

## SMALL WORLD CATEGORY

Bradford Swing

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RIP Alice Willetts (Alice Putnam "Putty" Willetts - 1926-2020), significant sports figure nationally and longtime girl's field hockey coach at Swarthmore High School (SHS). Her death truly marks the end of a lengthy era of Swarthmore history. This September 22, 2018 photo with Putty was taken before the service for my lifelong neighbor, Betsy Wray. (With Pam Swing and Laura L.

Wray). When Putty found out that I lived in Boston, she asked whether I knew that Governor Charlie Baker of Massachusetts was Miss Baker's nephew (Miss Caroline Ronk Baker, legendary English teacher at SHS and Putty's longtime companion on College Avenue.). I did not! Putty reported that "Charlie" called her once a month to check in. Because I work in the Boston Mayor's Office, I knew I would have an opportunity at some point to tell Governor Baker about this interaction with Putty and how important Miss Baker was to me as an English teacher with high standards. Although I've been in large meetings that included the Governor since then, I did not have the personal opportunity I hoped for until February 29, 2020 at the memorial mass for Vin McCarthy, the extraordinarily politically connected attorney and gay rights activist. I was sitting with my friend Lawrence S. DiCara, former Boston City Council president and candidate for Mayor, and Governor Baker came over our way to say hello to Larry. I used this moment to tell him that I had seen Putty Willetts the year before and that she told me that he stayed in touch with her. "Aunt Putty!" he exclaimed. We ended up speaking for a solid 10 minutes about memories of his Aunt Caroline (whom HE found to be quite tough) and his frequent visits to College Avenue when he was young. "If you ever wanted to see someone throw a football with a PERFECT spiral - that was my Aunt Putty." Miss Baker, more than Putty, was really quite important to me as a Swarthmore High School student, and I shared many stories about her with the Governor. Miss Baker died of a stroke in her early 60s in 1991, and I was able to share with him how sad I was that she had died relatively young. He was truly touched, gave me a hug, and with tears in his eyes said that he was going to visit his father, Caroline's brother, now age 91, in a retirement village, the next night. "I will tell him everything you remembered with me and it will mean the world to him.