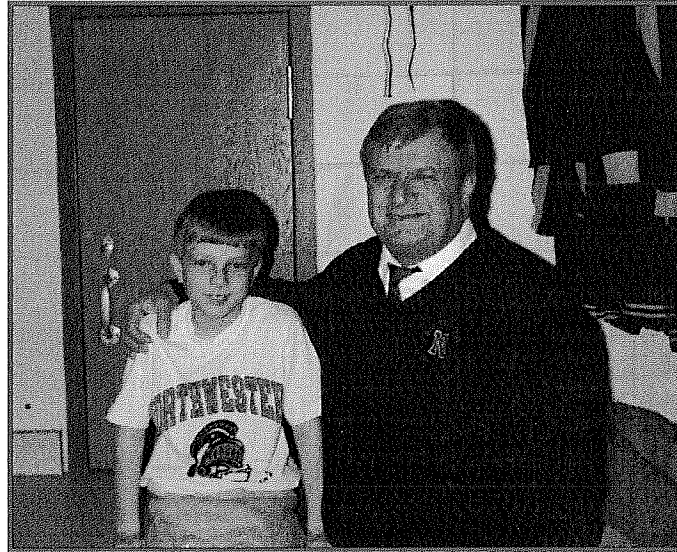


"A Heart of Gold!"

Coach Jerry Kruse

1933-1996



(Coach Kruse and D. Sievert in 1988)

Coach Kruse's Influence & Encouragement of
Ministry-Minded Men
(And Trojan Basketball Highlights)

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Introduction

It has been twelve years since *Cheer for Old Northwestern* echoed off the gym walls at Northwestern College (NWC) in Watertown, Wisconsin. While the days of NWC basketball move further into the past, its memory still lives on. Unforgettable games, antics by the cheerleaders and the fan support for Trojan hoops all come to mind. Still even more memorable is the man who patrolled the sidelines from 1981 to the final buzzer in '95. Who can forget the man with the gruff exterior, but the heart of gold? Who can forget Coach Jerry Kruse?

As we take a trip back to the "NWC days" at 1300 Western Avenue, we find a man who didn't put much stock in wins and losses. Instead, Coach Kruse "combined his love for sports with encouragement for ministry."¹ And ministry is exactly why Northwestern existed in the first place. Former NWC President, Carleton Toppe, explains: "The Northwestern College athletic department has pursued its athletic records and championships, but it has kept the eyes of even its best athletes trained on the goal of the Christian ministry."² For fourteen years at NWC, Coach Kruse held firmly to that motto. He coached basketball, but more importantly he encouraged for ministry. Coach "saw the bigger picture"³ and "had a great perspective—he knew the life of the Lord's Church always trumped basketball."⁴ As we move forward, we will review the Jerry Kruse Era at Northwestern College and consider his influence among ministry-minded men.

¹ Dan Rautenberg - NWC 1992-1995.

² Carleton Toppe. *Holding the Course: NWC 125*. Milwaukee: NPH, 1990.

³ Paul Waldschmidt (1990-1994) - Paul comments, "He understood there was something bigger than him or us at work at NWC. He saw the bigger picture - in that his program was not ultimately about W's and L's, but about shaping the characters of men. His personal encouragement to me is near the top of the reasons why I am in the ministry today."

⁴ Wayne Shevey (1995-1999) - Wayne adds: "Coach was loyal and faithful to his Savior and to his players."

1933 ~ 1961

Jerome L. Kruse was born September 10, 1933 in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Jerry was the son of William and Linda Kruse and grew up in Oakfield. His dad was a blue-collar stone quarry worker and his mother worked in a flower shop. He went to public grade school,⁵ but attended Sunday school and confirmation classes at St. Luke's in Oakfield where Clarence Koepsell served as pastor. Upon graduation from Oakfield High School, Jerry enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and graduated in 1955. He told *The Black & Red* (September 1981), "When I went to Oshkosh, I originally enrolled in engineering, because I like math and science, but in my junior year I switched to education." Following two years (1955-1957) of service in the United States Army,⁶ his first job opportunity took him to no-man's land in Escanaba, Michigan (UP). From 1957-1959, Jerry was a "Yooper" serving as a public school teacher and a faithful member of Salem Lutheran Church.

It was a phone call that landed him "downstate" and into the service of a WELS congregation. Near the end of the 1959 school year, the pastor from St. Stephen's Lutheran in Adrian, Michigan made a phone call to the pastor of Salem in Escanaba seeking names of qualified men who might fill his principal vacancy. Jerry's name was passed on and soon he was "hired" as St. Stephen's principal for the 1959 school year. Not long after his hiring, Jerry became synod certified in 1961 and was formally issued a call.

It was ironic (seeing that Coach was quite the match-maker himself) that Mr. Tolford from Adrian attempted to match up his daughter, Judy, with the new single principal. At her father's urging, Judy and Jerry began dating and were married on August 5, 1961 in Adrian on a

⁵ St. Luke's in Oakfield did not have a grade school until 1976.

⁶ Jerry was stationed in Louisiana and served during peace time at the tail end of the Korean War.

day that was "hotter than the dickens" as Judy recalls. The Lord blessed Jerry and Judy with two boys, Paul and Steve.

An Absolute Saint

Coach's better-half, his wife Judy, had a wonderful influence on her family, but she also left a lasting impression on the Northwestern boys. This fine Christian example should not be overlooked. Jeff Mahnke (NWC 1986-'90) says: "Behind every good man is an even better woman and Judy is a sweetheart." She may have been referred to as "that woman" by Coach, but to everyone else she was a "saint."⁷ Judy was certainly an active lady on the Northwestern campus. She served for numerous years as a Prep (NPS) P.E. instructor, a cheerleading coach and was also the "mom of sorts for the co-eds who attended NPS. Gals like Ellen Balge and Deb Ulhorn (now Rothe) thought the world of her...as did so many others."⁸ Coach Dennis Gorsline, the long-time NWC football coach, shared a quaint office with Judy for ten years and has nothing but admirable things to say about "the saint" with whom he never once had a disagreement.

Judy did share common traits with her husband...they possessed hearts of gold, would do anything for anybody, and had a passion for the ministry. But she didn't share his gruff and often stubborn demeanor. This was certainly not lost on the students. "Mrs. Kruse supplied the external approachability that Coach sometimes lacked. Coach was blessed to have her," comments Steven Lange (NWC 1989-'93). Phil Hirsch, a former Trojan player and also assistant coach with Coach Kruse, adds: "Judy is the definition of a faithful Christian woman. She handled his rough edges with grace and a sense of pluck that one simply had to admire. Judy is in a class by herself."

⁷ Nearly every person interviewed expressed this exact feeling. Wayne Shevey says, "Even though he would make himself sound important by calling Judy, "Woman," you knew she ran his show."

⁸ Ken Brokmeier - NWC 1980-1984, also NWC tutor 1988-1990.

Along with her Prep duties, Judy had the "24-7-365" job of keeping Coach in line.⁹ "She put up with a lot from both Coach and the guys, but you could tell she loved every minute of it."¹⁰ Judy was a loyal fan of Trojan Basketball traveling to nearly every game to offer her support. In keeping with her husband's style, she was most concerned that the boys concentrate on ministry. She takes great pride in the many men who are now serving as pastors and enjoys hearing them preach.

Judy also served as a fine Christian example for the NWC guys seeking life-long mates. Sam Hacker (NWC 1991-'95) echoes what many former Trojans thought: "One of the best examples of a Christian wife that I have ever seen!" Ken Brokmeier also adds: "Judy was a special lady. She was an example of what it meant to be the wife of a called worker. I think there were plenty of guys who could clearly see that. Judy served her Savior in a real way by simply being a helper for Jerry. I'm sure Coach would say (with most of us pastors), 'God blessed me with a very understanding, supportive and patient wife - which is far better than what I deserve.'"

Love for Ministry and On to MLS

One mystery that still exists is where did Coach Kruse get his passion for promoting the pastoral ministry since it was never "engrained" in him by attending a Lutheran grade school, high school or college? Judy says, "For some reason, he had a real love for ministry. Where exactly this came from I don't know." Perhaps this came from Pastor Koepsell at his hometown church in Oakfield?¹¹ Whatever the origin, his genuine love for gospel ministry was clearly evident. "Coach was not a pastor. Yet he very obviously held pastors and the men training to be

⁹ Todd DeNoyer - NWC 1985-1989.

¹⁰ Joel Heckendorf - NWC 1993-1995 and Steven Pagels (NWC 1990-1994) each echoed this sentiment.

¹¹ Speculation from Judy Kruse.

pastors in high regard. He clearly took seriously his role in helping train our future pastors and treasured that role."¹²

Jerry took on that role (of training future called workers) as he accepted a call to Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) in Saginaw, MI while serving in Adrian. During a January 1966 snowstorm, the Kruse family packed up their belongings and trekked north. (Actually this was the second time Principle Kruse was called to MLS. The first time he returned the call because it was poor timing as there was no one to fill the administrative role at his grade school. This second call was issued in early winter, during the time when WELS teachers could receive calls year round, and Jerry accepted because St. Stephen's had a suitable replacement).

As the Kruse family settled into their new surroundings, Jerry began his call at MLS and "Would you believe," remarks Judy, "they had him teaching religion!" (Surprising for those of us who knew Coach!) He also taught math, science and coached each season.

Jerry didn't wait until his Northwestern days to begin encouraging and influencing men for ministry. That began in Saginaw and he left an impact on a former MLS Cardinal football star and current WELS pastor. Bill Heiges can recall many "Kruse stories"¹³ from the gridiron, but makes sure to add:

Coach Kruse is one of the biggest reasons I went into the ministry. My goal in high school had always been to play for the University of Michigan (Bill did have a chance to walk-on), but was injured most of my senior year. Coach knew this (that it would be a difficult road to playing time at UM) so he arranged to take me and three other seniors to NWC for an extended weekend. He made sure I got hooked up with some of the football players at NWC for the weekend and a couple of them took me out to meet some of the guys. I never had so much fun and met so many great guys. That weekend gave me a pretty good idea of what life at NWC was like. After that weekend, my mind was made up. I was going to NWC. Coach Kruse knew what he was doing. There was more than one way to recruit for the ministry. He did more in his own down-to-earth style to influence me for the ministry than all the arguments from others. And the rest is history.

¹² Steven Lange - manager and "laundry guy."

¹³ Bill Heiges shares a story from freshman year - please see Addenda.

As I look back, I remember those days with fondness. And I thank God for all the people who were an influence in my life and were used by God to steer me on the path that would take me to Northwestern and the ministry. Coach Kruse ranks near the top of the list of people I thank God for.

The Kruse family made Saginaw their home until the close of the 1974 school year. It was then that the synodical prep school (NPS) from the other side of Lake Michigan issued Coach a call. Immediately the folks at MLS asked the Kruse's "when do we help pack your bags?"¹⁴ They surely sensed his interest in moving to Northwestern. Coach himself saw the move as sort of a challenge. He desired to make a difference at Prep, where he heard they had lousy school spirit.¹⁵

Coach Kruse undoubtedly influenced many men (besides Bill Heiges) for ministry during the eight and a half years he coached and taught at MLS. And he certainly encouraged ministry in his own unique way...whether on the football field, in the classroom or by pulling a student aside. Who knows how many lives he impacted in Saginaw? We do though, for certain, that God worked through his encouraging words.

Hornets First

The Kruse family headed to Watertown in the summer of '74, and Jerry began his tenure at Northwestern in the Prep department. (At that time, the faculties and coaches of NPS and NWC had a very good working relationship, often switching between College and Prep for both academics and athletics. Coach arrived for his first year at Prep the same year that William Zell began serving as president. This marked the first year that there was a separate president for NWC and NPS. Carleton Toppe, who previously served as President for both NWC and NPS, now became the College president, serving there until 1987.)

¹⁴ Judy Kruse comment.

¹⁵ Judy Kruse comment.

Similar to his MLS days, Coach was a man for all the seasons. In fact, in his first year at Prep he coached four sports: football, basketball, track and baseball. During his inaugural year, he even led the Hornets to a second place finish at State in baseball. Following seven years at NPS as teacher, coach and athletic director, Coach Kruse accepted a call to NWC.

The Black and Red Era

President Toppe once said, "The young men at Northwestern College who are aspiring to the parish ministry need teachers...who love the pastoral ministry."¹⁶ That statement very appropriately sums up Coach Kruse. President emeritus Robert J. Voss (1987-'93) remarks that Jerry "was one of Northwestern's most loyal supporters. He spoke glowingly of the ministry and I enjoyed working with him. I always knew where he stood."

Hoops Highlights, Encouragement & Eternal Salvation

The ever-intense coach began his college career in the fall of '81 leading the Trojans to an 11-10 season. He was privileged to have some very talented players on his first teams including Phil Hirsch, Chuck Westra (1325 career points, second all-time), Ken Brokmeier, Jim Danell and John Steinbrenner among others. Early highlights in the Kruse Era include summer trips to Europe, competition in the post-season tournament over Spring Break, a victory over DMLC in the '82-83 *Trojan Classic* and a first ever win over Lakeland during the same season, along with any Maranatha win.

The '85 season marked the dawn of the Phil Sievert era at NWC. Phil is recognized as the most talented player ever to don a Trojan uniform. Not only did he shatter records on the gridiron (he caught 199 passes for 2966 yards and 34 touchdowns); he also proved his greatness under gymnasium lights across the state. Sievert finished as the all-time scoring leader for Trojan hoops with over 1450 points. As great as Phil was on the field and in the gym, Coach

¹⁶ Toppe, pg. 19.

Kruse was more impressed with his ministry capability. It was written that Phil emulated the "Trojan spirit."¹⁷ What exactly does that mean? To Coach, that meant someone who played basketball with maximum effort, but at the end of the day he knew he was at Northwestern for a greater goal...to prepare for ministry. I personally remember Coach Kruse pulling me aside and urging me to follow in the footsteps of Phil. And he wasn't talking about being a great hoopster.

Ever since I was born, my dad took me to countless NWC events including basketball games. But as I entered second grade in 1988, I had the privilege of a lifetime! I became the "full-time" manager for the basketball team. (It certainly helped that my cousin and God-parent Ken Brokmeier was serving as assistant coach/tutor at NWC at the time so my dad trusted that I wouldn't get in the way.) Coach Kruse immediately befriended me and gave me duties. I had the task of handing out towels, filling water bottles, and rebounding shots. Days I wish I could have back. But it was at that early age that Coach began encouraging me for ministry. (It's never too early to plant the seed.) By allowing me to be a part of the team, he saw that I was being influenced every day by men such as Phil Sievert, Todd DeNoyer and Earle Treptow among others. Sure, I wanted to play buckets like them, but I also wanted to be a pastor like them.

It was quite a privilege for me to be around the gym for practice, but I also attended most every game - home and away. I fondly remember going to away games and boarding the blue vans for our trips to Marian or MSOE.¹⁸ I always made sure to get into Coach Kruse's van...even though he was a sporadic driver.¹⁹ Jeff Mahnke remembers those days: "On roadtrips, Coach would drive the van and Todd DeNoyer would sit in the driver's side seat telling Coach jokes and stories. Coach would laugh so hard that the van would cross the center line or

¹⁷ NWC basketball program insert. Senior day 1989. Please see Addenda.

¹⁸ At this time NWC was a member of the Lake Michigan Conference.

¹⁹ Driving stories - see Addenda for additions from Jim Danell and Todd DeNoyer.

go on the shoulder. Only by God's grace and the help of angels were we kept from crashing." (See addenda for more stories.) Judy recalls Jerry telling her that he knew it was a great thing for me (and the Sutton boys)²⁰ to hang around the guys because they would push me toward Northwestern, but he'd worry, "I just don't know what the players are telling those kids at the back of the bus?" Not to worry, Coach! I only remember the good things. I remember guys studying their Greek and Hebrew vocabularies and I distinctively remember them telling me how great NWC was and what an awesome privilege it will be to be a pastor. By allowing me such a big role in Trojan basketball, Coach was influencing me for ministry through his players. And all the while, he himself was also encouraging me on a path to being a pastor. During those seasons, while I was manager as a second and third grader, Coach also included me into the team picture. A true highlight for me! Coach presented me with a team plaque at the end of each season. Why did he do that? Not only was he being kind, but I'm certain he wanted me to remember the guys I "hung around" with. It was his small, subtle way of influencing me for ministry. Those pictures still hang prominently in my office. They're there as a reminder of all the men who influenced me to train for ministry - above all Coach Kruse - and also so I never forget the great times spent watching Trojan sports.

The Phil Sievert days at NWC were also filled with many team highlights. Wins over 'Natha, a 85-77 victory against a tough Lawrence team in '86-87, an 88-86 overtime win versus Edgewood²¹ in '88-89, two *WELS Classic* triumphs, a first ever win over Beloit and an unprecedented second place conference finish (2nd in conference in '87-88 and 2nd place at the

²⁰ Joel and Noah Sutton, my best friends, also attended many practices and games with me.

²¹ Jeff Mahnke remarks: All the starters but Phil Sievert fouled out. Sievert single-handedly won the game scoring 40+ points. I remember well Coach's simple advice at timeouts: Just get the damn ball to Sievert! Earle Treptow adds, "Coach was as fired up as I can ever remember. He was so excited by that win."

first annual Lake Michigan Conference Tournament in '88-89.)²² Earle Treptow, an intense and tenacious point guard from '87-89 recalls the "Best Ever" season ('87-88) of Trojan hoops in the college yearbook *Mnema*:

The buckets team surpassed everyone's expectations this year, putting together a 17-4 overall record, 11-3 in conference play. No team in the past forty years posted a better record. The Trojans were the first to win a *Classic* (it was in New Ulm), pulling it out with a buzzer beater²³ (by Phil Sievert). With an unprecedented second place conference finish, the Trojans carved a niche for themselves in Northwestern history. Coach Jerome Kruse, our fearless commander, was recognized as the conference's Coach of the Year.

Phil Kieselhorst and Steve Melso followed by Aaron Steinbrenner, Eric Miller, Mike Geiger, and Bart Brauer led the Trojans to battle in the subsequent years. While wins may not have been as numerous, in part due to injuries, Kruse's Trojans continued to play tough defense and stay in games. But again, wins and losses were not why the guys were at Northwestern. Ken Brokmeier, both a player and coach during the Kruse era offered this lasting memory: "It was great playing with some awesome men with whom I share a special bond of serving in the public ministry. I understand that basketball was an outlet for us, and an enjoyable one. School and preparing for ministry is still what it was all about." And dedicated team manager Sam Hacker observed: "The team was always a team. What was demonstrated to me was that there was something deeper than just being members of a team that brought the team together. It was the strong fellowship that we all shared in our Savior, Jesus." Brauer, an Oakfield native like Kruse, says: "Even though, of course, Coach wanted us to play good basketball, he very much knew we

²² Assistant Coach Ken Brokmeier remembers staying up with Coach K. pretty late watching film of Concordia and the next day putting in new plays and Coach convincing "the boys" it would work. The following day we played CU - caught them off guard and beat them (97-89 in OT). It was a real highlight for the team.

²³ Steve Melso (1987-1991) remembers fondly: "I believe Bethany was ranked in the top 5 in the nation for Junior Colleges. We were down by one with 2 seconds left. Todd DeNoyer threw the ball in to Phil Sievert (it was intended for me- I still don't know what Todd was thinking). Phil cut in front of me, grabbed the ball, shot, and scored as time expired. The entire student body mobbed us on the floor. Coach Kruse was crying and saying over and over "I love you guys."

were students first, preparing for the important work of gospel ministry." Certainly well said, and an excellent reflection of Head Coach Jerry Kruse.

One reminder to the players wearing the black, red and white of NWC of their real purpose for being on campus came from Coach Kruse after an exceptionally poor game. The following quote could very well have been said after many Trojan defeats (which exact game it happened after, I'm not sure). "Following the game, Coach came back to the locker visibly upset. He ranted, 'Men, it is a good thing that your eternal salvation didn't depend on how you played tonight, or we would all be in trouble.'²⁴

We should include one final Trojan basketball tradition and piece of encouragement from Coach that I, along with many former players fondly recall. After every game...win or lose..."Coach would go through the whole locker room and shake each player's hand and say 'thanks for playing hard, nice effort etc.' His handshake was sincere and he would look you in the eye. He loved us and we loved him."²⁵

Waved Off...the Chase

Eric Miller (NWC '88-92) was a "lunch-pail" bruising forward for the Trojans during the lean years. Beating DMLC, WLC or MBBC would classify a season as successful. In the midst of a long '91-92 campaign in which NWC notched only one victory, a nightmare startled both Miller and the Trojan faithful.

An early season game versus MBBC at "the Barn" in Watertown resulted in a four point defeat. In February, the Crusaders came across town for the rematch. For many, the exact play-by-play details are fuzzy. Looking to send the game into overtime (NWC was down 70-68);

²⁴ Ken Brokmeier and Chuck Westra (1980-1984) quote this memorable Kruse line.

²⁵ Both Jeff Mahnke (quote), Phil Sievert, Ken Brokmeier and others relayed this great memory.

Kruse²⁶ drew up the perfect play. It went off as planned. Miller picked for Erich Zellmer cutting to the left side of the bucket, Troy Heiman lofted the pass and Zellmer banked it in for two! The packed house went crazy, the Trojans thought overtime ensued. But wait...a hearing impaired official thought the buzzer sounded before the shot was released and mistakenly waved the shot off good as he went tearing toward the ref's locker room. "The gym was in utter chaos as the likes of Dean Lindemann and the whole NWC student body was in an uproar."²⁷ Following the zebra's mad-dash, everyone remembers "the chase." Without hesitation, Coach Kruse bolted cross-court in hot pursuit of the erring official. He didn't like to see "his boys" cheated. And he especially didn't like losing to 'Natha. "He yelled through the door at that ref for about ten minutes."²⁸ Soon the video was gathered and the Trojans assembled in the "Black and Red Room" to view the evidence. Also in the room was the other official who worked the game. It didn't take him long to admit that his partner made a mistake. The shot should have counted! It's a good thing eternal salvation wasn't at stake, just city bragging rights.

Every game with MBBC was an intense rivalry, usually sparked by humorous cheerleading antics and excellent crowd support,²⁹ but this one will forever be a nightmare. (Eric Miller's version of the event, titled "The Trial," from the NWC's student body publication, *The Black and Red*, is certainly worth reprinting. Please see the Addenda.)

The Matchmaker

Jerry was truly blessed to marry "Saint Judy." And so he desired that others, especially "his boys," find a suitable companion. Judy recalls Jerry setting up students together for dances

²⁶ Or was it the players who suggested the play???

²⁷ Ken Brokmeier, watching as a fan, recalls the nightmare.

²⁸ Sam Hacker comment. Sam was recognized in *The Black & Red* (May 1995) as "best known as the adopted son Coach Kruse. Sammy's work as basketball manager and equipment manager has made him an integral part of sports at Northwestern."

²⁹ Many remember the "Red Rover" cheers directed at the MBBC cheerleaders or Wayne Shevey and others being reprimanded during a one point loss at "the Barn."

during his MLS days. And that didn't stop in Watertown. Because NWC was an all-male college, Coach had to be creative in finding men a "good pastor's wife." Dan Rautenberg recalls Coach's influence as "Matchmaker."

The biggest impact Coach Kruse had on my life has little to do with sports. As a young freshman football player, I and my teammates were getting prepared for back-to-back away games in Minnesota (against NWC-Roseville and DMLC). But what concerned Coach Kruse as much as (or more than) the football games were the fact that his players (Coach was NWC's OL coach) were going to have two quality opportunities to meet good young WELS ladies. One day at practice he told his O-line to huddle up. In no uncertain terms, he told us that a pastor required a good Christian wife and it was our collective task to help each other. He then proceeded to have each one of us list some names of some quality Christian ladies at DMLC who would be "good pastor's wife-material" for one of the brothers. After some discussing and matching he gave out assignments to some of the attached brothers to work the phones and their connections so that everyone had a date for at least one of the weekends. His choice for my blind date was a young pastor's daughter and MLS graduate from Saginaw named Katie Bivens. Coach Kruse took it upon himself to not just follow up with me on the progress, but also to seek out Katie's mom at some WELS gathering a few months later and put in a good word for me. We didn't know it then, but that blind date would eventually lead to marriage and wonderful children!

Also Coach often attempted to set up Tim "Judge" Wempner with dates. It's written in *The Black & Red* in May 1990: "Tim's buckets coach (Kruse) for the last four years has had quite an influence on his life, and Tim attributes all his dating success to Coach Kruse." No doubt, Coach had his hand in many more Trojans finding suitable helpers - (I'm sure there are more stories out there to be told).

More Hats

Jerry not only wore the "hat" of matchmaker at NWC, he was also a mathematics teacher,³⁰ athletic director since 1985, Lake Michigan Conference commissioner, and the "financial aid guru" on the Watertown campus. Another subtle, yet significant way that Coach

³⁰ Steve Pagels - NWC 1990-1994 comments: Coach Kruse was not just my coach and my boss, he was my college freshman math teacher. And let's just say that he should have stuck with coaching. He didn't like it very much when his students would correct him.

Kruse influenced men on their pursuit of the ministry was "if a guy needed money for tuition, Coach would help him find work."³¹ He didn't want money to be a factor for students leaving NWC. Judy comments: "Who knows? He probably gave guys money without me knowing. But he wanted them to continue their ministry training." Coach employed guys as equipment managers, laundry guys, scorekeepers and sports information directors (SID) on campus. In addition, he had a very good relationship with the Watertown Park & Recreation Department. Numerous NWC students found well paying jobs working chain-gangs for Watertown Gosling football games or refereeing local sporting events. Sam Hacker simply states an everyday truth about Coach's heart of gold: "He cared for us."³²

Ministry-Minded

What would Coach Kruse most want to be remembered for? "His top priority was ministry. He just loved ministry," commented Judy. Pastor Don Sutton, who preached for Coach's funeral, stated his influence in these words: "He recruited at NWC; but this recruitment was for the ministry. Young men who played under and learned from Coach Kruse, he loved it when you came to NWC and decided to play basketball. But he was happier that you decided to pursue the ministry. That's what God wanted him to recruit for." And recruit for ministry is what he did, in his own unique way and at each of his calls...especially at NWC. Phil Hirsch pictures Coach's unique style of encouragement. "He encouraged fellas in his own Jerry Kruse way; not in some fake "Jesus loves you" way that was dripping with pancake syrup and was just

³¹ Dan Rautenberg comment.

³² Sam Hacker relates the story that Coach hated him working at Wal-Mart because he wasn't eligible for a work-study job. "So Coach told me I wasn't allowed to work there anymore, and would find me a job in the athletic department. He created a new job with money coming from the athletic budget and not the work-study program so I could work on campus. He knew that job would serve me better in my studies and fellowship with other students, and did what he could to help."

a repulsive after too much of it. He's a prime example of a guy understanding that he fit somewhere in the grand scheme of ministry. And he served so faithfully doing it."

Coach Kruse indeed "had a heart for the students and players that could not be matched. You had no doubt about his love for NWC and the pastoral ministry."³³ Coach "built the ministry up"³⁴ both on and off the court. Ken Brokmeier remembers sharing the captain duties with Chuck Westra and meeting with Coach during try-outs one year. "I recall Coach talking to us about a player whom he was struggling whether to keep or cut. One of the questions he did pose with regard to that individual was: 'Do you think keeping him on the team will help keep him on track for his preparation for ministry?'" Chuck Westra further adds; "In some tangible and in some intangible ways, Coach Kruse help us to see that ministry was at the heart of the Northwestern experience."

Late in the '88-89 season, the Lord called Coach's Kruse's mother home to heaven. After practice, the team boarded the blue team vans and went to the visitation. "Coach got pretty emotional when he saw us all walk in. And then we played WLC the next day and got spanked 83-61. Everything, including the loss was put into perspective when we had a team meeting the next practice after the funeral. Coach sincerely commented, 'Men, what that pastor did for me and my family for my mother's funeral is really what it is all about. You guys finally are not here to play basketball. You are here to prepare for the ministry so that you can do that very thing for others.' Those words left an impression on the young men from NWC that day."³⁵

Coach sought to influence and encourage for the public ministry in a variety of ways. Coach felt that it was very important to consistently schedule the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (Mequon, WI) for an annual hoops game. He saw the importance of the interaction between the

³³ Joel Heckendorf comment.

³⁴ Coach Gorsline comment.

³⁵ Ken Brokmeier comment.

men and the influence and encouragement a Seminarian could give a Trojan. "In my days, he would tell us to make sure to tell all the guys to have their homework done on the day we played the Seminary, so that if we were invited out afterward for a beer, there would be nothing to hold us back."³⁶ Furthermore, at the end of each year, he would always hold a steak dinner at his house to show his appreciation to the players. He wanted them to know that he cared for them and there expressed his desire that they keep up on their studies...as well as find a good pastor's wife. He also showed up at evening chapel or out in some local congregation when one of "his boys" preached to offer his support. Judy remembers traveling around to different congregations each summer. One player/jokester that Coach had a special bond with was Todd DeNoyer. And Judy remembers Jerry making a point to make it to his first public sermon at St. Matthew's in Iron Ridge, Wisconsin. Certainly, Jerry was extremely proud that Todd had continued on to the Seminary. Todd says, "Coach kept me in school! I had no desire to be a pastor. I struggled with the grades and he helped keep me eligible. He always stuck up for me no matter the situation. He played a key role in keeping me at Northwestern." Furthermore, Jerry and Judy always made a point to attend the Seminary graduation each May and congratulate the guys. Some, no doubt, who walked under the arch because they were tremendously influenced and encouraged by Coach Kruse.

One final "unique" way in which Coach influenced others for ministry was at the annual *Lutheran Invitational Basketball Tournament* (LIT) hosted by NWC in Watertown. Eight area Lutheran high schools intensely competed over three days. Jerry was the organizer of the tourney and often felt frustrated with all the duties. (Good thing he had an "assistant athletic director" in Mrs. Barb Gorsline to help make things flow smoothly!) Specifically, he didn't much care for all the dance teams and finding a person to sing the National Anthem. Assistant

³⁶ Ken Brokmeier comment.

Coach Ken Brokmeier one day kidded to Jerry that the Trojan Hoops team could sing the Anthem before the championship game. Ken says, "Before I knew it, I was directing the team! Coach saw it as an opportunity to show a packed gym that the men of NWC were gifted in many different ways. In his own little way, he saw it as a recruitment opportunity."

More Memories

Each player and student of NWC has their own memory of Jerry that will last a lifetime. One man comments: "What a dedicated servant. You always knew that his heart was set upon encouraging young men for ministry."³⁷ While another says, "I always wondered why the "Trojan" logo (a growling, gruff character) looked so much like Coach Kruse?"³⁸ Both are true and that's what made Coach so special and unique. He was a man who was passionate about ministry and "such a nice guy that he'd do anything for you, but he could also be ornery, stubborn, caustic, territorial, and impatient."³⁹ A former player recalls, "How could a guy who was so grumpy all the time, be so dearly loved by so many people? The grumpiness was only a thin shell...not too far underneath was a man who truly cared about people, his players, NWC and his Lord."⁴⁰

This "prickly, stubborn, yet at the same time caring and kind man"⁴¹ cannot be forgotten. His caring heart not only reached out to the students, but each year he also put "his boys" to work as he hosted Special Olympics sports tournaments on the Northwestern campus. This was a way for him to encourage a "servant-like" attitude among the NWC guys.

And on the other hand, his heart turned cold after a 1994 *WELS Classic* loss to WLC. He was so irate following the game that he immediately threw the second place trophy in the

³⁷ Joel Heckendorf comment.

³⁸ Steve Pagels comment.

³⁹ Don Sutton funeral sermon.

⁴⁰ Paul Waldschmidt comment.

⁴¹ Steven Lange comment.

garbage in the locker room. Furthermore, he told the team that they were not allowed to speak to any WLC people⁴² - (though he did give permission for Bart Brauer to talk with his WLC sister).

Bart Brauer provided the Trojan faithful with a lasting memory before the final buzzer in NWC history sounded. He single-handedly delivered the Trojans a victory in their last home game on the Watertown Campus. On that February 1995 day, Bart dropped in 45 points in a memorable performance. Also on that day, many folks were honored for being faithful and loyal supporters of Trojan basketball. And "*Cheer for Old Northwestern*" was emotionally sung for the final time at a Trojan basketball game.

Wearing a New Uniform

"But thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Corinthians 15:57) Those words, which are also engraved on Coach's gravestone, comforted the Kruse family, many friends and colleagues, former and current players and students who learned of Coach's "victory" on Easter Sunday, April 7, 1996. While many more memories could have been made and certainly Coach would have influenced more men for ministry; God had different plans and he called Coach home.

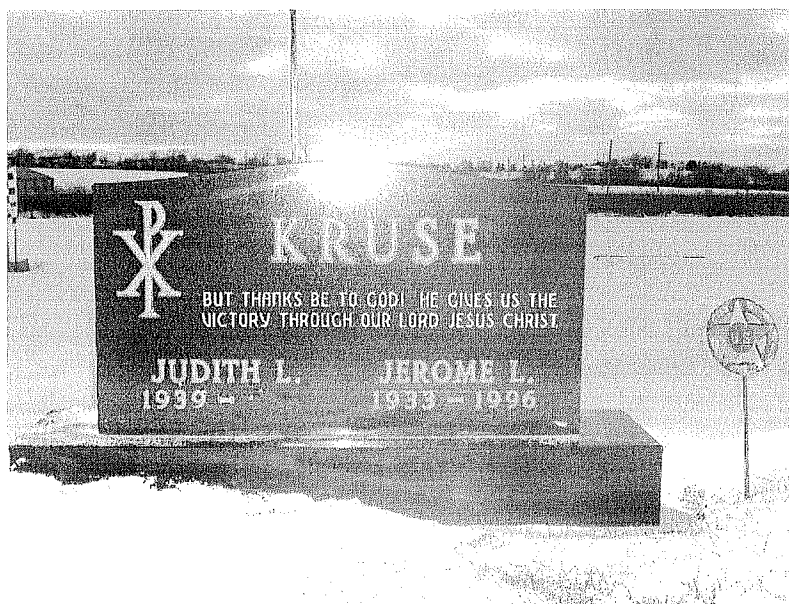
Rev. Don Sutton shared God's Word from 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 to a packed church at St. Mark's in Watertown on Friday, April 12. Fred Sievert (longtime friend and also assistant coach for one year), NWC maintenance men Mike Vesper and Tim Gutzdorf along with Professors Braun, Eickmann and Lindemann served as pallbearers. Amidst the sadness of the day, many of Coach's "boys" wonderfully sang "Beautiful Savior," "Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name" and "Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See" from the St. Mark's balcony. Also many "Kruse stories" were told by the men whom he had influenced toward ministry.

⁴² Bart Brauer and Joel Heckendorf relate this story.

And isn't it fitting that Coach got the final laugh, asks Joel Heckendorf? "We couldn't believe Coach was as close to Dick Bennett (former UWGB and UW Badger coach) as he claimed. Bennett sent flowers and showed up to the funeral!"

As many laughs, along with the wins and losses, which Coach and "his boys" shared, clearly their time together was most important because of the ultimate goal: ministry and finally heaven. "I believe God used a man like Jerry Kruse, "the General," to help mold and shape future leaders of his church who would lead by serving and proclaiming the gospel...a gospel that clearly tells us that our eternal salvation does not depend on the way we played basketball, as fun as it was at times. Our eternal salvation depends on Jesus who died, more than that, was raised to life and who is at God's right hand also interceding for us (Romans 8:34)."⁴³

So many guys truly will have Coach Kruse to thank when they get to heaven for influencing and encouraging them for ministry. I know I'll be in that line. Until then, Coach Kruse will not be forgotten. *Cheer for Old Northwestern!*



⁴³ Ken Brokmeier comment.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Coach Jerry Kruse...a very special friend who encouraged me for ministry and was unbelievably generous to me. I can't thank him enough for letting me be the "manager" for the Trojans. I still fondly remember the countless hours I spent in the NWC gym at practice, watching games, folding towels or simply hanging out in his office or with the guys...days which I will never forget. His influence on me is one reason why I will walk under the arch as a graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary on May 25, 2007.

Also, I recall Coach pulling me out of second grade to take me to the WIAA (Wisconsin boys high school) state tournament in Madison. I have not since missed a state tournament. Each year that I'm in Madison, I recall the great times of watching basketball with Coach and sitting in "the booth" at Jingle's.

Upon completion of this work, \$200 was donated to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in memory of Coach Kruse. The gift was placed into the scholarship fund that bears his name to encourage and support more men in the pastoral training.

Special Thanks

First of all, thank you to Mrs. Judy Kruse (aka the "saint") for all her input for this piece. Her love for the Trojans and her strong faith in her Lord will always be remembered.

Thank you, to all the former Trojans who influenced and encouraged me along the way, especially my cousin Ken Brokmeier. You're a huge reason I'm studying to be a pastor.

Thanks to my parents, Fred and Pat Sievert, for allowing me to follow NWC sports so closely - even to away games in Sheboygan and Fond du Lac.

Thank you, to those who helped me remember Coach Kruse through your correspondences:

Bart Brauer, Ken Brokmeier, Jim Danell, Todd DeNoyer, Coach and Mrs. Gorsline, Sam Hacker III, Joel Heckendorf, Bill Heiges, Phil Hirsch, Steven Lange, Jeff Mahnke, Steve Melso, Steve Pagels, Dan Rautenberg, Wayne Shevey, Frederick Sievert, Phillip Sievert, Earle D. Treptow, President emeritus Robert J. Voss, Paul Waldschmidt, Chuck Westra.

Bibliography

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Addenda

Following Coach Kruse's "victory" in April 1996, his former players and managers presented Judy Kruse with a beautiful plaque. It reads:

Prof. Jerome Kruse, Basketball Coach

Northwestern College 1981-1995

Martin Luther College 1995-1996

Judy Kruse

Thank you

...for supporting our coach, our brother in the faith, our friend, and our partner in the ministry of the Gospel.

...for granting him the freedom to work with us and to be such a blessing to us.

...for allowing him to demonstrate the joy that comes in serving others.

(The names of those players and managers who graduated from NWC or who played at NWC and were on track to graduate at MLC are engraved. * = name mistakenly omitted.)

I've added the current place of service, if available

1982

Phil Hirsch - Hope, Manhattan, KS

Mike Nitz - Cross of Glory, Peoria, AZ

Mark Wessel - St. John, Sparta, WI

1983

Jon Bitter - Resurrection, Rochester, MN

Ross Henzi - Trinity, Brillion, WI

John Parlow - St. Mark, Green Bay, WI

1984

Martin Bentz - Christ, Cambridge, MN

Ken Brokmeier - Our Savior, Brookings, SD

Chuck Westra - Christ Our Savior, Columbia, TN

1985

Dan Helwig - Peace, Livonia, MI

Duane Rodewald - Abiding Peace, Simpsonville, SC

Dave Rothe - St. Matthew, Oconomowoc, WI

Tim Satorius - Grace Lutheran, Falls Church, VA

Ross Stelljes - Living Savior, Littleton, CO

Kris Taves

Bill Werth - Abiding Faith, Smyrna, TN

1986

Jim Danell - Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN
Joel Gaertner - Faith, Fond du Lac, WI
John Nitz - Star of Bethlehem, New Berlin, WI

1987

Virgin Hanson - Mount Calvary, WI
Steve Raddatz - St. Mark, Lincoln, NE
John Steinbrenner - Cross of Christ, Boise, ID
Keith Wessel - Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

1988

Kevin Klug - Abinding Love, Loveland, CO
Tom Unke - St. Paul, Howards Grove, WI

1989

Todd DeNoyer - Good Shepherd, Deltona, FL
Joel Jenswold - Shepherd of Peace, Powell, OH
Jeff Gaertner
John Koelpin - Calvary, Dallas, TX
Erich Schaser - FVL, Appleton, WI
Phillip Sievert - Lord of Life, Thornton, CO
Earle D. Treptow - Zion, Denver, CO

1990

Jon Brohn - Salem, Stillwater, Minnesota
Jeff Mahnke - Christ the Lord, Clearwater, FL
Karl Schultz - Trinity, Kaukauna, WI
Tim Wempner - Our Savior Lutheran, East Brunswick, NJ

1991

Phil Kieselhorst - Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, OK
Steve Melso - Bethany, Manitowoc, WI
Dave Schleusner

1992

Pat Arndt
Eric Miller
Kevin Wattles - Grace, Falls Church, VA

1993

Mike Geiger - Tree of Life, Cary, NC
Aaron Steinbrenner - Peace, Hartford, WI
Steve Lange - Hope, Louisville, KY*

1994

Matt Guse - Beautiful Savior, Las Vegas, Nv
Troy Heiman - member at Redemption, Milwaukee, WI
Jon Micheel - Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, UT
Pete Prange - Jerusalem, Morton Grove, IL
Charlie Vannieuwenhoven - Living Savior, Tampa, FL
Paul Waldschmidt - Saint Mark, Normal, IL
Erich Zellmer
Steve Pagels - St. John's, Wauwatosa, WI*

1995

Bart Brauer - Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, Caledonia, MI
Sam Hacker III - Bethany, Gibsonia, PA
Wayne Shevey - Apostles', Dardenne Praire, MO

1996

Matt DeNoyer - Shepherd of the Hills, Duluth, MN
Andy Fix - Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, IA
Steve Meyer - Resurrection, Rochester, MN
Aaron Robinson - St. Croix, Minneapolis, MN
Paul Seager - Hope Lutheran (Henry Co. Mission), McDounough, GA
Jason Zahn - Hope, Irmo, SC
Tim Westendorf - Redeemer, Tucson, AZ
Tim Dolan - Luther Prep School, Watertown, WI

1997

Joel Heckendorf - St. Peter, Schofield, WI
+Andy Jacobsen+
Jon Scharf - Abiding Grace, Covington, GA
Kurt Schaser - Good Shepherd, Kearney, NE
Chip Wilke - Amazing Grace, Florence, KY

1998

Mark Gunderson - Messiah, Nampa, ID
John Mattek - Luther Prep School, Watertown, WI

Every time we Northwestern College basketball fans have entered this gym for an NWC game, we have seen a team we've grown to admire. Our team has played from its heart and, win or lose, they have always competed selflessly under an unparalleled aura of sportsmanship. Tonight will be no different.

Tonight will not be the same, however. Tonight we prepare to say good-bye. Four seniors will never again grace the Trojan floor in a Trojan uniform (so get out your cameras), and it is appropriate to issue a tribute in their honor. From all of us . . . to all of you. THANKS: Phil, Todd, John and Earle.

Phil Sievert is . . . well, spectacular. In his four years at Northwestern College, Phil not only shattered records on the gridiron--he caught 199 passes for 2966 yards and 34 touchdowns--but he also proved his prowess under gymnasium lights across the state. Sievert broke records left and right, the proudest of which may be his shattering of the school scoring record, which now stands at 1450 points and will rise with every basket Phil scores tonight.

Phil also basked in conference and state-wide recognition, earning a four-year membership not only on the Lake Michigan Conference All-Conference squad, but also a unbroken four-year stint on the Wisconsin Independent Colleges Association All-State team. In addition, Phil was honored with the Lake Michigan Conference Player-of-the-Year award in 1988, and his own teammates selected him as Most Valuable Player twice.

For a man of such prominence, Phil Sievert impresses us most by carrying humility and class right along with his gym shoes and uniform. He emulates success, the "team," and the "Trojan spirit."

Phil summed up his career in his own words. "The last four years have been a lot of fun mainly because of the teammates I have had the pleasure to play with. If I had to pick a particular moment that I found most memorable, it would either have to be our entire school plowing onto the floor at last year's Classic or it would be the many Maranatha games, simply because of the fan support coming from both schools."

Another mover on the Trojan team worked hard from day one to improve his game, and he turned into an ultimate scorer for Northwestern in this, his senior year. *Todd DeNover* received "Most Improved Player" status in his freshman year, and he never looked back. After scoring 95 total points in his first two years, Todd vaulted into prominence as a junior by averaging almost ten points a game.

Now a senior, Todd is averaging 49% from the field and has already sunk over 350 points this season. He makes use of a deadly three-point shot and a powerful baseline drive, always contributing a strong measure of consistency to the Trojan lineup. Looking back on his four-year stint with the Trojan basketball organization, Todd takes extra care to mention, "I'll never forget Coach Kruse."

Although outside shooters are essential to every basketball team, senior *John Koelbin* has proven that the inside tall guy can make a difference. John came into his own last year, when he grabbed 77 total rebounds and shot an incredible 62% from the field.

Although benched by an unfortunate injury early in his senior season, John came back and proved his importance to the overall game plan. Although he missed numerous games, John has managed to come back with a vengeance, sinking 67% of his shots and grabbing almost 70 rebounds. When asked to reflect on his basketball career here at Northwestern, John had this to say: "It was enjoyable to play with a group of excellent players and to have the opportunity to play on a team which put the emphasis on "team."

Earle Treptow emerged onto the basketball scene with surprising suddenness last season, but he proved that he was a basketball player to the core. Earle stunned opponents in his rookie junior year with tenacious defensive intensity and the uncanny ability to find the open man. For his efforts, Earle collected 95 assists and was selected for the Lake Michigan Conference All-Conference team.

In his senior year Earle has unleashed more of the same, much to the excitement of Trojan fans. So far Treptow has added 44 steals, 61 assists, and 110 points in his point-guard capacity for Northwestern, and he has contributed volumes more of enthusiasm and spirit. Earle has collected many fond memories during his two years of basketball, but he chose one as "most special." "I remember the Classic last year--how great the fans were before 'the shot' and how unbelievable they were after. I was proud to be part of the school, not just of the basketball team."

Earle, John, Todd, and Phil have all earned fond memories for themselves, and through the years they've been gracious enough to share them with us, the fans who loved to watch. Thank you, and may God grant you success in life as he has in college sports.

Jerome Kruse

A local funeral service for Jerome Kruse, 62, of 216 Summit Ave., New Ulm, Minn. and formerly of Watertown, where he had been a professor and athletic director for Northwestern College and Preparatory School, will be held at 11 a.m. Friday at St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church with burial in the Lutheran Cemetery.

Visitation will be from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday at the Hafemeister Funeral Home and from 9 a.m. until the time of service Friday at the church.

A funeral service will also be held Thursday morning in New Ulm, Minn.

Memorials may be given to the Martin Luther College-Studies in Pastoral Ministries Scholarship Fund; St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Ulm, Minn.; St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Watertown; and Lakeside Lutheran High School in Lake Mills.

He was born Sept. 10, 1933 in Fond du Lac, the son of William and Linda (Kollman) Kruse. He married Judith Tolford on Aug. 5, 1961 in Adrian, Mich. After marriage, they lived in Adrian, Mich., where he was principal of St. Stephen's Lutheran School. They then lived in Saginaw, Mich., where he served as a professor and coach at Michigan Lutheran Seminary. Later, they moved to Watertown and he served as professor and athletic director at Northwestern Preparatory School and Northwestern College. In 1995, they moved to New Ulm, Minn., where he was professor and athletic director at Martin Luther College. He was a member of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Ulm, Minn.

Survivors include his wife; two sons, Paul (Wanda) of Lake Mills and Stephen (Deborah) of Watertown; and one sister, Shirley of Fond du Lac.

Preceding him in death were his parents.

The Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the

paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; Thy rod and

thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence

of mine enemies: thou anointest my head

with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life: and I will

dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

IN MEMORY OF

Professor Jerome L. Kruse

BORN IN FOND DU LAC, WIS.
SEPTEMBER 10, 1933

PASSED AWAY EASTER SUNDAY
IN NEW ULM, MINNESOTA
APRIL 7, 1996

TIME AND PLACE OF SERVICE
FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 1996
11:00 A. M., ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

CLERGYMAN
REV. DONALD SUTTON

FALLBEARERS
FRED SIEVERT REV. JOHN BRAUN
MICHAEL VESPER REV. PAUL EICKMANN
TIMOTHY GUTZDORF REV. EDWARD LINDEMANN

INTERMENT
LUTHERAN CEMETERY
WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

ARRANGEMENTS BY
HAFEMEISTER FUNERAL HOME
WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 "This Funeral Is about a Uniform Change"
Funeral Sermon - Prof. Jerome Kruse - April 12, 1996
St. Mark's Lutheran Church - Watertown, WI - - - - - Rev. Don Sutton

INTRODUCTION

(Show the old NWC basketball uniforms.) Do you see these? These are parts of old uniforms that Coach Kruse gave to his ball boys (Dustin Sievert and Joel and Noah Sutton) just a few years ago. And I know these ball boys pretty well, and on occasion I see these uniforms being worn - once in a while even for a pick-up basketball game.

Uniforms - this is why we are here today. "No, you say to yourself, we are here because on Easter Sunday Jerry suddenly had a heart attack and died." Certainly this is true. But looking beyond the physical events and the medical reasons for Jerry's death, we see another reason, God's reason. Looking into the Word of God before us in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 let's think about the fact that **"THIS FUNERAL IS ALL ABOUT A UNIFORM CHANGE."**

1. A Needed Change

GOD RECRUITED JERRY

In yesterday's sports sections was the news that UW - Madison and UW - Milwaukee both landed sought-after recruits. As a college basketball coach one of the things that Jerry didn't have to do, was beat the bushes for guys to give scholarships to so that they could play basketball for NWC or MLC. He recruited; but this recruitment was for the ministry. Young men who played under and learned from Coach Kruse, he loved it when you came to NWC or MLC and decided to play basketball. But he was happier that you decided to pursue the ministry. That's what God wanted him to recruit for.

Once upon a time Jerry himself was highly recruited. Maybe you're thinking about his high school days - wasn't it at Oakfield High? No, I'm talking about way before that. I'm thinking about eternity. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ..... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit"* (Eph 1:4ff.) This means that God decided that he wanted Jerry on his team - the Holy Christian Church long before we knew Jerry or there was a Jerry to know. God chose Jerry in Christ; redeemed him in Christ; sanctified him through the Holy Spirit, bringing him to faith, cleansing him through Christ and setting Jerry apart for his team. Paul says that this is reason to praise God.

NO SIN IN GOD'S SIGHT

I remember when after I came back to Watertown to serve at St. Mark's, I was asked to play in a NWC College

intramural league. I thought it might be fun; besides, I needed the exercise. So I played. But Jerry said, "Not without the proper uniform. So I had to buy and wear one of these (Show old NWC phy-ed shirts).

The reason Jerry died is because God decided it was time for him to join God's heavenly team in God's heavenly city. That is where Jerry's soul is right now. He is among those praising the Lamb as described in Rev. 7. His soul is at peace. His tone is excellent; his pitch, good. But Jerry couldn't play on God's heavenly team in God's heavenly city without a change in uniform. (*Read v. 50 & 53*)

Jerry's earthly uniform was affected by sin. We all have it. We're born with it. That's what the apostle Paul was writing about when he said, "*You were dead in your trespasses and sins ... We were by nature objects of wrath (Eph2:1,3).*" This sin traces its origin back to Adam & Eve. We all have it. Jerry had. This is why not only could Jerry be such a nice guy that he'd do anything for you, he could also, be ornery, stubborn, caustic, territorial, impatient. This is what makes us that way too. Sin affected Jerry's soul and made him unacceptable to God. It affected his body too, making it unacceptable to God. That's why his body aged. That's why parts of his body ached and acted up. That's why your body experiences these things too. No one and nothing sinful can stand in the presence of God.

God provided cleansing for Jerry's soul, for your soul and my soul in Christ. "*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*" The story of Jesus - his holy life and death on the cross - is about Jesus bringing cleansing to our souls. (Expand - obedience, suffering, death, resurrection) God's gave Jerry's soul cleansing when he brought him to faith. God did this in baptism. God did this through faith. He dressed Jerry's soul in the holiness of Christ - a beautiful spiritual uniform. He gave Jerry the forgiveness of sins. He made his body the temple of the Holy Spirit and made him part of his team, the Christian Church here on earth.

But the body, that was still affected by sin. There had to be a change in uniform. This body had to die. (v.53). So God used death to bring about this change - a change that physically hasn't taken place yet.

2. A Change Jesus Will Bring About

RESURRECTION God, through Paul, sheds some light on this. "*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (v.51,52).*" Paul alludes to the last day, Judgment day, when Jesus returns. When Jesus comes again the dead will rise. Those who have died with no faith in Christ, what their bodies will be like...we do not know. The destiny of those bodies we know. Jesus said in John 5 that they will be raised to condemnation, the hell their souls experienced at death. Those who have died in the Lord, their bodies will be raised, glorified to be like Christ's glorious body (Phil 3). Jerry's body, this body, will then be raised and changed. The mortal,

will be immortal. The perishable - imperishable. The weak, will become strong.

VICTORY Paul says that when this happens, *"Then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Death will have no more effect on Jerry Kruse than on any other of God's people in the resurrection and the life everlasting. Rev. 21 reveals, "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (21:4)."*

A VICTORY CHEER One of the things that I know Jerry enjoyed in his coaching career, especially at NWC was the cheerleading squad - "The Rags". Since NWC had no lovely young ladies to cheer the team on, they often had to settle for some often big, bruising men who added new angles to cheerleading as they antagonized, generally with good taste, anyone they considered to be an adversary, from the opposing team, to the referees, etc. Paul says that when death is swallowed up in victory then "the rags of God's heavenly kingdom" may rightly taunt and antagonize death, *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death is your sting."*

3. A Change (and a Cheer) Christ Made Possible

Paul explains this victory and this cheer. *"The sting of death is sin the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (v.57)."*

With this picture Paul compares death to a bee or a scorpion. The deadly sting of death is sin and the strength or potency is the law. The point Paul makes is that with sin came death. (Gen. 3; Rom 5:12) The law proclaims the consequence of sin, its curse. *"The wages of sin is death - spiritual, physical & eternal."*

Jesus has removed the sting and strength of death by taking our sins upon him and suffering our curse. *"Christ redeemed (saved, bought us back) from the cruse of the law by becoming a curse for us. (Gal 3:13 Now as a result, as Paul wrote, "There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus."*

With Christ's death & resurrection, God delivered us from sins curse of hell; through conversion God delivered our souls from the curse of spiritual deadness. In the resurrection, God will deliver Jerry's body from the curse of physical death, his uniform will change and he will share the greatest final four victory celebration one could ever imagine.

4. The Meaning for You

(Read v. 58)

EXPLANATION Now we're told to stand firm in our faith. We're told to abound in the work of the Lord. And what is that work of the Lord: simply the gospel ministry. Going as Jesus said in the Great Commission...

EXHORTATION At a time like this we mourn and we are sad. You have lost a beloved family member. Many of you have lost a friend, a co-worker, a character. Yes, we have lost and

we are sad. But our Lord says, in view of the victory that I have brought into this world for my people even in the face of death, I want you to go on. I have left you here for a purpose. Judy, it will not be easy for you to live a different life without Jerry. There will be loneliness, sadness, different challenges that come with all kinds of decision making and having to do things, in a sense, by yourself. But you know that you are not by yourself. The Lord who has stood with you throughout your life and through these last days, will continue to stand by you and strengthen and protect you. And he will do that for you too, Steve and Paul, and for the rest of the family.

But God has still left you in this world for the purpose that with your lips and with your lives and that is to glorify your Lord and proclaim his name in all the different ways that he gives you the opportunities to do so. And the rest of us have the same opportunities and responsibility. And our Lord reminds us that even though sadness and troubles and problems may come our way, as in a sense, we are experiencing right now. Our labor is not in vain, because Christ has won the victory! He has provided the uniform. Amen.

Eric Miller - "The Trial"
The Black & Red - March 1992

"How do you plead?" Silence. "You," grumbled the judge, "how do you plead?" Several moments before, the defendant would have replied with a quick, cocky "Not guilty." The sickening self-assuredness of the man oozed from every step of his proud strut when he first entered the room. But that was before the full realization of the dangerous situation came crashing into his consciousness with one terrified look of recognition. "You're, you're the..." "That's right," growled the judge with a troll-like grumbling, "but you still haven't told me what you're plea is." "This isn't fair! How can I get a fair..." "Fair!" snarled the judge with a menacingly low rumble, "You have the audacity of trying to tell me what's fair after what you did! I'll tell you what's not fair..." The roar of the words releasing from his throat resembled the geyser's explosive stream of steam bursting from the ground. The shade of the defendant's complexion took a ghostly, almost corpse-like hue. The boastful, self-centered peacock had quickly been reduced to a cowering, whimpering rat who had his foot caught in a trap. "But you still haven't answered my question, you louse! What do you plead? Guilty or not guilty?" The likelihood of the once-proud man being able to answer this seemingly simple question decreased dramatically after the judge's last outburst. "Well, if you're not going to say anything, I'll answer for you. You're guilty," declared the judge returning to his normal volume of murmuring. "Now all that's left is to prove it. I'll be the judge and prosecutor, and you'll have to defend yourself. Now do you have anything to say for yourself?" "Wait a minute, this isn't fair!" "You're wasting time, answer the question." After a short pause of disbelief, the reasoning of the young man seemed to rebound slightly. Recognizing the precarious circumstances, he mustered his remaining courage and carefully chose his words. "My only defense is that the call was correct." "So does the defense stand?" "Yes." "You're dumber than I gave you credit for," the judge sneered. "Bring in the witnesses." The scene suddenly became all too familiar. Why did I have to relive this again? The opposing crowd was roaring in anticipation. Four seconds remained. Troy gathered up the inbound pass at half court. I became a helpless actor in the scene as I cut across the lane to set a crucial pick for Erich. Troy pulled up at the three-point line once again and rifled that perfect pass across the lane to Erich. It's good! The game's tied. Even in reliving it I couldn't contain my joy. But then, the inevitable. There he was. That disdainful peacock waving his wings, calling off the shot, ripping the game from our grasp. I didn't know a peacock could fly until I saw him take off out of the gym. And there was the judge scurrying after him with a quickness that I never would have guessed his body could obtain. But to no avail. Then as the scene switched back, my heart quickened as I finally realized that justice was going to be served. The judge would surely get his revenge. "Well, what do you have to say for yourself now?" the judge growled triumphantly. "Even you can see that you made the wrong call. He clearly got the shot off before the buzzer." The short burst of courage that the defendant had mustered to defend himself proved to be short-lived. After reviewing the evidence, he regressed to a mere shell of his former self. He barely managed a whining, "But that would have only tied the game. You might have still..." "We would have won!" snapped the judge. Besides, we're here to assess your guilt, and you've all but admitted to being wrong. So my verdict is guilty--prepare for sentencing." Although deep in his heart the defendant knew that a guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion, the news still made him cringe. "For single-handedly taking the all-out effort and hard work of twelve young men who laid their hearts on the line for that game and flushing it down the toilet, for dashing the hopes of a memorable come-from-behind victory for a team that has suffered a season of losses, and for stealing a Northwestern win." The judge

paused, savoring his next words, "I sentence you to death. The sentence is to be served as soon as the captain of the basketball team that you wronged determines how to end your miserable life." I hardly even noticed the hysterical ranting the defendant went into after hearing a sentencing nothing could have prepared him for. I was simply too caught up in the unexpected opportunity to extract my own little piece of revenge. How should I kill him? Should it be a long, drawn-out painful death, or should I send him quickly on his way? Being sort of a history buff I finally decided on a simple medieval beheading. The scene was quickly prepared. Just how I imagined it. The referee's head was held firmly on the block. The sharpened steel blade of my battle axe hung menacingly in the air. "Justice is finally served," I thought as the cold, hard edge cut cleanly through the air and...What's that noise?" I wondered as my bleary eyes scanned the darkened room. A mixture of the soothingly mellow music of Pink Floyd and the rhythmic whine of my alarm clock confronted my senses. As I sat up to turn off the alarm my half-conscious mind recalled parts of the dream. After spending a few minutes pondering the dream and piecing it back together, I suddenly remembered that it was time to get going. Time to get ready for the COS. Time to forget about the game. But as I grabbed my soap and towel on the way to the shower, I couldn't help wishing that I had set my alarm clock five minutes later."

List a word or a short phrase to describe Coach Kruse...
(A sampling of answers I received from former Trojans)

Public ministry supporter

Faithful

Caring toward players

Giving

Bear of a man with a heart of gold

Loyal and faithful to his Savior and to his players

One of the most memorable personalities I've ever met

Heart as big as the world

Big heart

Unique

A rough exterior but a heart of gold

Prickly, stubborn, yet at the same time caring and kind

He loved his boys!

Gruff exterior and soft interior

Intense

Classic Kruse Stories and Comments...(not included above)

Bill Heiges recalls his lasting memory of Coach Kruse from a football practice from freshman year at MLS: I got to practice late one day. The freshmen defensive backs and linebackers were doing being used by Coach Kruse for a skeleton drill against the first team varsity backfield. There were no linemen involved. I got into position and on the first play I got leveled by the blocking back as Mark Toepel (the RB) ran around me. So, on the next play I slipped past the blocking back and tackled Toepel at the line of scrimmage. Coach Kruse comes running up to me, throws his clipboard on the ground and yells at me, "What the hell do you think you're doing? What do you think you're doing tackling him?" I made the mistake of answering. I replied, "This is tackle football, isn't it?" BIG mistake. I totally lit Coach Kruse's fuse. You see, I missed the opening of the drill where the freshmen were told they were going to be used like dummies. They were NOT to touch the running back. Oops. Well, Coach Kruse NEVER forgets, ever. Two weeks later I got called away from the freshmen drills. Kruse decided that I would play the star running back for the upcoming opposing team. I played with the third team varsity offense running the opposing teams plays against our first team MLS defense. Kruse was in our huddle calling our plays. On my first run I actually gained 8 yards against our defense. I got 5 yards on my second carry. On the very next play - a straight dive into our line - I watched as our tackle, guard and center all pulled out and didn't block at all. I hit a wall of defensive players and got totally creamed. I mean they piled a mile high on top of me. I literally stumbled and weaved my way back to our huddle. Coach Kruse gruffly said, "The hole was there, where were you?" This time I replied, "I guess I was a little too slow, Coach." And ever since then Coach Kruse liked me.

Sam Hacker III recalls a few memorable Coach moments: My senior year I suffered a tragic football field painting incident when a screwdriver impaled my leg. He took me to the hospital. The ER nurse stuck a foley into the hole in my leg and was irrigating it with saline. She kept on pushing it into the hole in the back of my leg until it came out the front of my leg. Kruse was watching the whole time, but as soon as he saw the foley come out of the front of my leg, he said, "I gotta get out of here," and was looking a bit pale. So much for the man of steel!

Walking through the graduation reception line after the last NWC graduation, it was something to see him with tears in his eyes because he knew it was all over.

He also put extra salt on his whoppers and French fries when we stopped at Burger King after games...

Paul Waldschmidt: I didn't play much during my four years at NWC. I remember showering after one game (you get pretty sweaty in warm-ups!) and as I'm toweling off, Coach comes up and gives me a big hug. He had no sense of personal space whatsoever! And he says, "Wally, you're a great kid. You're never, ever gonna get to play. But you're a great kid."

Earle Treptow and Phil Sievert: After a big comeback win against Edgewood, he was so excited that he said, "You bastards! You did it. The game was over. The fat lady was singing. My wife was singing. But you did it." I am certain that he meant "bastards" as a term of

endearment, but it was an interesting use of the word. Calling his wife the “fat lady” was also rather funny.

Treptow: I recall one practice when he was picking 5 reds to take on 5 whites. He said, without even pointing, “You, you, you, you, and you. Not you, you.” That was a fairly common occurrence, actually. “You” was one of Coach’s favorite words. In fact, our fans would regularly yell, in their best Coach Kruse imitation, “you” at an opposing player who had just been called for a foul.

Sievert: His excitement of winning was like a little kid. Earle and I doubted that he personally knew Coach Bobby Knight until he “proved” it to us. Coach Kruse had a lot more connections than one would think.

Ken Brokmeier recalls a trip to New Ulm and a “date” with Coach’s relative from Michigan: We are headed to DMLC to play in the Lancer Classic. To be honest, I don’t know that Coach had ever been to New Ulm at least recently. The team assured him that we could get him there OK. We had a number of guys on the team who were from or had attended MLA in New Ulm for high school. (Stelljes and Rodewald). We left Thursday after school and were driving up. It was dark as we came through La Crosse. Ross Stelljes had told Coach he needed to take the Rochester exit – Hwy 52). There was snow on the ground and it might have even been snowing a little bit outside. We approached the exit and coach drove by it – as did the second van being driven by the trainer. One thing Coach did not like was being embarrassed. He naturally placed the blame on Stelljes and had one of those classic lines that we used from many years, “Stelljes, you 4.0 (referring to his GPA) idiot! Why didn’t you tell me to turn?” He then proceeded to get over in the left lane and when we came to the first opportunity to do a U-Turn (that is for service vehicles only), Coach made the U-turn and we almost got stuck as there was a fair amount of snow on the ground. We did make it to New Ulm.

After we were done eating (with Coach’s relation) coach gave me a twenty and said, “You will now go out for drink somewhere.” And you will treat her like a gentleman. We did “lose” the old folks and went to a couple of different places in Watertown for drinks and a few good laughs about “Uncle Jerry.” All in all it wasn’t a half-bad night. Both coach and I would periodically laugh about that night, even years later when I was single and he would say, “Brokmeier, I had a wife all picked out for you (referring to Kathy) but you let her slip through your hands.” I would then gently remind him, “Coach, it would have never worked. She was Missouri Synod.” We would both laugh again.

Phil Hirsch: I do remember wondering if he’d have a heart attack because he was so, so excited for the fellas after we won the WELS Classic in New Ulm in 87-88. I also recall a moment in a game against MSOE in their gym and the guys were, generally speaking, slow and having a hard time against a team that we should have been kicking around a bit. But the difficulties weren’t because of a lack of effort; it was just one of those nights. He was particularly wondering though about one player (if you need his name, it was John Koelpin) and wanted to know if I thought he should come out. I suggested to call his number for a little post-up play to see if he’d fish or cut bait, so to speak. He did call his number and the play was well executed and he got the ball on the low post and he turned on his guy like a strong man and put it in his face. He earned the right

to stay in there and Jerry couldn't have been happier for him. He grabbed my knee with a proud look on his face, proud for John (who could be completely hard on himself). There are so many Jer moments. Some of them (most?) are better fodder for sitting around at a schwein.

Wayne Shevey: The classic Kruse moment for me was when he was already in heaven. He had always been such a name dropper (Bobby Knight was always my personal favorite). He told anyone who would listen that he knew everyone and everyone was his friend. Most people (me included) usually shook their head, laughed, and thought, "Whatever, Coach." I remember the wonderful funeral at St. Mark's where his past players were reminded by Pastor Sutton that they were always 'Jerry's guys.' And then as we filed out, there in the back pew was Dick Bennett, coach at Wisconsin. At that moment I realized Coach's influence went beyond our little NWC basketball family, but that he had touched the lives of others who had acquired much greater fame than him. He was right all along; Coach Kruse was everyone's friend! Thanks be to God I had a chance to be one of those friends!

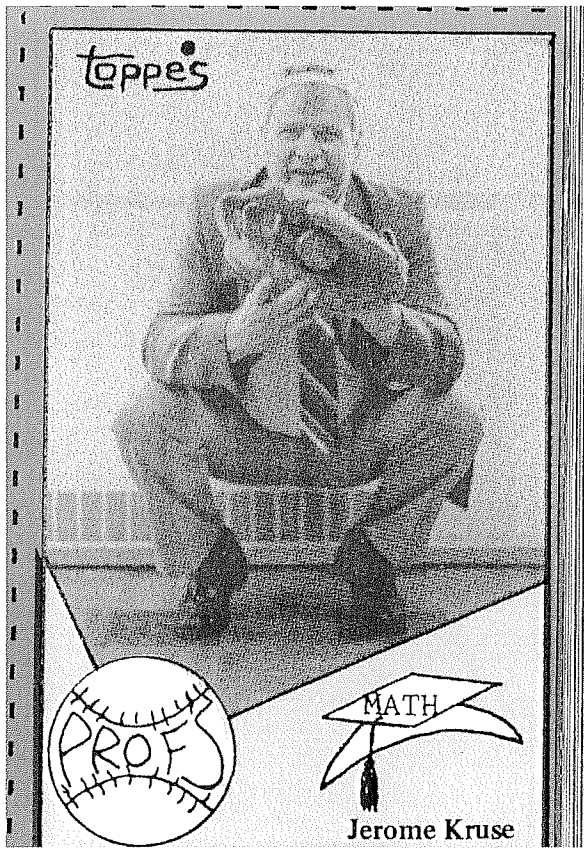
Jim Danell remembers a trip to Lakeland in Sheboygan: Coach was driving the bus and we got pulled over by a female state trooper for speeding. Coach Kruse insisted he wasn't speeding. He was so sure because he had been calculating our speed as we drove along by timing how long it took to get to each mile marker. He wasn't going to let a woman write him a ticket.

Todd DeNoyer: I was always giving Coach a hard time about anything; being old, plumbing not working etc. The biggest one was faking a growling dog in the dark. I grabbed him in the back of the leg, he swatted my arm and took off running!

Joel Heckendorf: Coach laughing so hard that he cried while telling old Todd DeNoyer jokes. (We'll leave off the content!)

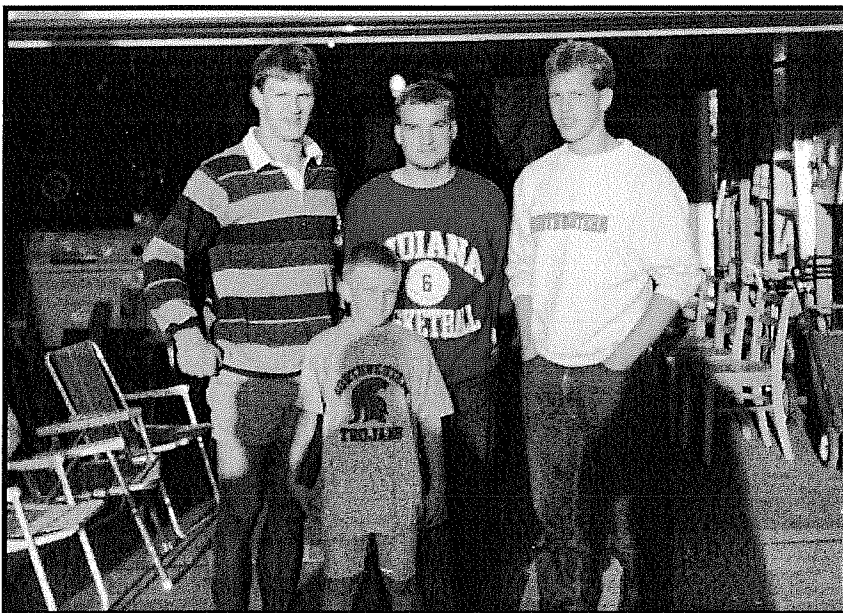
Steve Pagels: Coach Kruse wasn't too happy with me when I told him that I was leaving NWC to go to UW-Madison. When I came back, he welcomed me with open arms. Sometimes I think he wished that he could have been a pastor.

Shevey: I think he wanted his players to be the campus role models (and he secretly thrived on it). He wanted his players to strive to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He had a great perspective in that way—he knew the life of the Lord's Church always trumped basketball.

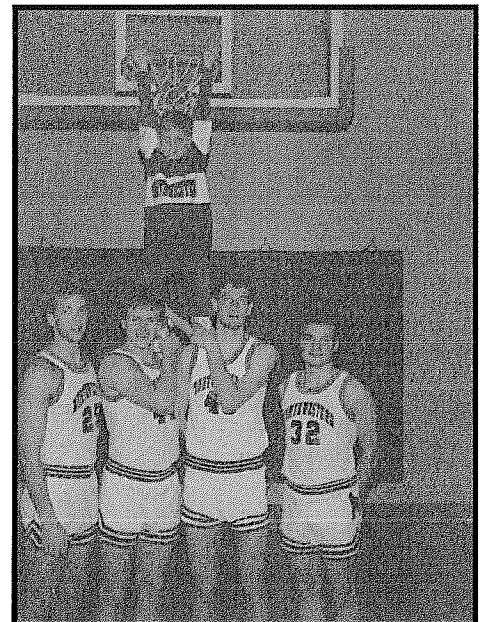


O 1 7	JEROME KRUSE: MATH Height: 5'11" Weight: 220, inhaling Bats: Right Throws: His 220 around Acquired: Via NPS Hometown: Watertown, WI.	THE ORIGINAL
	. . . revolutionized math program at NWC. . . heir to L. Thompson's AD throne. . . athletics is a "family affair". . . deft sense of humor. . . possi- bly single most influential man in Synod.	<p>JEROME LISTS BARBECUING AMONG HIS FAVORITE ACTIVITIES</p>

From the April 1985 *Black & Red*.



With my childhood heroes, Phil Sievert, Earle Treptow and Todd DeNoyer at my house for the Trojan hoops party.



DeNoyer, Sievert, John Koelpin & Treptow as I hang from the hoop.