

Sher joins heavenly writing team now

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 14 March 2014 16:12 - Last Updated Friday, 14 March 2014 16:14



Tom Fruehling called a little more than three years ago with news that a talented writer and editor was interested in joining the Metro Sports Report staff.

Tom, one of the original members of our cast, has an eye for talent, but admitted this friend of his had never been a sportswriter, was not familiar with nightly deadlines and had never dealt with sometimes cranky coaches before.

You might want to give her a chance, he suggested. She's really smart, a terrific writer and has a tremendous knack of getting people to talk openly for her stories.

Her name was Sher Jasperse, and as usual Tom knew exactly what he was talking about.

Sher, our friend and colleague, died Thursday at age 59, a victim of a devastating illness that destroyed her health but never took away her mind and great spirit. A writer to the very end of her days on earth, she even wrote part of her own obituary.

"I hope that if you have tears right now that they are tears of joy and not sorrow," she wrote shortly before she died, "because I'm finally home and resting in one of the many rooms of my Father's house that He has prepared for all of us."

Sher's husband, Daryl, remained devotedly by her side these past few months, attending to her every need and helping her cope with her illness. When friends told Sher they were praying for her, she responded by asking them to also pray for Daryl.

Tom Fruehling was absolutely right about Sher's ability. She was a terrific story-teller and had the uncanny ability of putting her subjects - even complete strangers - at ease as they revealed some of their inner-most feelings. They trusted her to get it straight and she always did.

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Sher's story about local tennis pro Micki Schillig, a child prodigy more than 30 years ago, is a prime example of her knack of telling a compelling story that made you proud to read the words. It seemed like Micki had kept things bottled up for a long time until Sher came along and told the story in a compelling, sensitive way.

She also wrote a beautiful piece about the Bell brothers - Cody and Chris - one of them a big, strong successful athlete and the other dealing with a lifelong ailment that left him a devoted spectator, unable to star on the field himself. Their love for each other came shining through the words.

Sher wrote a terrific piece about former Norway baseball coach Jim Van Scoyoc, seemingly a crusty, old-school coach on the outside but really a soft-hearted man on the inside who could not resist telling Sher his story.

She also wrote a tremendous article about Kiah & Tia - Kiah Stokes and Tia Dawson - a pair of girls basketball stars a few years ago at Linn-Mar and Washington and now in college. Sher brought their mothers into that story as well.

Sher would write these stories and you'd wonder, "How did she get the person to say that? How did she elicit that piece of information? How did she get them to speak so openly?"

It was her gift, honed through the years, but also a tribute to her personality. People simply liked talking to Sher Jasperse. We'd get on the phone for a "quick" conversation to discuss a story, and 45 minutes later we'd laughingly apologize to each other for spending all that time talking about writing and stories and other things.

Sher was extremely generous of her time with the Metro Sports Report. A busy writer and journalist, she served as the editor of the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library's bi-annual magazine Slovo. She did grant writing for the Catherine McCauley Center, taught English as a second language at the center, wrote magazine articles and wrote and edited books.

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She and Daryl loved to ride their bikes and took a "Bike & Barge" trip to the Netherlands a few years ago. Naturally, she sent "postcards" from that trip that we happily posted on the MSR website. They also went on regular bike trips in Florida and had a real zest for life and the outdoors.

Sher was born in Grand Rapids, Mich., and originally moved to Cedar Rapids to work at Coe College. She died at the Dennis & Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy in Hiawatha.

A private family service will be held at the Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church on Saturday at 10:30 a.m. A Celebration of Sher's Life will be held at the Clark Alumni House at Coe College on Saturday, March 30 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.