

Haledon's favorite son returns to speak at WPC graduation

By Matthew Halpern

Bruce Baumgartner, the most decorated freestyle wrestler in history, received the William Paterson College President's medal for outstanding service to the college community or society at large at the WPC Winter Commencement ceremony on Jan. 19, 1997.

The winner of four Olympic medals and 13 world wrestling medals, Baumgartner, a native of Haledon, has always been proud of what he has done outside of his wrestling career.

"I try to help out with as many charitable things as I can," he said. "I speak to high school and college students, about success, motivation, pride, and self esteem."

Currently, Baumgartner is coaching at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania, a division one school that is ranked seventh in the nation with Baumgartner at the helm. As well as teaching his athletes to be good wrestlers, Baumgartner hopes to make them better people.

"I enjoy coaching and am so happy at Edinboro," said Baumgartner. "Hopefully, I can teach these athletes not only to

be good wrestlers, but how to be good individuals prepared to go into society."

Baumgartner comes from a long tradition of native Haledonians. Both his father's family and his grandparents' families hale from this area.

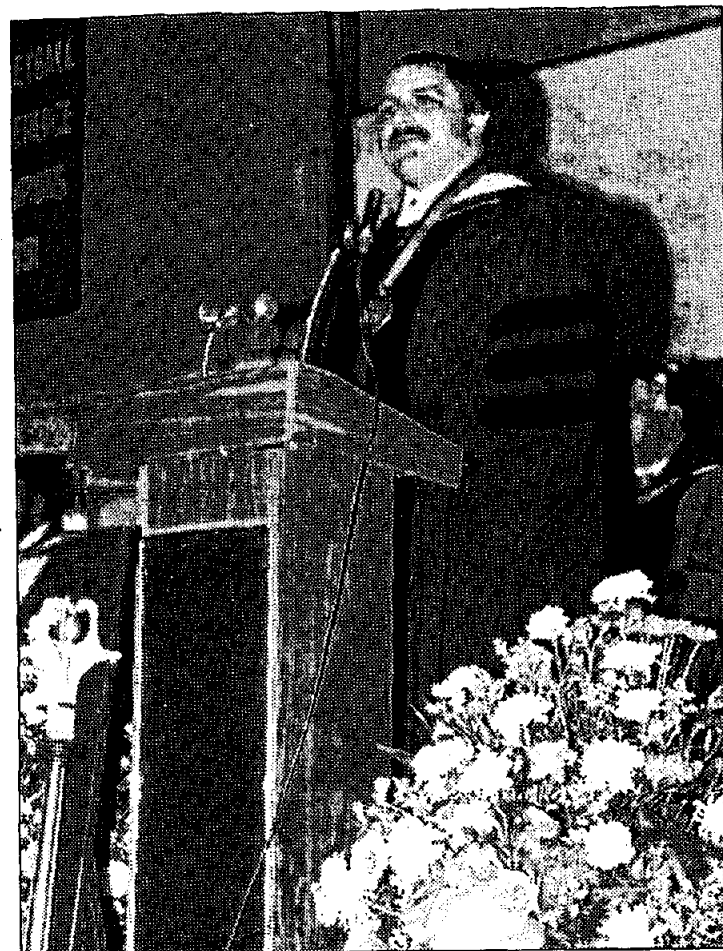
"Haledon was a great place to grow up and it still looks like a nice place to live," said Baumgartner. "Having the college here is a real asset, with the open atmosphere to the north making it a comfortable place to live."

From these modest roots Baumgartner

sees himself as no different than any other person. None of the championships hide the fact that Bruce Baumgartner is a regular man, who has used his talent and abilities to his advantage.

"Olympic and World Champion athletes are just people like everyone else," said Baumgartner. "I am no different than any one else except that I have chosen to use my wrestling talents to give me the success I have."

After spending the first 18 years of his life in Haledon, Baumgartner has since relocated



Sylvana Meneses/The Beacon

The Haledon native, Baumgartner — a four time Olympic medal winner — stress the importance of setting goals in his speech to William Paterson College graduates.

to Western Pennsylvania. He currently resides there with his wife Linda and their three sons, Bryan, Dylan, and Zachary.

Baumgartner earned his education through the Haledon school system and at the same

time developed a love and skill for wrestling in high school. He then went to Indiana State University earning his bachelors degree in education and his masters degree in education from

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Winter graduation goes off without a flake in sight

By Norman DeFilippo, Yoni Greenbaum and Michele Mielko

Although the temperature was low enough to freeze any water already on the ground — making driving and walking treacherous — thankfully, exclaimed, members of the William Paterson College Graduation committee, there was no snow.

The mid-year commencement, the college's second such, was held on Jan. 19 in the college's Recreation Center. As opposed to last year, when a blizzard blanketed New Jersey, no snow was expected.

Over 3,000 people filled the stands to watch the awarding of 649 bachelor's degrees and 84 master's degrees.

As the graduates walked in, to the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance," family and friends cheered and tried to get photographs. Siblings sat atop of parents' shoulders vying for a better view of their sisters or brothers.

Many of the graduates had written messages atop of their caps thanking their parents or friends.

"It took 11 years of night classes," read one such message.

Members of one sorority unfurled a banner that read "Good Luck Christine."

The ceremony marked the culmination of years of study and hard work — a message that was to be reiterated by all of the graduation speakers.

WPC students who completed their requirements for graduation between August and December 1996 are allowed to participate.

According to Pamela Fushko, director of telecommunication at WPC "the winter ceremony is about half the size of the May graduation ceremony, with roughly 450 graduating in the winter and between 800 and 900 people following the spring semester;

Fushko who organizes the event explained that "this commencement is usually a little more calmer, mainly because it is conducted indoors, as opposed to the outdoor setting for the May graduation."

Her sentiments were echoed by many of the graduates who said that they preferred the winter graduation because of its intimate nature.

The day started at noon with a faculty and staff luncheon held in the Student Center Ballroom. According to Ed Marsh, a WPC senior and member of the graduation committee, a letter was sent to all faculty from the senior class and the office of the president urging faculty to attend.

"It is very good to see so many faculty and staff and parents come out to honor [the graduating students] achievements," said WPC Provost and Executive Vice President, Chernoh M. Sesay.

At approximately 2 p.m., dressed in their robes, the graduates, entered the recreation center and were led by Doris White, senior faculty member and professor of curriculum and college marshal.

First to address the graduates was Senior Class President Anne Li. Although not graduating until May, the Warren resident recognized those members of the graduating class who had to work or raise families.

She urged the graduates to be proud of their achievements.

"Be proud as well, because you, have helped make William Paterson College the vital and flexible institution it is today," Li said.

Li explained her own "approach to growing" in the hope of inspiring her fellow classmates. She explained how she captures ideas and puts them down on paper. How she reflects often on her goals so as to remain committed to achieving these goals.

"This process makes me feel armed with the social, intellectual, personal capacity needed to succeed in the



Interim Dean of the William Paterson College School of Education, Susan Kuvec, (above) congratulates one of the graduates. (left) WPC Provost and Executive Vice President Chernoh M. Sesay presents the graduates for the conferring of degrees.

Sylvana Meneses/The Beacon

real world outside these campus gates."

Li was followed by WPC President, Arnold Speert. Before speaking to the graduates, Speert recognized those members of the WPC faculty who retired this past semester and those who had recently earned Emeritus status.

He explained how the mid-semester graduation and the reading of graduates names were both the result of students suggestions.

"We have adapted this celebration to become more significant to the celebrants," he said.

Speert went on to "reflect" on graduation. He explained how each aspect of the ceremony plays a certain role.

"The remarks made our very last chance to attempt to influence you before you commence your lives after WPC," he said.

Speert closed by urging that the students see the event as individual achievements. "this ceremony is the means by which we say directly to each of you: 'good job; well done!' and wish you the best for the future."

The featured speaker and recipient of the Presidential Medal, was then introduced by Fred Gruel, chair of the WPC Board of Trustees.

The Presidential Medal is given to a member of the

community for outstanding service to the college, community or society at large.

Bruce Baumgartner, who was chosen to carry the American flag for the 1996 games opening ceremonies has won two gold medals, one silver and one bronze, he is the first American wrestler to earn medals in three consecutive Olympics and only the sixth athlete in United States history to do so in four different olympics.

According to Gruel, Baumgartner was chosen "in recognition of his remarkable athletic achievements, noteworthy academic status, dynamic perseverance, and consequent stature as an inspiration for all who strive to succeed."

In accepting his medal, Baumgartner talked about growing up in and around WPC, as his mother worked at the college.

"Not long ago I was sitting in a chair at a graduation like this one," he said.

He went on to outline four areas or the "four keys to success" that graduates should focus on in order to be successful.

They included setting high goals, surrounding oneself with good people and taking care of ones body.

"Your mind and body will accomplish great things if you let it," he said.

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ON THE COVER — Three members of the Class of 1996 celebrate their achievements following graduation in the Recreation Center this past Sunday.

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