAS -, for a joyous Xmas night.

Anne and Joe McCluskey  
and Family

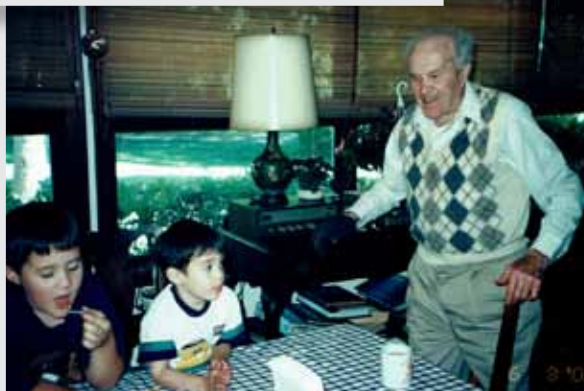


1999  
Dad, Rich Jr.,  
Andy



1999  
Family Birthday  
Party

June 2000  
Dad's 89th  
birthday







Dad and Earl Yost  
at the Manchester  
Road Race



Oct. 2000  
*Left to right:* John  
McCluskey,  
Edwina and Dad



July 2002  
*Left to right:*  
Antoine Cotard,  
Dad, Julian Cotard,  
Mom

ABOUT THE SCULPTOR:  
**Michael J. Keropian**

Michael was born in Hartford, CT and grew up in Manchester, CT. He enjoyed art from a young age and it was inevitable he would pursue art after graduating high school. He is a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the oldest art school in the United States where he was honored with a full working scholarship, exceptional training and learned to sculpt in a traditional figurative style.

His experience in sculpture encompasses all aspects of the discipline. Michael's work history includes a decade at the Tallix Sculpture Foundry in Beacon, New York where he was responsible for enlarging, restoration and mold making important monuments such as the Korean Veteran's Memorial in Washington D.C. Michael has extensive knowledge of the sculptural process involved in bringing a work of art from conception to completion.

Along with developing a unique personal style in figurative sculpture; Michael created Keropian Sculpture LLC in 1989 that provides sculptural services to a variety of clientele. He specializes in dynamic custom sculpture; figure and animal compositions, portraiture and relief sculpture, architectural, memorials, fountains and historical sculpture. Other services provided are design, instruction and consultation, sculpture restoration and casting services.

As a Fellow of the National Sculpture Society in New York City, Michael stands among the leading figurative sculptors in the USA. He regularly attends the society's meetings in New York City and has had his work published in Sculpture Review Magazine that has been called the foremost figurative sculpture magazine in the world. His work is reproduced in more than a dozen publications. Mike's achievements in the field of figurative sculpture have earned him numerous awards.

Throughout the years Michael Keropian has been commissioned to create a variety of sculptures for both public and private clients.

One of Michael's most public and his largest commission was creating nine heroic-sized tiger sculptures to adorn the new stadium of the Detroit Tiger's Baseball Team, Comerica Park. The mix of these grand sculptures with an iconic American pastime is brilliant. He has an impressive portfolio, which includes portraits of famous musicians and celebrities, Native Americans, martial arts masters, a college president and the former Mayor of Brewster, New York. Keropian's work is also in numerous private collections around the world.



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*Celebrating Our History*  
**The Sculpture Project**

MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT

## **The inspiration behind The Sculpture Project**

Manchester's history is all around us – in the architecture, the paintings in Town Hall, the Dancing Bear fountain, and the silk industry legacy left to us by the Cheney family. It's in events like the Thanksgiving Road Race and memorials erected around town that commemorate heroes. These all define our City of Village Charm.

History is also about **people** – individuals who made **extraordinary contributions that helped shape our community**. With that in mind, *The Sculpture Project* is celebrating the lives and achievements of three individuals by memorializing them as life-sized bronze statues. Memorable sculptures are found in many towns in Connecticut and across the country, and are a creative way to provide **inspiration, history, and artistic interest** to people of all ages.

Future honorees are

- **Elisabeth Bennet** *To be located on Bennet Academy grounds*
- **Emily Cheney Neville** *To be located at the Mary Cheney Library*

We hope you'll be inspired by this project and we appreciate your interest. Please continue to support our fundraising events and consider making a donation to *The Sculpture Project* so future generations will benefit from our appreciation of **history, arts, and culture** – all the things that make Manchester the great community it is today. Together, we are creating a **legacy for future generations**.

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Susan C. Wright

Claudia Kuehl

*Special Thanks to our "chef," Frank Parseliti, for providing great sustenance to us during our evening meetings.*

Learn more about *The Sculpture Project* and our future honorees  
at [www.manchesterhistory.org](http://www.manchesterhistory.org)



*Celebrating Our History*  
**The Sculpture Project**

MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT

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Center Perk Restaurant  
Cosmic Omelet  
Dunkin' Donuts - Gagnon Realty, LLC  
Fani's Restaurant  
The Gathering  
Great Harvest Bread  
Kenny's  
The Main Pub  
Landmark Cafe  
Manchester Country Club  
Pastrami on Wry  
Silk City Coffee  
Sol de Bourinquen Bakery

*If we have inadvertently omitted your name,  
please contact us. Thank you*

The Sculpture Project is grateful to:

- The Manchester Historical Society** for their fiduciary support.
- Town of Manchester Board of Directors** for their support and faith in this project.
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- Bill Ludwig**, Town Troubadour, for his gift of a song about Joe McCluskey.



*The Town of Manchester is now the steward of this statue, giving  
it loving care to ensure its longevity for future generations.*

## Run on, Shufflin' Joe!

When he was just a boy, his early teens  
Delivery from door-to-door  
Always in a rush to get 'em out on time  
Hurry to deliver more  
Running and a-leaping 'stead of going 'round  
Fences and a-hedges in a single bound  
The Running Newsboy born  
Speeding out there ev'ry morn

Oh, run on, Shufflin' Joe, run on  
Run on, Shufflin' Joe  
Not one man faster at the starting gun  
Be it steeplechase or on the road  
Lickin' any challenger from miles around  
When he crossed the finish there was just one sound  
There goes Shufflin' Joe McCluskey, The winner is Shufflin' Joe!

At MHS, then Fordham Flash  
The champ on every track he stood  
He showed off all his stuff on the Olympic stage  
But came home every chance he could  
No one ever touched him in the steeplechase  
All the town came out when he ran our road race  
With his hearty laugh and friendly, smiling face  
The greatest runner we have known

Oh, run on, Shufflin' Joe, run on  
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Be it steeplechase or on the road  
Lickin' any challenger from miles around  
When he crossed the finish there was just one sound  
There goes Shufflin' Joe McCluskey, the winner is Shufflin' Joe!

Written and performed by Bill Ludwig, Manchester's Town Troubadour