

MICHIGAN MAN NEWSLETTER

FEB. 1, 2005

Hello Everybody,

Well, a thousand apologies for last month's remiss. As some (most) of you know, I have been working on a book for two years now. I've never tackled such a complicated task in my life. To sum it up it's about several things rolled into one story taking place between the mid-1960's and the mid-1970's: basketball, social change, Michigan State University and a former coach of the Spartans, Gus Ganakas, my experiences in race relations, all told from an occasional first person point of view. It's been taking a lot of my time and I apologize for last month ... not that I thought a lot of you sat waiting in anxious anticipation, but I just felt I owed you a small explanation. Anyway, this month's column, which appeared last week in the Straitsland Resorter, (www.resorter.com) is

related to my book. Basketball and playing time.

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But first ... a short joke. Again, prefaced with the actual set-up.

I was playing at the Noggin Room of the Perry Hotel where, gratefully, a lot of “families” dine. I usually try to get kids up on stage to sing or dance or tell a joke. Grandma and Grandpa as well and Mom and Dad looked particularly pleased when a their eight year daughter stepped to the microphone and exclaimed, “I’ve got a joke.”

Sheepishly, she scanned the crowd and said in a sudden and precocious manner, “Two muffins were in a an oven and one says to the other, ‘It sure is hot in here.’” She paused perfectly for the punch line.

“Then the other muffin replied, ‘Holy crap!!! A talking muffin!!!’”

Grandma and Grandpa damned near spit and Dad took a quick gulp of his water. Mom stepped to the stage and pulled their little darling back to

her seat. I thought it was a great joke. So did everybody else but apparently Dad thought it was inappropriate for a minister's daughter to use the word "crap." Well, as the comics say, "funny is funny."

The column ...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICA???

What's wrong with America? I'll tell ya what's wrong with America ... my kid's on the bench.

Well, not so much that he's on the bench but the attitude that it's a serious problem bordering on catastrophe if he is. It's not exclusive to the hardcourts of northern Michigan. It's a malady that seems to be sweeping across the country. To sum it up and cut to the chase it's all about the minutes.

Perhaps this entire playing time dilemma started with my generation. Ours was a demographic inhabited by latent and hedonistic dreamers who cried for peace, love and understanding and were out to change the world. Most of us gave up and turned the process inward thinking that if we treated ourselves well and manufactured better self-concepts the world would in turn, treat us better. The "we" generation quickly and without much discussion became the

"me" generation. Along with it came an innate sense of entitlement. Thank you, Dr. Spock.

Now, as the spontaneity and joy of youth is replaced with the paperwork of legal liabilities, lock-stepped organizational protocol, butt-covering due process, and the tiptoeing of politically correct conformity we somehow think our kids deserve more than they get. It's as if there is a code written somewhere that says your child will not only make the team, he will get the opportunity to play and this is how much he will play. We even give them ribbons, medals and other assorted awards celebrating ... well, I'm not sure what we're celebrating. Mediocrity? No one should get an award for being a C student. Perhaps outstanding effort is what we should look for but shouldn't we expect that? Shouldn't we reassure them instead and tell them it's great to be the star, get the adulation and attention but you can contribute in other ways. You don't need a certificate or a ribbon. I'm afraid it's become a public relations triad between the kids, the parents and the schools. As long as everybody's happy, everything is all right. We've become delusional. Believe me, there are no guarantees. Get used to it.

The world is a tough and often cruel place that chews up some and spits out the rest. No one goes unscathed. It would be a mistake to enable a child saying, "you got cheated" just because she didn't get the playing time you thought she deserved. Deep down most adults know it doesn't work that way but being protective is a natural

instinct. We will teach our kids something but it's not necessarily the right thing. A child will grow up thinking you will always be there in his stead, making their decisions and paving their path. What a disservice that would be. It's a sad fact that most growth is precipitated by pain. Love and comfort are a resting place. Disappointment and discomfort are great motivators. Don't worry. At this stage of the game most of it's benign.

The limelight is a desirable albeit questionable commodity. The minutes you play in a game, the touches you get from the offense, the calls you get from the coach and cheers you get from the crowd; it's all very vaporous and is good for maybe a few goose bumps and, take it from me, a few dusty memories. As we move up the food chain team participation becomes less about recreation and more about the hard lessons for life. But let's back track for a moment. A kid doesn't get in a game and no matter if his team wins or loses he doesn't feel a part of it. That's his ego and that is something to be quickly and sharply dismissed. You tell him team effort is not just the players on the floor. You tell him that working in preparation for the game is as important as the game itself. If he is relegated to the bench he has to, number one, be supportive of the team in spirit and in voice and, number two, if he doesn't like the bench, figure out how to get off it. Those are the two lessons parents should relay to their child. It's not tough love .. it's real love.

Sure, you will share some of the hurt and disappointment but kids are more resilient than we give them credit for. Most of the time it's our disappointment that sets them off and they often know the pecking order better than we do.

Maybe that's what's wrong with America. As a nation we are so blessed and more fortunate than the rest of the world we take the good things for granted. Consequently, we tend to think we all deserve more than we get. And when we don't get what we think is fair it's easy to ignore the common good for what we as individuals want.

I had to ask my dad what it was like driving to East Lansing for every home game my sophomore year in college knowing that the chances of me getting in the game were pretty slim. His candor really didn't surprise me.

"Well, don't take it wrong, son. I liked to see you play but first and foremost I was there for the team."

Wise words from the greatest generation.

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My schedule

FEBRUARY

WEDNESDAY 2/16 & 2/23 O'TOOLE'S IN NOVI 9-1

THURSDAY 2/3 NOGGIN ROOM IN PETOSKEY 8-11

THURSDAY 2/10 & 2/17 DICK O'DOW'S IN BIRMINGHAM 9-1

FRIDAYS 2/4, 2/11, 2/18, 2/25 FOUR GREEN FIELDS IN ROYAL OAK 9-1

SATURDAY 2/12 & 2/19 NUB'S NOB IN HARBOR SPRINGS 3-6

SATURDAY 2/26 HOOPS IN AUBURN HILLS 9-1

MARCH

WEDNESDAY 3/2 & 3/23 O'TOOLE'S IN NOVI 9-1

THURSDAY 3/3 & 3/24 DICK O'DOW'S IN BIRMINGHAM 9-1

THURSDAY 3/10 & 3/31 NOGGIN ROOM IN PETOSKEY 8-11

ST. PATRICK'S DAY 12-4 O'TOOLE'S IN NOVI & 6-10

O'TOOLE'S IN ROYAL OAK

FRIDAYS 3/4, 3/11, 3/25 FOUR GREEN FIELDS IN ROYAL OAK

FRIDAY 3/18 DOHERTY HOTEL IN CLARE 9-1

SATURDAYS 3/5 & 3/26 HOOPS IN AUBURN HILLS

SATURDAY 3/18 THUNDER BAY RESORT IN HILLMAN,
MICHIGAN

ANOTHER JOKE

BY FAR, MAY FAVORITE FUNNY IN A LONG, LONG TIME ...

A monkey was smoking a joint up in a big tree in the middle of the jungle. A chameleon walking by yelled at the monkey, "Hey monkey!!! Whaddaya doin'?"

The monkey looked down and said I'm somkin' a joint. Come on up."

Soon the chameleon and the monkey were so high they could hardly move. The chameleon

commented, "This is the best stuff I've ever had."

"Good shit, ain't it?" replied the monkey.

The chameleon nodded and said, "I've got cotton mouth. Let's go to the river and get a drink."

The monkey shook his head and said, "I'm too high to move. You go on."

So the chameleon climbed down the tree and found his way to the river where he met up with a big crocodile. The crocodile eyed the chameleon and said, "Chameleon, you look higher than a kite. Where'd ya get it?"

The chameleon replied, "The monkey had some good shit up in that big tree in the middle of the jungle."

"Do ya think he'd share some?" asked the crocodile.

"I'm sure he would," stated the chameleon.

So the crocodile found his way to the big

tree in the middle of the jungle and looking up saw the monkey relaxing and just buzzing away. "Hey monkey!!!" yelled the crocodile.

The monkey looked down in amazement and said, "Shit!!! How much water did you drink?"

I love stoner humor.

THAT SAME OLD CAVEAT; IF THIS IS A BAD ADDRESS TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER ADVISE ME OF THE CHANGE OR TO DROP YOU AND I'LL DO IT, POST, HASTE.

Well, until I see you next time, be well and drop a line once in a while.

THIS ISSUE BROUGHT TO YOU BY SNOW SNAKES, AND WE GOT 'EM