

Luke Rekucki
Vito Trause Scholarship

For the first part of my high school career, I knew who Vito Trause was, but I never really got to *know* him. In contrast to some of my peers, who had known Vito for years prior, I really only knew him based on reputation. I knew he was a veteran, a former prisoner-of-war in Germany during World War II, a vehement supporter of Westwood athletics, and he could be found in David's Bagels a few days of the week in the early morning.

I learned that last part going into my junior year; I started going to David's for breakfast every few days. As my trips to David's became more common once school started, I would see Vito probably about every other morning sitting in David's with the WCTV guys, John and Larry. At this time I was really coming into my own both as a person and a Westwood football player, and each morning when I saw Vito and John and Larry in David's Bagels they would all bombard me with questions about the team.

But Vito also had jokes. Stories. And you might think that being a POW in WWII would have made him maybe a little less joyful, or even just a little less outgoing. But without a doubt Vito was the guy in that store that just lit the place up whenever he was there. He'd sit with his friends dispersed at every table, joke and laugh with them and the people on the bagel line. And I looked forward to talking to him on those mornings. There were even a couple times where I got to school late because I was held up listening to Vito go on about Paris, or number forty-four on the 2010 Cardinals.

There were also the days of practice when Vito would drive his car down to that corner spot in the upper gym lot. Every day, football practice would end and we'd walk right past Vito chilling in his car with the windows down in his corner spot, and he would smile and talk to each of us and shake our hands as we walked back to the locker room.

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For me, Vito's legacy isn't just about how he left school to go fight in WWII and how he survived a German POW camp. What I love about Vito and what stays with me to this day is his love, commitment, and care for his community and the people in it. After all the time I spent interacting with Vito over the past couple years, if there is one thing that I learned about him, it is that he lived for others. And five-hundred words isn't enough to thank him for everything he was and did for this community. But Vito will always serve as an inspiration to me, a standard to strive for. And I hope to take his lessons of dedication and love into all aspects of my future.

Thank you, Pal.