

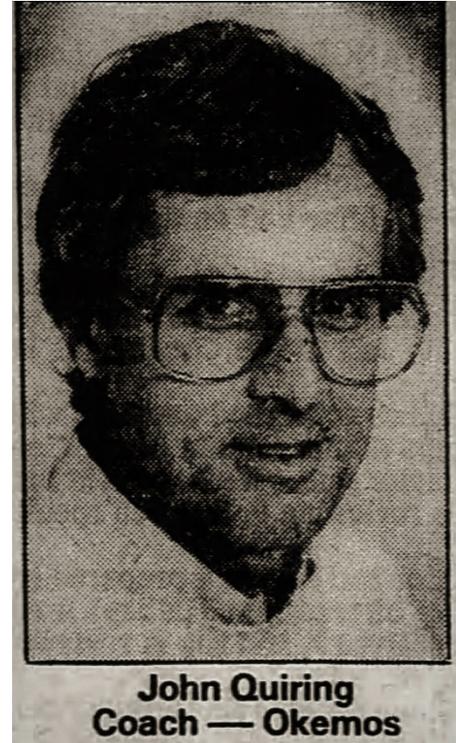
June 13, 2020

I nominate, **John Quiring**, an accomplished teacher, track and cross-country coach, to the Alumni Athletic Hall of Fame.

In my freshman year in the fall of 1978, John started coaching cross-country at Okemos. Coach Q (as we know him) taught us lessons in the classroom, on the track and the cross-country courses of lower Michigan that I will never forget. He made "learning easy" and instilled in many of us the love of running and teamwork. A small number of us ran all four years with the cross-country team. Although the awards in those years were limited, our time together and lessons from Coach Q stay with us today.

Coach Q touched the lives of many over his thirty plus years at Okemos. Those who were coached by "Q" know of his disciplined approach to personal development and his generous spirit. Notable coaching accomplishments include his cross-country teams won 29 league titles, 20 regional titles and the 1986 Boys' State Championship. Coach Q was a member of the Okemos Community Church, past president of the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association, and a devoted member of his community.

Jeff Preston - class of 1982



**John Robert Quiring**, of Okemos, Michigan, loving husband, father, grandfather, and brother; devoted teacher, esteemed coach, and an inspiration to all who knew him, died at home in the presence of family, on Sunday, February 4, 2018.

John was born on April 4, 1942 in Detroit, to Robert Irving Quiring and Carol Jean Bale Quiring, and grew up in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He graduated from University High in Kalamazoo (1960) and received his BA in Mathematics (1964) and MA in Counseling (1966) from Michigan State University.



Surviving are his wife of forty-eight years, Janet Balmer Quiring, his daughter, Alison Balmer Quiring (Matt Shullick), his sons Adam

Robert Quiring (Sara) and Nicholas Jon Quiring; his adored grandchildren, Bronwyn and Gwyneth Shullick, Evelyn, Audrey, and Isabelle Quiring; his sisters Joanne (Richard) Chamberlin and Roberta Quiring King; and his daughter-in-heart Carrie Ladyga and her children, Rileigh and Colton Ladyga.

John taught mathematics in Richmond, California and Leslie, Michigan before beginning a thirty-year teaching and coaching career at Okemos High School.

Known as "Q" by his runners, John was an accomplished track and cross-country coach. His cross-country teams won 29 league titles, 20 regional titles, and the 1986 Boys' State Championship. Those who John coached knew and loved him for both his disciplined approach to personal development and his generous spirit. John continued the legacy of his father, Bob Quiring, who was a beloved teacher and coach in Kalamazoo and a Michigan Hall of Fame recipient.



John was a member of the Okemos Community Church, past president of the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association, and a devoted member of his community.

John loved nothing more than spending time with his family and friends on the Leelanau Peninsula in northern Michigan. A perfect day included walking the beach, catching the sunset, and gazing at the stars late into the night.

A Celebration of Life Memorial Service was held in Okemos, Michigan in May, 2018.

# A tradition of caring

## Former runners honor longtime Okemos coach

By **DICK HOEKSTRA**  
Lansing State Journal

**D**ana Irrer had just won the first big race of his high school cross country career.

It was the Mason Invitational if he remembers correctly.

Longtime Okemos coach John Quiring came running toward him, let out a yell of glee and gave Irrer a huge hug.

"I think he was more excited than I was," Irrer said. "What I remember most was that it was so cool to have someone care that much about you."

Quiring's genuine concern for and devotion to his students and athletes was a major reason that more than 200 of the nearly 600 he has coached from 1978 to 2003 gathered at Kinawa Middle School in Okemos last Saturday for the annual race with varsity that usually attracts about 25 to 35 alumni.

There were lots of hugs.

Three of the five women who made up the first Okemos girls team in 1978 — including two who came from California — and seven men from the 1986 boys Class B state championship team returned. Class A girls 1985 individual state champion Denys Adams was there.

Entering his junior year at Carnegie Mellon University of Pittsburgh, Irrer was the first runner across the finish line that was decorated with a huge banner. One of many nice touches by Quiring's wife, Jan, the banner read "Q, Thanks for the Memories! Alumni Race 2004."

"Q touched you in a way that most people don't realize until later in life," Scott Hemstreet told the runners gathered at the starting line. "(They see) how wonderful it was to have a man like Q around in some of the most important years of life."

But the festivities didn't end there. Most who were present in the morning, plus others — like Kelly Johnson, who flew in from New York in the afternoon — gathered on Saturday night at the Brookshire Inn and Restaurant Lodge in Williamston. A total of 275 plates were set.

Runners and their families and some former and current coaching colleagues were seated at tables designated by balloons with dates on them, such as 1978-80.



Quiring

Pictures of past teams and runners, including some from when Quiring was much younger, adorned some tables. Slides from the morning's alumni race and from different runners getting reacquainted with Quiring were shown.

Different runners took turns telling old stories and commenting on the effect that Quiring had on them.

"Every time I run up a hill, I can hear him say 'Lift your arms and pump your knees,'" said Robert Cambray of Madison, Wis. "But the effect goes far beyond running. Without his encouragement and his accepting nature, I wouldn't have continued to run, and I wouldn't be the person I am."

Lessons learned from Quiring and cross country about

## Chieftain champions under John Quiring

### LEAGUE TITLES

(All in the Capital Circuit except 2003, which was in the Capital Area Activities Conference Division 1)

#### ► Boys cross country (11)

1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1998, 1999, 2000

#### ► Girls cross country (13)

1978, 1984, 1985, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003

### REGIONAL TITLES

#### ► Boys cross country (4)

1983, 1985, 1986, 1987

#### ► Girls cross country (4)

1991, 1992, 1999, 2003

things like health, discipline and stamina led Cambray to "choose my life's work as a physician" and to "honor you by making a difference in the lives of people I come in contact with like you have in mine."

Quiring made a similar difference in the entire Dood family. Track and field teammates enthused by Quiring talked Lindsey into going out for cross country as a senior after he played football earlier in his high school career.

His sister, Yvonne, went out for the team as well. And, later, his younger brother, Joel, went out and helped the Okemos boys team to its Class B state title in 1986. Along the way, Lindsey's parents adopted a more fit lifestyle that included biking.

Lindsey, who went on to become a three-time league most valuable runner in cross country for Hope College, is still physically fit enough at age 40 that he finished runner-up in the alumni race in 17:17.

"He was able to instill a love

for the sport," Lindsey said. "And that's no easy feat, because running is hard."

And Quiring cared for more than just the top runners.

"Our JV (junior varsity) kids have bonded together over the years," he said. "And that's the best thing about cross country. No matter how good you are, you get to perform."

Quiring credits his father with setting an example of how to care for his athletes. Bob Quiring once coached seven sports at once at old State High School in Kalamazoo and later led Kalamazoo Central boys basketball teams to consecutive Class A state titles in 1949, 1950 and 1951.

"He was always having kids over for dinner," John said. "I realized what a relationship he had with them."

Quiring had an inkling that Saturday's alumni race would be a little larger than normal. But its scope was so much larger than he could have imagined. And the banquet at night was a total surprise.

"It was so nice to catch up with people I hadn't seen for such a long time," he said. "Seeing where these bright, disciplined, hard-working kids have gone is pretty exciting."

They chose to honor Quiring because this may be his last year of coaching. He retired from teaching in June and hasn't decided how long he will continue to coach.

"They filled cards with nice notes and memories that took me a day and half to go through," he said. "It was really moving to see some of their responses."

"I have never been so emotionally drained. But I'm so appreciative of the people who made this all possible."

Lansing State Journal, August 26, 2004

**"It was so cool to have someone care that much about you."**

**Dana Irrer**

former Okemos High School boys cross country runner describing longtime coach John Quiring



ROBERT KILLIPS/Lansing State Journal

**One of many hugs:** In a scene that was repeated with many of the more than 200 former runners who were on hand last Saturday morning, coach John Quiring hugs 2003 graduate Lindsay Harkema. They were gathered to honor the longtime coach in conjunction with the annual alumni race.

Those who wish may make a contribution in John's name to: Okemos Community Church, Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association (MITCA), or the John Quiring Memorial Scholarship Fund.