

What will hero tell the kids?

WHAT IS HE going to tell the kids?

Whichever version of the incident you believe — the one minimized by Pistons star Isiah Thomas or that filed in a police report by Channel 2 sports reporter Virg Jacques — it is obvious that physical contact was involved.

After Thomas apologized, Jacques withdrew an assault and battery complaint against him, claiming that Thomas choked him in an Oakland University parking lot. It's hard to believe that a reporter who makes his living covering the Pistons would choose to take either the Pistons or team captain Thomas on for small reason — even in the battle over ratings.

The concern is what Isiah will tell the kids. Few of us are immediately identified by the mere mention of our first name — Cher, Madonna, Isiah. Even George — you'd have to think about whether someone meant Washington or Bush.

Here in metropolitan Detroit, no matter suburb or city, the name Isiah universally conjures up a soft-spoken, articulate, good-looking, superb athlete devoted to his mother, wife and family.

ISIAH, WHO makes his home in Bloomfield Hills, is a role model for a whole generation. He takes the time to talk to them, to work for charitable causes which help them, and to endorse the Boys Club movement which he says helped him stay straight and become what he is today.

His good guy image is so indelible that he was able to completely erase the attempt to link him with gambling charges involving his friend and former Bloomfield Hills resident Emmet Denha. Some say the Thomas-Jacques



Judith Doner Berne

Incident may have had its roots in that controversial gambling story Channel 2 carried the day after the Pistons won their second championship.

Up to that time, probably the worst thing ever said about Thomas was that it sounded like he was still in bed when he checked in regularly with J.P. mornings during the Pistons season.

THAT ISIAH would resort to a physical attack is a repudiation of his image and the message he has been trying to get across to kids.

"Why should I be held to a higher standard than anyone else?" Thomas asked. Because that comes with the territory. It's part of being a hero... but it's not even applicable here.

Keeping your hands off another person, even if verbally provoked, is hardly a case of being held to a higher standard.

His apology to Jacques is important — and so is the broad-based consequent withdrawal of assault charges — in showing that reasonable people can resolve differences out of court.

But Thomas also owes someone else an apology — and that's the kids who subscribe to the Isiah Thomas legend.

What will he say to them? Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Let's thank tough teachers

Q: My son's friends were discussing their teachers recently. They complained of one English teacher who was very "tough," who really pours the work on. A student has to work to get an "A" from her and these are all high-achieving students. Sometimes, my son and his friends are working till 10:30 p.m. on her assignments. To me, she doesn't seem reasonable. She doesn't seem to be very popular the way the kids talk. Do you think I should talk to her about this?

A: No, because you also told me that college-bound juniors and seniors in your high school all want to get into her class. That tells a story. According to you, she expects that the students will write at a college level before leaving her class. She does not accept mediocrity. Let's thank her.

From my experience, the most popular teachers are not necessarily the best teachers. Yes, a very popular teacher can be one of the best teachers in the building, but there is no hard and fast rule on this issue.

Some of the most effective teachers have non-charismatic personalities but can teach up a storm. And, yes, many very charismatic teachers can teach up a storm. There is no fixed rule.

How can you tell a good teacher?



Doc Doyle

First off, they care about the kids and want them to be successful. Second, they are organized, they know their subject and are continually on a daily basis, self-evaluating their performance. Their self-evaluation is usually more stringent than their principal's formal evaluation of their performance.

They set high standards for themselves and have high expectations for their students.

They don't "shoot from the hip." When class starts they're ready.

They are not the arrested adolescent "Freddie Fraternity or Sally Sorority" types who think entertaining the kids — wasting class time — will endear themselves to their students.

Students in the "Freddie Fraternity" class may initially appear to enjoy the antics but later on will complain about what they didn't learn.

WHEN I WAS a high school counselor, we visited colleges to get in-

formation from our former students regarding how we could do a better job. The discussion invariably came down to our teachers.

Teachers I thought were average or marginal, whom the kids complained about the most while in high school, often turned out to be the teachers they said helped them the most. They also told us what they didn't like in teachers.

What don't they like? They don't like the, "I'm your buddy teacher." Indeed, their message is: I've got my own buddies, you be my teacher.

One teacher showed so many moves, the kids would say, "I never recognized him until the second semester because the lights were always out."

Students don't like teachers who grade ridiculously hard; a class in which one has to be a Fulbright scholar to get an A or a B.

Teachers who use grades as a means and a weapon to control classroom behavior are not in the students' hall of fame.

Also, teachers who give out almost all A's and B's for mediocre performances to be liked by the kids, or to keep parents off their backs, are not really respected.

Teachers who lower a student's grade from an A to a B because the student "mouthered off" in class one day creates an even more angry ado-

lescent to deal with.

These above situations, of course, are exceptions, but they do occur. Most teachers use reason and logic in assignments and are fair in grading.

THESE COLLEGE-BOUND students you refer to need teachers who set high standards, teachers who require quality work, teachers who prepare students for the challenge they will face in college.

Indeed, university professors respect and often personally know or at least know of those high school teachers who deliver students well prepared for college work.

Candidly, I know the high school principal of the teacher to whom you refer. The principal says her students write letters of appreciation to her from college. Many students visit her just to say thanks.

The students say, "Mrs. X really taught me how to write."

So, it seems Mrs. X is not interested in being the most popular teacher. She wants to be a teacher students say prepared them for college and life.

She is the teacher students will always remember.

Doc Doyle is a former Troy Schools administrator. His column on education appears periodically.

Say 'no' to drugs, 'yes' to life

By Betty Nicolay
special writer

FARMINGTON Families in Action is once again celebrating October Drug Awareness Month. Our city is wrapped in red ribbon which is the visual sign of a commitment to being drug-free.

Various activities during the month involve the entire community from preschoolers to senior citizens. Seniors from Mercy Center cut 50,000 ribbons which were distributed by Girl Scouts to businesses for handouts. Every Farmington student was given a ribbon to wear and individual schools decorated trees and buildings.

Fosters with anti-drug messages were created by local students and are on display in the libraries, city council offices, the Community Center and private businesses. Be sure to look for them.

On Oct. 7, more than 600 people gathered at Nardin Park United Methodist Church for an ecumenical service put on by the Scottish Clan Alliance for Drug-Free America sponsored by FFIA and local churches. The pipers and drummers played and the clans presented their colorful tartans. It was a sight to behold.

SUNDAY, OCT. 14, FFIA is sponsoring a Family Day of workshops at North Farmington High School 12:30-4:30 p.m. There are sessions for all ages. The classes offer information for people who are directly affected by substance abuse and also for those who just want to raise their awareness.

Bill Proctor from Channel 7 will be the keynote speaker. Finalists from the Farmington middle and high schools in the Tap Contest will perform and a winner will be chosen.

The month ends with a Run/Walk

guest column

for Life co-sponsored by the Farmington Area YMCA and FFIA. This is another opportunity to say "no" to drugs and "yes" to a life of health and wellness. Bring the family and join in the fun.

October Drug Awareness Month is becoming a tradition in Farmington/Farmington Hills and has grown each year. The planning committee of 50 people represents a cross section of our city.

The campaign could not be successful without the support and cooperation of the schools, police departments, local businesses and city government. We thank you, but we also apologize if you are not aware of the opportunities for involvement offered during October.

FFIA is a small, non-profit group. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible for us to reach every business in our area. We depend on our local newspaper to help spread the word.

The Observer recently ran an excellent series on drugs in Oakland County, yet we find the paper reluctant to promote, as well as cover, positive programs which will combat those statistics.

Our city is progressive in its approach to prevention and education, and I would like to see The Observer report this to its readers.

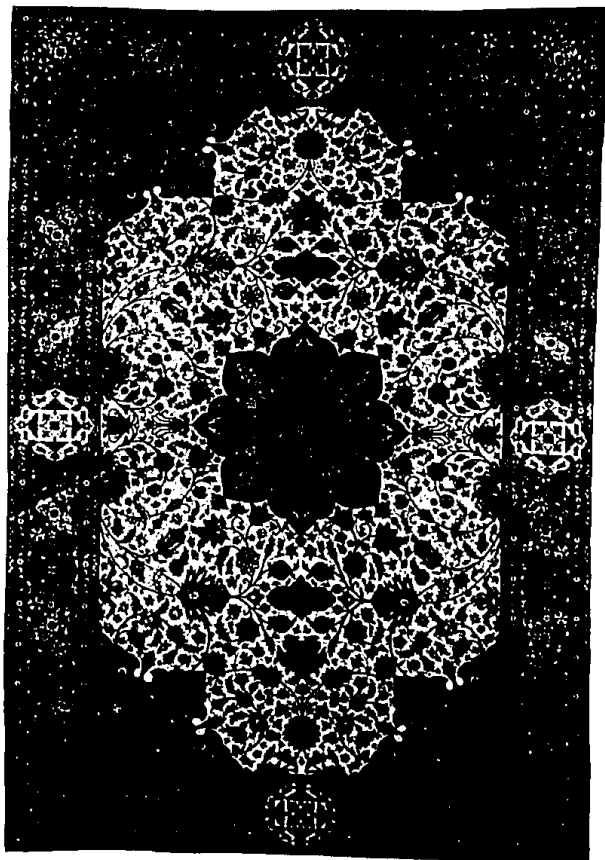
Together we can make a difference.

Betty Nicolay is a Farmington Hills resident and the general chairman of Farmington Families in Action.

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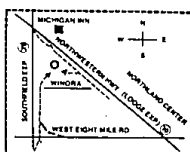
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