

By Kerry Monaco

On June 26, Ann Liguori will be hosting her Ninth Annual Ann Liguori American Cancer Society Golf Classic at Hampton Hills Country Club. Proceeds from the event benefit Camp Adventure on Shelter Island, which opens each August for children with cancer and their siblings.

But Liguori, a resident of Westhampton, is so much more than just that golf outing. Liguori just returned from covering the U.S. Open for WFAN Radio. As the station's golf correspondent, she provides live coverage from major golf events throughout the country, doing interviews with players as well as giving updates every 20 minutes. She has also been the host of a weekly call-in sports show on Sunday nights on the station since 1987, when it became the first in the nation to go to an all-sports format.

She is also the host and executive producer of the award-winning "Sports Innerview with Ann Liguori" a nationally-syndicated television show.

In addition to the golf coverage, she covered her sixth Olympics this past winter in Torino, where she was the alpine correspondent for Westwood One Radio Network and did play-by-play of men's and women's alpine events.

She is the author of "A Passion for Golf, Celebrity Musings About the Game."

Liguori grew up in Brecksville, Ohio, just outside of Cleveland and then graduated from University of South Florida in Tampa with a degree in broadcast journalism. In high school, she lettered in volleyball, basketball, track and field and tennis, playing on the boys team because there wasn't one for girls. Her current activities include running each morning as well as playing golf and tennis.

Question: *What is it like being a woman in the sports broadcasting field?*

Ann Liguori: Being a woman in sports broadcasting is very exciting. We have paved the way for women to pursue all kinds of jobs in sports. Back in the early '80s, there were few sports broadcasting opportunities for women. I decided back then to work independently so that I could create my own opportunities and would be limited only by my own imagination, not by a person in a decision-making capacity telling me I could not do something because of my gender. So I decided I wanted to host and produce my own sports interview show to air on sports networks throughout the U.S. So in 1989, I created Sports Innerview with Ann Liguori, a half-hour, weekly show that features interviews with top names in sports, entertainment and business. I created the show, own the show, get sponsors for the show, book all the guests for the show, package the show and distribute and syndicate the show. The show aired weekly from 1989-2004. Now, I produce specials when I feel

there is someone I really want to interview or a golf course I really need to play. The entire archives can be seen on www.annliguori.com.

Q.: Have you encountered any prejudice in your job?

A.L.: Unfortunately, prejudice exists in our society and is experienced by many people in many fields. In the early days of my work on WFAN Radio, some listeners were not accustomed to hearing a woman's voice on the air talking about sports. There was a lot of pressure, particularly in the early days of the station, for me, as a female talk show host, to really know my sport's topics and be more knowledgeable and even more prepared than my fellow co-hosts. Most of these traditional mind sets have since been converted and are fans. At least that is what they tell me in the fan mail I get. Some sports fans will always be dinosaurs so you just do the best job you can do and not worry about it. I worked very hard to earn the respect and credibility from people in my business and from my fans, so I feel very comfortable doing what I do, regardless of what some people may think.

Q.: Has the perception of women in your field changed?

A.L.: Yes, the perception of women in sports broadcasting has changed as more and more knowledgeable women, who work hard, are given opportunities at networks like ESPN and with newspapers like USA Today. Both of those companies have done an excellent job hiring qualified women to work in their sports departments.

Q.: What is your favorite part of your job?

A.L.: The favorite part of my career is the opportunity to talk with some of the most fascinating people in the world and interview them on some of the most incredible golf courses in the world. I have always been genuinely interested in other people and have developed a passion for golf so to be able to combine those two elements, and my love for travel, is very satisfying.

Q.: The least favorite?

A.L.: I enjoy all elements of my business, even the intense research and preparation required to be knowledgeable on so many subjects in sports and on so many people that I interview. Let's just say that hosting live radio shows and hosting and producing television programs requires an enormous amount of work and preparation. But it is all part of the process and I truly enjoy all of it.

Q.: What's a typical day like for you?

A.L.: There are few "typical" days but when I am not at a venue like Winged Foot, covering the US Open for WFAN, or at Doonbeg Golf Club, in western Ireland, interviewing Greg Norman for my television show as he plays the course and discusses his design philosophy and success story, I really enjoy working in my home office. A typical day would be going for a

morning jog, spending time in my office answering e-mail and working on various projects. I consult for Bobby Jones Golf and Tri-Bag in addition to hosting and producing radio and television sport's shows, so there are always things to do in my office. Running a production company takes a lot of time and attention to detail. And with my annual charity golf tournament approaching, the Ninth Annual Ann Liguori American Cancer Society Golf Classic on June 26th, in which participants come in as early as Thursday evening, June is a very busy month! To unwind, I enjoy biking and golfing with my boyfriend, Scott Vallery. He loves to cook so we normally sit down to a lovely dinner every night. I set the table and clean up. As he likes to say, we don't eat, we dine.

Q.: What are the most memorable sports moments you have been a part of?

A.L.: Covering the Masters for WFAN when Phil Mickelson won his first Major in 2004; being on the air, live, when he birdied the final hole to win it.

Being on the air, live, on WFAN, when Tiger made that infamous long chip at Augusta for birdie on the 16th hole, in 2005. It was quite the memorable play-by-play call, full of surprise and emotion, because of how dramatic the shot was and the time it took for the ball to finally drop into the cup.

Doing play-by-play on CBS Radio Network of Picabo Street's gold medal race in the Super G at the 1998 Nagano Olympics after her comeback from knee surgery.

Broadcasting the USA Women's Basketball gold medal victory in 1996 at the Atlanta Summer Olympics because I knew that the future of a women's professional basketball league was riding on the success of the women's U.S. Olympic performance during those Olympics.

Interviewing Mickey Mantle in 1989, the first guest on my Sports Innerview syndicated cable show.

Getting the last sit-down, exclusive interview with Ted Williams in Boston in 2000 and bringing in his son in the third part of the interview. [It was] the only time the two were ever interviewed for television together.

Interviewing Charles Schulz, the creator of Peanuts, in his art studio in California, while he sketched a picture of Snoopy putting, which he later gave to me.

Being a part of The Golf Channel's early days as the first woman to host her own prime-time, weekly show. "Conversations with Ann Liguori" aired on The Golf Channel for the first three years of the channel's inception and featured my interviews with everyone from Kevin Costner and Joe Pesci to Yogi Berra and Glenn Frye of Eagle's fame.

Q.: Who is the most interesting person you have ever interviewed?

A.L.: That is a difficult question because I have interviewed so many fascinating personalities in sports, business and in entertainment. Charles Schulz was so thoughtful. Ted Williams was intriguing as he discussed the nuances of hitting a baseball and his opinions on the game. Alice Cooper is interesting to talk with. He is quite intelligent and so unlike his on-stage persona. He is a Christian and plays golf every day, having transferred his alcohol addiction to golf. He hosts a charity event each year in Scottsdale that I attend.

Yogi Berra is one of my favorites—one of the last of the living legends in baseball and forever coming up with more “Yogi-isms.” Celine Dion was very generous with her time and quite humble despite all of her success. Jim Brown is a very intense interview. He is very opinionated.

Q.: Why did you start the golf tournament?

A.L.: I started the golf event nine years ago. I lost my father to cancer when I was in college and two years later, I lost my 22-year-old brother, Jim, to leukemia. When the American Cancer Society asked me to host an annual golf event in Westhampton, I knew that I could put my heart and soul into the cause. So many people have been affected by cancer. I figured we cannot do enough to raise money and awareness to fight the disease. We have a very committed group of people on my golf committee who live in the Hamptons and the support from the community has been overwhelming. I am very proud to say I live full-time in The Hamptons. We have a wonderful community.

Q.: What is the best part of the event?

A.L.: The best part of the tournament are the people I work with. There are so many wonderful, generous people in our community who are genuinely committed to fighting cancer and raising money to support the cause. The fellowship at the tournament is extraordinary. The event attracts wonderful people—both in the Hamptons and throughout the world—who give their time, energy and money for an organization committed to stamping out cancer. Every year, old friendships are renewed, new friendships are made. Many of the same people and sponsors come back year after year because of the warmth and hospitality my committee extends to all the participants.

Q.: Do you have a favorite golf course?

A.L.: I play all of the top courses in the area. This is golf heaven in the summer. There are too many fine courses to distinguish one favorite course from another.

Q.: Do you have any advice to women who want to enter a career in a historically male-dominated profession?

A.L.: Set your goals and then work harder than the next person to achieve them. Clearly desire and you'll clearly acquire. Pursue something you are passionate about so you can enjoy the journey, as long and difficult as it may be. Stay focused. Don't be discouraged by setbacks. Learn from them and keep going. Have a sense of humor. Spread good will to others. Be a positive role model. Give back to society in a meaningful and generous way.

Q.: *What does the future hold for you?*

A.L.: I am enjoying every minute of my life. We are only here for a short time so I am trying to make the most of every moment living the dream. Most importantly, I hope to continue having a positive influence on people—young and old. I enjoy helping people in need.