



## REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

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### Would-be baseball stars, composers and star-crossed lovers ...

BY JASON TURCOTTE

People in the real estate industry are aware of the challenging deals under their belts, they know which boards they serve on, which charities they support, but Real Estate Weekly is pleased to offer the following little known anecdotes about the 2010 REBNY honorees.

For example, did you know the real estate industry has its own Andy Pettitte? From the pitcher's mound to the sales pitches, Massey Knakal Realty Services chairman Bob Knakal nearly had a career in the Major Leagues. A coveted baseball player at Hackensack High School, in New Jersey, he received an invitation to tryout for both the Philadelphia Phillies and the Cincinnati Reds.

Knakal ultimately landed in college, where he became an All-Ivy League pitcher at the University of Pennsylvania. Despite the institution's storied baseball history – which dates back to 1867 – Knakal continues to hold the fourth best ranking on Penn's all-time low ERA (Earned Run Average) list: He posted an impressive 0.74 ERA in 1982. Knakal is receiving REBNY's Louis Smadbeck Broker Recognition Award.

And while Knakal was impressing scouts on the pitcher's mound, Warburg Realty's Frederick Peters hit his own notes with dreams of a career in music composition.

With his training as a composer, Peters was pursuing a Ph.D. in music when he became a real estate agent in 1980. In his 20s with one child (and a second on the way) he entered the business to make some extra money on the side. But real estate quickly consumed his life and though just shy of a dissertation, Peters put the doctoral program aside and, as he puts it, "unsuspectingly morphed from artist to businessperson."



Bob Knakal holds a baseball record.

For honoree Ralph J. DiRuggiero, vice president of property management at Paramount Group, one might call him a bit of a historian. An avid reader, he immerses himself in historical fiction and history literature spanning New York City and San Francisco.

Other little known facts about DiRuggiero? He is a California wine aficionado (with tastes leaning toward smaller, less known vineyards like A. Rafanelli and Brown Estate); he spends a great deal of time raising scholarship funds for his alma mater, the University of Scranton; and his favorite getaway with wife Susan and their daughter Caitlin is the beaches of Delaware. He's receiving REBNY's George M. Brooker Management Executive of the Year Award.

And, speaking of wives...

Framer Levin Naftalis & Frankel counsel Samuel H. Lindenbaum — who will receive REBNY's Harry B. Helmsley Distinguished New Yorker Award - has an interesting tale to tell regarding how he met his. As a 17-year-old counselor in training at a co-ed camp, Lindenbaum's bunk/office was positioned next to the infirmary. One day another counselor asked him to call a doctor on a microphone (yes, there were no cell phones in those days) because a girl had been hit in the ear with a baseball. Letting curiosity get the best of him, he walked over to the bunk side of the office and there lay a "cute little blonde chick" in his bed. Said Lindenbaum, "So when people ask me how I met my wife of 52 years, Linda, I say: 'She was in my bed.'"

Rounding out the 114th Annual REBNY Banquet honorees are Swing Equities' senior vice president and director of commercial leasing and operations Todd E. Korren and David Greenbaum, president of Vornado Realty Trust's New York division. Korren will be awarded the Young Real Estate Man of the Year Award, while Greenbaum is receiving the Bernard H. Mendik Lifetime Leadership in Real Estate Award.