



## **2004 HOF Speech**

## **Rosalia Gioia - Inductee**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. This is a game with which we share a great passion....During my playing days with the New York, Long Island and Westchester Lacrosse Associations I played center and attack wing, which gave me the opportunity to run all over the field which I loved. This is indeed a great and beautiful and truly American sport!

The emblem of the New York Lacrosse Association was of the Statue of Liberty framed by two crossed sticks. It is that same symbol – the Statue of Liberty, which greeted my parents upon arriving in this country any years ago. They were seeking greater economic and social opportunities and successfully met and faced all the challenges of a new life – a new game so to speak with great hope, promise and perseverance...That is where my journey here tonight began.

I am a sports enthusiast a lover of games of all seasons. My first competition was in track then on to softball, basketball, tennis field hockey and of course lacrosse Sports have taken me great distances far and wide from the streets and parks of New York City with the Police Athletic League, to lacrosse fields across the nation, playing games, for example before 50,000 empty seats at a hockey tournament in Berkeley California as well as before a packed Madison Square Garden crowd for a basketball championship.

While I attended Hunter College,( which had no lacrosse program) many of my friends and I were invited to join the NYWLA, a new club organized by a group of women who had played prep school and college lacrosse and who were living in Manhattan for career reasons .We were a very diverse group-of experienced, mature players and raw beginners ,united by a love for a game that featured running, throwing and catching, great freedom, few rules and no boundaries.!.....

I remember my early days riding the NYC subways proudly carrying my lacrosse stick (and the lead pipes we used for goals). Because we sometimes practiced on the grounds of Randall's Island, located in the East River under the Triboro Bridge. we became very skillful and accurate. Any wild throw, missed catch, or loose ground ball ended up in the East River. .

The noted Boston-New York rivalry is not one limited to baseball.. At national lacrosse tournaments New York regularly faced Boston and in one such match one of the most improbable shooters on our team, scored the winning goal against Boston's All-American goalkeeper The shot, made with a deeply-pocketed stick , more closely resembled a dink in volleyball than the hard shots of lacrosse. Boston called it the Curse of the Deep Pocket.

..When I am reunited with old friends they invariably asked if I am STILL officiating.– All here tonight know and share my passion for this game However, my continued presence ,is motivated by the thoughts of Ms Gloria Steinham, a pioneer in the women's movement . At a conference I attended she repeated these words over and over "because a girl is watching." calling attention to a mandate for women to recognize the importance of role-modeling and to accept the challenges of leadership .“Young girls will notice women who are executives, astronauts, scientists etc”,. Yes I `m STILL in the game because ..somewhere out there a girl is watching.