



Chris McCosky

Untimely death is a cold slap in the face

I HAVEN'T thought about Terry Johnson in more than a decade. Maybe longer.

I can't seem to think of anything else right now.

Terry and I were classmates at John Hill Junior High School in Inkster. We played on the same basketball teams in seventh and eighth grade. Terry Johnson was a bigger athlete, even then. He was supreme than the rest of us back then. And stronger — both physically and mentally. I can't recall exactly, but I think he carried a 4.0 grade point average and was president of our class. I remember I had an embarrassing crush on this girl named Cindy. My first crush. This girl was in love with Terry Johnson.

Who could blame her?

Terry moved away after eighth grade. I went to Inkster Cherry Hill and he to Westland John Glenn. I never saw him again (except the few times Cherry Hill and Glenn played each other in basketball), but I knew what he was up to. All you had to do was read the local papers. He was the quarterback at Glenn. A standout basketball player. A model student.

After high school he went to Wayne State University, football scholarship. He overachieved there as well, earning academic all-American honors.

TERRY JOHNSON died Tuesday. His heart gave out on him while playing touch football in Plymouth. He was 29 years old. Apparently, Terry's arteries closed up. Even now, more than a week later, this seems impossible.

One of the news editors here got hold of the obituary and thought it might make a good followup for the sports section. I was given a sheet of paper with the vitals on it: Terry Johnson, former area athlete, 29, married less than a year, still living in Westland, died of natural causes at St. Mary's Hospital in Livonia Oct. 14. Graduated from Wayne State and Westland John Glenn.

My first thought was, "My God, I'm 29 years old and this guy had to have been in better shape than me." Then it dawned on me who "this guy" was.

Terry Johnson was in better shape than me. He was probably in better shape than most 29-year-olds. He played on five softball teams in the summer (this past summer he was

the MVP on three of them); he played basketball in the winter and touch football in the fall. He also jogged. His wife, Terri, said her husband wasn't feeling well the day he died. Nothing serious, just under the weather. He collapsed early in the tough football game. He hadn't done anything strenuous at that point. He simply couldn't catch his breath. Then he lost consciousness. By the time he got to St. Mary's, he was gone.

TERRI JOHNSON'S life collapsed as soon as her husband did. The last year had been a whirlwind for Terri. She and Terry were married 1 1/2 months ago. Five months ago the Johnsons bought their first home, in Westland. Last month Terri was appointed to the Wayne-Westland School Board. And now this.

"I feel like this is a nightmare," Terri told Observer reporter Sue Mason. "I feel like my life is over. He was my life. The one good thing I had was I knew he loved me more than anything and we had 11 months together."

There was talk of starting a family. Terri hoped to be pregnant by Christmas.

I wonder if I should be exposing Terry's grief in front of 100,000-plus readers. I wrestle with this for two days. On one hand, it didn't seem fair to limit Terry Johnson's too-short life to a four-inch obituary. Terry Johnson touched more lives than either he or his wife could imagine. There were more than 1,000 people at Uht Funeral Home last Friday. Twice that many, he included, were consumed by the memory of his life and the utter shock of his death. But is all this fair to Terri and the Johnson family?

I've decided to go through with it. For one, Terri Johnson said that her husband would have wanted it. That's the primary reason.

The second reason is personal. Terry Johnson's death slapped me across the face. It woke me up. It made me realize how much I take for granted: my wife, my son, my family, my home. Two weeks ago I would not have considered myself a luckier person than Terry Johnson.

And I'm not so unusual; maybe Terry Johnson's death woke some of you up, as well. Terry Johnson would have wanted that.

Area skier shines

Vicki Cole, 9, of Farmington Hills finished fourth in the country in the Coca-Cola Junior NASTAR National Ski Program. She was ranked No. 1 in Michigan.

Cole, who raced at Schuss Mountain, recorded a season-best handicap of 23.0 in the 7-9 age category.

More than 100,000 boys and girls participated in the NASTAR program at the 140 ski areas across the country. The top 16 juniors in each of the six age categories were determined by the average of their two best handicaps from the 1985-86 season.

"Considering the enormous number of skiers who are participating at NASTAR areas across the country, Vicki's fourth-place finish is quite an accomplishment," said Bob Beattie, NASTAR commissioner and former U.S. Olympic Ski Team coach.

Cole will among the national leaders listed in the December issue of SKI Magazine. Also, Coca-Cola will produce and distribute nationwide a poster of the Junior NASTAR rankings leaders.

Image taunts JC players

Continued from Page 1

help a program, but can't provide a foundation for one.

"I'm never going to rely on junior college players. It would hurt my other recruiting. If incoming freshmen felt they might be replaced in a year or two by JC players," said Oakland University basketball coach Greg Kampe.

Kampe came to OU two years ago intent on rebuilding a program. That meant establishing a recruiting pattern.

"I'm not afraid to recruit JC players, and I will supplement my team with one," he said. "Basically, I like to have a player for four years. We feel it takes two years just to learn our system."

"But a great player won't take that long."

KAMPE HAS signed one JC player in three recruiting seasons: Mike McCan, a 6-foot-4 forward from Cherry Hills, Iowa. He could start this year for the Pioneers.

At St. Mary's College of Orchard Lake, the recruitment of JC players follows the same basic guideline, although the Eagles have re-

lied on them far more than OU has.

"We don't want to get too many of them," said co-coach Rich Zelenksi, who coordinates recruiting at OLSM. "My policy is they have to be among the top seven players. I don't want them to be just sitting there."

ZELENKSI HAS signed seven JC players in the last two years. Five could be starters before this season ends. The graduation of two forwards and the transfer of a third combined for an overall lack of experience. That prompted Zelenksi to concentrate on JC players this season.

But even if such an infusion of JC talent works out for OLSM, chances are slim that their recruiting policy would change. Most four-year coaches want a player to be in their program long enough for them to mold him into something useful. That's difficult to do in two years.

Which is why most JC players will remain second-year recruits, mere supplements to any basketball program. And they will retain the poor image they've been saddled with.

SO IS IT worth it?

That was the theme of this series. Are community college sports programs worth the trouble, the financial investment?

Naysayers will point to almost non-existent audiences. Even at SC, which boasts three teams currently ranked among the top 20 nationally in the NCAA (men's and women's soccer and volleyball), spectators are sparse.

As for being an image-enhancer, JC sports get little (if any) ink in daily newspapers. And JC athletes are too often labeled as "not smart enough" to go to a major college, an unwarranted — but still widely accepted — depiction that does nothing for school image.

And yet, to accept such arguments would be contrary to what collegiate sports are actually about.

"If the only reason you're in (collegiate sports) is for the attendance or entertainment value, then you're in it for the wrong reasons," said Mary Gans, SC's athletic director.

OTHERS AGREE. Fred Tho-

man, currently the Plymouth Salem girls basketball coach and formerly OUC men's cage coach, defines athletics as more than a game.

"If, as I believe, athletics are a part of the educational process, then (athletes) are in a classroom," said Thomann. "They get immediate feedback on decisions they make, they have goals to strive for. I don't differentiate between a classroom setting and an athletic setting."

"I don't think athletics are for the spectators. I think they are for the players."

The JC athletes' image can be improved. And community must be re-emphasized if JC sports are to receive the recognition they deserve. Promotions must be created, interest must be generated to increase fan appreciation.

But even if no improvement is made, even if its status remains unchanged, there will be good reason for retaining JC sports. As Briggs said, "If it helps one or two guys a year, that should negate any money that is invested."

ONLY 16 DAYS 'TIL SKING

Bavarian Village

SKI SHOPS

SKI & SKIWEAR SALE

NOW THRU SUNDAY OCT. 26

10 to 30% OFF
SELECTED MODELS OF
NEW 1987 SKIS
OLIN-ROSSIGNOL-ELAN-K-2
PRE-DYNASTAR-ATOMIC

Plus \$100 "LET'S GO SKIING" BONUS FREE WITH ALL ALPINE SKIS PURCHASED THIS WEEK, WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.

REAR ENTRY SKI BOOTS \$79
ALL MENS & LADIES SIZES
BOOT SHOWN

SKI PACKAGE SETS INCLUDING BOOTS

ADULTS & TEENS RETAIL \$420 •SKIS •BOOTS •BINDINGS •POLES	\$214
\$435 SET INCLUDING NORDICA SKI BOOTS	\$228

NEW 1987 SKIWEAR COLLECTION

LOTS TO CHOOSE FROM MANY DIFFERENT STYLES SELECTED FROM OUR FRESH, NEW 1987 SKIWEAR COLLECTION, FOR MEN, WOMEN AND KIDS.

QUALITY JACKETS—PANTS
SWEATERS—BIBS—GLOVES
WARM AND RUGGED.
OUR SELECTION IS FABULOUS.

SAVE 20% to 30% OFF

FREE NOV. '86 SKI PASS
FREE SKI PASS TO SKI MT. BRIGHTON ANY DAY IN NOVEMBER, WITH ANY PURCHASE AT ANY BAVARIAN VILLAGE SKI SHOP, THIS WEEK WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.

BOOTS on SALE

NEW 1987 SKI BOOTS	10 to 30% OFF
SELECTED MODELS NORDICA-LANGE HEIERLING SALOMON-RAICHE	
NORDICA \$130	
REAR ENTRY SKI BOOTS \$79	

ALL MENS & LADIES SIZES
BOOT SHOWN

GET FITTED TODAY, WE KNOW HOW TO FIT BOOTS

RET. \$120 HEIERLING \$69	RET. \$160 SALOMON \$109
RET. \$140 RAICHE \$99	RET. \$180 RAICHE \$129
RET. \$175 NORDICA \$119	RET. \$180 NORDICA \$139
RET. \$225 HEIERLING \$149	RET. \$155 HEIERLING \$99

CHOOSE FROM MICHIGAN'S LARGEST SELECTION OF TOP BRAND SKI BOOTS.

GET READY TO SKI NOW & SAVE

Bavarian Village

SKI SHOPS

- BLOOMFIELD HILLS: 2540 WOODWARD at Square Lake Rd. 338-0803
- BIRMINGHAM: 101 TOWNSEND CORNER of Pierce 644-5950
- LIVONIA/REDFORD: 14211 TELEGRAPH at the Jaffries Fwy. 534-8200
- MT. CLEMENS: 1216 S. GRATIOT 1/2 mile north of 16 Mi. 483-3620
- EAST DETROIT: 22301 KELLY between 8 and 9 Mi. 778-7020
- ANN ARBOR: 3336 WASHINGTON west of U.S. 23 973-9340
- FLINT: 4261 MILLER across from Genesee Valley Mall, 313-732-6560
- SUGAR LOAF: SKI AREA 18 miles N/W of Traverse City, 313-228-6700
- FARMINGTON HILLS: 27847 ORCHARD LAKE RD. at 12 Mi. 553-8865

• VISA • MASTERCARD • DINERS • AMERICAN EXPRESS WELCOME
OPEN EVENINGS 'TIL 9 P.M. SATURDAY 10-6:30, SUNDAY 12-6 P.M.

CHIMNEYS
Cleaned
Screened
Repaired
New

Roofs
• Repaired
• Re-Roofed
• New
• Leaks Stopped

Karney Denderian's CROWN CONTRACTING, INC.
427-3981
LICENSED • INSURED • GUARANTEED
SINCE 1952

ALL TYPES ROOFING

Immediate Delivery Available

ROOFING WHOLESALE

19250 W. 8 MILE RD.
353-6343

CHIMNEYS
Cleaned
Screened
Repaired
New

Roofs
• Repaired
• Re-Roofed
• New
• Leaks Stopped

Karney Denderian's CROWN CONTRACTING, INC.
427-3981
LICENSED • INSURED • GUARANTEED
SINCE 1952