

A Tribute to Mickey Corso

(Reprinted from December, 1990)

The Passing of a Friend:

"The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time", a verse from a James Taylor song. This was always on Mickey Corso's bulletin board and it's a passage he lived by. Because of his enjoyment of life, Mickey had many interests.

One of his earliest loves was baseball: Mickey was a standout in his sport, both in high school and college. He was a 5'6" catcher who received the Blanket award, he stole home plate twice in one game and even pitched a "no-hitter" in San Francisco A league play. But the highlight of his baseball career he felt was when he hit a triple off of Tom Seaver in a college game. Mickey was even drafted by a "Philly" farm team, but chose a second love...recreation.

Mickey's career in recreation started in South San Francisco, California as a Recreation Supervisor and Administrative Assistant.

Mickey came to Washington in 1972 to become the Director of Recreation and Parks for Mountlake Terrace. He held this position for 18 years before becoming the first Director of Parks, Recreation and Human Services for Federal Way in August, 1990.

Mickey was noted for his "hobo stews" as a recreation leader, as well as his work in developing the Mountlake Terrace system, which won the National Recreation and Park Association and Sports Foundation Gold Medal Award in 1986.

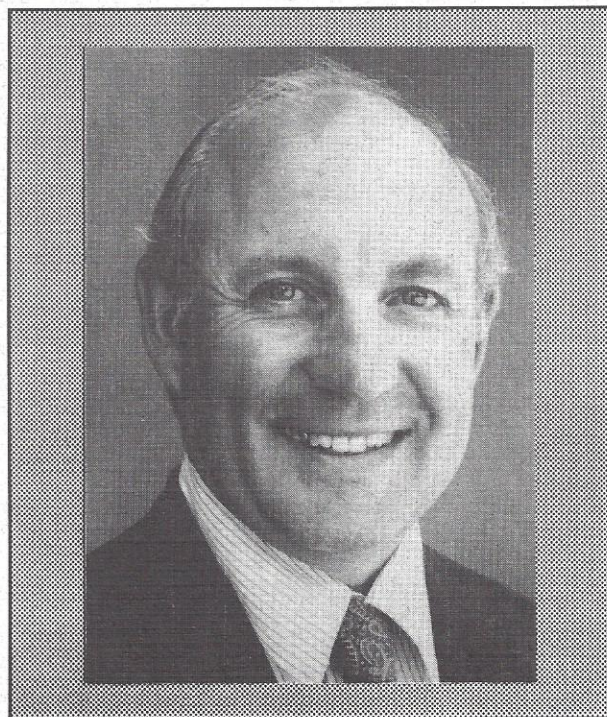
During his time in Mountlake Terrace, Mickey was active in the Mountlake Terrace Youth Athletic Association serving as president of the softball association from 1978-1980. He was also active in the Washington Recreation and Park Association, serving as president from 1989-1990.

Another of Mickey's inclinations was towards music and dancing. Country, blues, gospel, top 40, folk — he liked them all, with a special fondness for '50s rock. This in turn led to an interest in juke boxes and a collection of radios of the '40s and '50s.

Mickey's newest passion, fishing, began four years ago. And, as in all of his interests, he went full speed into this. Fishing gear led to a 12' boat and electric motor, soon to follow were a gas motor, trailer and other sundry items. Mickey's competitive spirit and drive were very evident in this. He would stay out on a lake, regardless of weather, temperature, wind, etc., until he had caught a fish.

There are numerous memories of Mickey held by many people — some funny, some sad, some cherished. He enjoyed life, he looked for the good in everything and he cared about people. For that we will miss him and be better people for having known him.

Dave Fair



Mickey Corso

January 3, 1942 - November 9, 1990

Corso Leadership Scholarship

As a tribute to Mickey and the professional leadership he provided in the field of parks and recreation, his family, friends, and co-workers have established the "Mickey Corso Leadership Scholarship".

Each year scholarships will be awarded to professionals in the field of parks and recreation who demonstrate the leadership, commitment and professional qualities for which Mickey will be remembered. The scholarship awards can be used for post-graduate training such as NRPA schools, graduate courses or other areas relating to park and recreation leadership.

Information concerning the scholarship is published in *The Syllabus* or can be obtained through the WRPA office, 350 S 333rd Street, Suite 103, Federal Way, WA 98003 - 206-874-1281.

Contributions to the Scholarship Fund can be made through the Washington Recreation and Park Association and are a tax deductible charitable contribution.

Though the singer is silent, there is still the song.

In Memory of Mickey Corso

As we all know, Mickey Corso devoted his professional life to the field of Parks and Recreation. His fellow professionals elected him to the highest office in our professional organization.

In his role as President of the Washington Recreation and Park Association, Mickey had many duties. They ranged from giving counsel to State legislators to listening to disgruntled members of our Association.

Mickey was the epitome of excellence in leadership in our chosen profession and in life. One of his favorite sayings was "Look for the good in people. Concentrate on their strengths, not their weaknesses." He taught this to anyone who would listen.

The following is an article written by Mickey in June of 1989, for our association publication, The Syllabus. It has been on my desk ever since it was originally published. I'm sure it is still on many other desks around the State. From Mickey's own words you will learn and remember some of his true priorities in life.

The Least Important Things in Life — are Things by Mickey Corso

What a profound statement. This comes to mind as I write this article on Father's Day, and remember how difficult it is for me to answer my children when they ask, "Dad, what can we get you as a gift?" Because I believe most "Dads" usually have everything they need, don't want their children spending money they don't have, and would much prefer "things" that money can't buy—health and happiness for their children and families, quality time with loved ones, and the ability and opportunity to simply communicate and share feelings and positive experiences.

Well, if you're asking yourself how does this relate to me, stop and think about it. You are a member of this Association, doing what you're doing, or reading this publication because you care about people. You care about their health and happiness, receiving and spending quality time in their lives, and having positive experiences—and because of that you are giving or sharing the most important things in life. "Things that are not Things."

Mickey possessed all of the qualities of excellence that we look for in a leader; honesty, competence, and probably most important, compassion. He was self-sacrificing for the betterment of the quality of life of all mankind. His family, his friends, his profession, the people of the State of Washington and the world are better off and more cognizant of the important things in life because Mickey Corso knew and demonstrated that "The Least Important Things in Life are Things."

Thank you Mickey for being you and for guiding us.
Thank you Brenda for sharing Mickey with us.

God bless you Mickey Corso. You truly blessed us.

Bob Hudson



Mickey at the WRPA Conference in Pasco, April 1989

And Remember...
I've lost a mentor and a friend
Will the sadness end?
I look back
And remember
The day we met, still in school
At the Pavilion pool
I look back
And remember
Meetings, reports and WRPA
He showed me the way
I look back
And remember
Juke boxes, '60s songs and the bop
Don't let the music stop
I look back
And remember
A Mickey Mouse watch, golf balls and a pin
Will always remind me of him
I look back
And remember
My mentor and my friend is gone
But his memory lives on
I'll always look back
And remember, Mickey.

Lynn Devoir
November 10, 1990

"One person can make a difference... and everyone should try."

Mickey Corso... An Inspiration

Why do I teach? Why do I coach? Why do I coach baseball? I do all of these things because of Mickey Corso and some others like him!

Teaching and coaching are not financially rewarding, but there are far greater rewards and satisfactions.

After being in the teaching profession for forty-one years, there are a number of negatives, but every once-in-awhile, someone like Mickey Corso comes along and makes the job so complete and really satisfying.

I have reviewed my scrapbooks and read with absorbing interest all of the newspaper articles regarding Mickey and his outstanding accomplishments on the baseball diamond. According to the papers, and I certainly concur, it was his "spark" and "fiery leadership" that led the Warriors to the championship. He was a unanimous choice for the all-league catcher.

Throughout his life Mickey was able to utilize his proven qualities of leadership. Not only did I see him as a great baseball player, but I also saw him as a truly wonderful human being. I saw him as the student body president of South San Francisco High School. I saw him doing a fantastic job as a recreation department leader, especially when he ran the great program that he instituted at Hillside Center. I saw him working with my own sons in various athletic programs, and, as parents, my wife and I considered ourselves very fortunate to have Mickey Corso as the role model for our boys.

I have always used Mickey as an example of how effort, dedication, attitude, commitment and hard work can pay off for our high school kids, not only on the athletic fields, but in their entire lives. Over forty-one years I have obviously had many excellent catchers on our baseball teams, but the number one of all time is Mickey Corso.

In closing, I wish to quote an unknown author who wrote on the topic of "Inspiration":

My Friend Mickey

Mickey and I have been friends for over 35 years.

We grew up together in South San Francisco—or perhaps, as our wives say, "We never did grow up".

You see, for all of us Mickey's death is very painful and we'll all mourn in our own way.

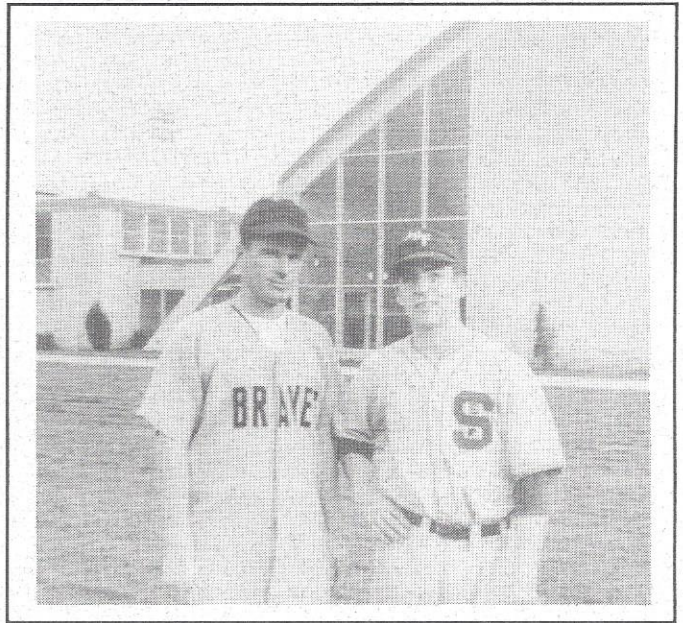
I want to share some things with you about our friend, Mickey.

Mickey didn't know that a baseball catcher wasn't supposed to be 5'6" and 145 pounds, but he excelled at that position anyway.

He didn't know that someone who stuttered didn't teach or become a public speaker - but he did both very well.

Mickey and I had the dubious distinction of flunking out of college—but we returned to earn Bachelors and Masters Degrees.

Mickey didn't know that something couldn't be done—he just did it!



1957 — Coach Brian and Mickey

"When I grow tired, as I occasionally do; when I get discouraged, as once in awhile happens; when the slings and arrows of our common enemies get to me, as they do now and then; there is never one failing source of inspiration upon which I learned long ago to rely, and which always send me back into the fray with renewed strength and a stout heart. It's a very simple thing. I merely close my eyes and call up from the depths of memory my old teams, the myriad faces which have passed before me for so many years. The bright, fresh, questing faces of the kids with whom I lived and worked. Those strong, eager boys, so willing to learn, so wrapped up in the joy of playing the game for the game's sake, and, by the way, that's the only way it ever should be played. I recount those many hours of being a part of their lives—and suddenly, it's all worthwhile!"

Thanks, Mickey, for enriching my life. You will always serve as an inspiration to me.

*Your coach and friend,
Bob Brian*

Since Monday, I've cried and I've laughed. I've cried because it hurts. I've laughed because I remember all of the good times and the positive influence Mickey had upon my life.

Mickey was a hustler, a competitor, a humanitarian and above all a fair, decent human being.

Hand him a lemon and he'd make lemonade.

Just like the old Volkswagen ads—Mickey would see the glass as half full, not half empty.

Each of you who has known Mickey is fortunate to have had your life affected by him. He was a positive influence to us all and part of him will always remain with us.

Life goes on and that's the way it should be. While we'll all miss Mickey—he also knew that life must go on!!

He'd want us to see the glass as half full and continue to do our part to make this a better world.

With Love, Ken Mesa

Moments

If I had my life to live over,
I would try to make more mistakes next time.
I would relax.
I would lighten up.
I would be sillier than I ever have been.
I would take more things less seriously.
I would be crazier.
I would take more chances.
I would take more trips.
I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers and watch more sunsets.
I would have more real problems and very few imaginary ones.
I have had my moments, and if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them.
In fact, I'd have nothing else...
Just moments, one after another instead of living so many years ahead of each day.
I would go places and do things and travel lighter than I have.
I would stand barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall.
I would pick more daisies.
I would ride on more merry-go-rounds.
I would gather more clowns in my life.
I would hug more people and hold more hands.
I would meet you sooner and know you longer.
And, I would love you better...
Perhaps it's not too late!

Author Unknown



The Corso family: Brenda and Mickey, Danielle Corso Larway, Bryan, Debbie and Gracie Woolley and Deanne Erickson. (July 30, 1990)

Those who never dare to climb are those who never know how high their dreams could take them, how far their hearts might go!



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