



Jon Craig Hersch

February 10, 1946 - November 21, 2020

Hersch, Jon Craig

Youthful and active at age 74, Jon Craig Hersch went home to eternal life on November 21, 2020 after a battle with COVID-19. Cherished and adored by so many, his gentle spirit and selfless character left an indelible mark on those he encountered and will be deeply missed.

Hersch was born to Russell and Irma (Selg) Hersch in 1946. In 1957, the family moved from Cambridge, Minnesota to Osseo, Minnesota, where his father had accepted the position of Junior-Senior High School Principal. As the eldest of four children, Jon was often the babysitter for his three young siblings. The patience and love he demonstrated with his first small team would later be replicated with his own children and grandchildren. Jon was always "first" - to get a car, to buy records, to go to college, to get married, to have children and grandchildren. His siblings looked up to him and were proud to watch him excel in sports and academics - and to inherit his 1968 seafoam green Ford Mustang! He attended Osseo High School where he was a standout student-athlete, participating in football, basketball, baseball, and track.

Following his graduation in 1964, Hersch attended St. Olaf college where he played football and made many lifelong friends. He graduated in 1968 with a

bachelor's degree in English and began his teaching and coaching career in Mt. Morris, Michigan.

During the summer of 1968 on a blind date, Jon met the girl of his dreams, Gretchen Asche, who would be his bride of 51 years. They were married in 1969 in Clara City, Minnesota, and returned to Mt. Morris, Michigan, where they both taught. In the summer of 1970, they found that their rental home would be unavailable for the summer, so they decided to take a trip to Europe. Armed with a guidebook titled, "Europe on \$5 a Day," they bought a Volkswagen Beetle from Wolfsburg, Germany and weaved throughout Europe, shipping the car home after their trip. This would be the first of many adventures for Jon and Gretchen in the years to come, including many wonderful years spent enjoying their Disney Vacation Club.

In 1971, Hersch received a teaching position in the Anoka Hennepin School District where he taught English and served as a football coach and head track & field coach at Blaine Senior High. After 14 years, he moved to Champlin Park High School, where he taught and coached for another decade. With abundant joy and profound empathy, he served as educator, encourager, and friend to students and faculty alike. As a close friend said, "He was so kind, it makes one wonder how he had control of the classroom - the answer is that the kids adored and respected him."

As head coach for the boy's track team, Jon - along with two fabulous assistant coaches who stuck together for 25 years - coached 53 all-state individuals, 21 all-state relay teams, and they had teams place in the top 10 at the state meet on six occasions. In 2008, Hersch was inducted into the Minnesota State Track & Field Coaches Hall of Fame. He served as Secretary and Treasurer of both the Minnesota Track and Cross-Country Associations for 21 years, and he served as an official for the XXIII Olympic Games at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in 1984. Most importantly, though, Jon had a

meaningful impact on the lives of the many young athletes he coached; they knew they were part of a program that welcomed and challenged them. As one friend wrote, "Jon paid it forward by coaching, teaching, and inspiring generations of young men and women over his distinguished career."

Hersch retired in 2003, but he couldn't stay off the field for long. He and fellow coach Dave Nelson reconnected shortly thereafter to coach together at Minnetonka High School. Jon relished the opportunity to coach for five more seasons, staying on as the team's statistician through 2019.

Jon cherished his family. As a husband and father, he unconditionally loved the three women in his life. As a grandfather, Jon was an ever-present light, offering boundless warmth, encouragement, and acceptance. He always obliged when he heard, "Just one more, Papa?" Jon attended a small group at Christ Presbyterian Church in Edina, MN and held a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ that inspired his children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

Jon was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by many who will miss him dearly: wife Gretchen; daughters Jennifer (Andrew) Matysik (Edina, MN) and Sarah Helgeson (Guyton, GA); grandchildren Joey, Maria, Will and Sydney Matysik, and Tait and Ingrid Helgeson; as well as his beloved siblings, Geri (Don) Isaacson, Bobbi (John) Augustine, James (Candy) Hersch, and many adoring nieces and nephews. We will leave a spot at the table for the family games of PIT, UNO and Boggle until we can play together again!

We're grateful for the story and example of Jon's life, and the way he showed us how to walk humbly, listen patiently, and love joyfully.

Friends and family will hold a memorial service on Friday, June 11 at 1pm at Christ Presbyterian Church, 6901 Normandale Rd, Edina. Service will be

livestreamed at www.livestream.com/cpc

Memorials preferred to Osseo High School Athletics, c/o Bill Quan or Randy Shaver Cancer Research and Community Fund (Tackle Cancer)

Previous Events

Church Service

JUN 11. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Christ Presbyterian Church
6901 Normandale Road
Edina, MN 55424

Tribute Wall

RR

“ *I have great memories of John from the years coaching track in Elk River and competing against John's teams. HE was a gentle soul. We shared time at the Los Angeles Olympics watching events and sharing tickets - lots of fun memories. Thanks for all you did for kids and teams!*

*Roland Ring-Jarvi
Elk River Track coach and teacher*

Roland Ring-Jarvi - December 04, 2020 at 01:56 PM



“ I have so many fond and amazing memories of Jon. He was my track and cross country coach, he wrote me a letter of recommendation for college, then he became my colleague and then my friend.

In high school, I lived only about 1/2 mile from his home and he was so welcoming to me when I needed to talk, had questions about running, or even when I came over to flirt with his daughters. He allowed me to drive a group of kids on the team out to his home in his car so we could run back to Champlin Park from Ramsey. What a great memory.

It was because of running for Jon and Rose that I became a track athlete in college and then ended up back at Champlin Park to work with them and eventually take over the track program from Jon. Taking over the program I knew I could not live up to the standard he set. He was meticulous, patient, kind, hard-working, and knowledgeable.

Thank you Jon. You had an incredible impact on my life.

*Joe Ward
CPHS Class of '96*

Joel Ward - November 30, 2020 at 09:52 PM

SR

“ Almost every day at track practice we would say...’ Jon...Jon...Jon ‘. He and ‘Rose’ did more for me than I can every repay. He gave me a way to find confidence in my life.

I remember talking with him after my regional race at Stillwater. I had run the race of my life. I went in to the race facing my biggest rival of the year, and the favorite from another school. Thought I didn't have a chance...didn't win the race but did qualify for state. Talking with him about the race and he showed me where he had me in order of finish. He had me at second...he knew. That means more to me now than it did at the time. I have many, many times thought of that moment and I have tears thinking of it again.

My sincere condolences to Jon's family...

*Scott Rajala
Blaine class of 1981*

Scott Rajala - November 29, 2020 at 02:39 PM