

The Meaning of Sharing

Dan Jansen, now a retired American speed skater – multiple world champion in sprint and perennial favorite at the Winter Olympics – broke a jinx by winning a gold medal in his final race (1,000 meters) in 1994 at the end of his career.

But the year 1988 may have been the defining time in Jansen's quest for the gold. That was the year Jansen became the World Sprint Champion, and then he was off to the 1988 Winter Olympics where he was a favorite for the 500- and 1,000-meter races. In the early hours of Feb. 14, the day of the 500-meter event, Jansen was informed that his 27-year-old sister, Jane Marie Beres, was dying of leukemia. Jansen spoke to her on the phone, but was unable to receive a response. A few hours later, Jansen was notified of his sister's death.



Jansen was to compete in the 500-meter race that afternoon, but fell in the first turn. Four days later, in the 1,000-meter event, he began with record-breaking speed but fell again, just past the 800-meter mark. He left the 1988 Olympics with no medals, but became the recipient of the U.S. Olympic Spirit Award for his valiant efforts. In the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville, he finished fourth in the 500-meter and 26th in the 1,000-meter events, and left the games with no medals. In 1993, Jansen set a world record in the 500-meter event and was cast as a favorite to win the gold medal in the event at the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer.

Jansen arrived at the 1994 Winter Olympics for one final attempt at an Olympic medal. In the 500-meter event, he finished eighth. In the 1,000-meter event, Jansen defied expectations and finished first, winning his first and only Olympic medal of his career, while setting a new world record in the process. He received the 1994 James E. Sullivan Award and was chosen by his fellow Olympians to bear the U.S. flag at the closing ceremony of the 1994 Winter Olympics.



What drove Jansen after the emotional upheaval of the death of his sister and a series of disappointing, subpar performances?

(more)



Most likely, it had something to do with a 30-year-old medal winner in the Special Olympics, Mark Arrowood of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, who sent Jansen a letter of consolation upon his return home. Arrowood wrote: “Dear Dan, I watched you on TV. I’m sorry that you fell 2 times ... I want to share one of my gold medals with you because I don’t like to see you not get one. Try again in four years.”

For Jansen, receiving the medal from a fellow athlete must have come close to winning one of his own, and it provided inspiration.

That’s an example of the *koinonia* – the oneness, the unity – that athletes share. Christians are to have that same kind of *koinonia*, or what we call fellowship. If a fellow Christian is suffering, then the rest of the church suffers. If we are rejoicing, then we’re blessed when other believers rejoice with us.

Because we are all part of one body, the experiences of one member of the body – whether joy or sorrow – are experienced by all.

The same is true of what we as associates are called to do in Life Care and Century Park. We are a team, a family. And the bonds of that *koinonia* sustain and encourage us.

I see it and hear of it on a daily basis. God never intended for any of His children to laugh or cry alone.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter