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Tales from Sheet Nine

by David Garber

Passing of curlers both sad and uplifting

When notable curlers pass away it is sad, certainly, but also an occasion for reflection.

John Pierre Jahant, 51, died May 19 in Illinois. John, Russ Armstrong, Jim Wilson and Tim Wright won the 1985 U.S. nationals and were world semi-finalists at Perth. John, survived by spouse Dale, was one of those kind and colorful characters best described by close friend Russ Armstrong: "My dear friend John Jahant had been in declining health for several years and passed away peacefully with Dale at his side. John always had a smile and a hearty laugh, and would give you the shirt off his back. His many close friends came to know and love his selfless, easygoing nature.

"A fantastic curler, John's signature tuck slide and dead-on release was a main force in our team's 1985 national title. I traveled with "Yodel" from Alaska to Europe, and up and down the North Shore in his bright yellow Mustang, always laughing and enjoying life with every mile of the journey. Though he left us too soon, he packed more life, love and laughs into his life than most. We will greatly miss our good friend."

This writer knew that playing against John Jahant meant your bonspiel experience would be even better, on and off the ice.

William "Bill" Strum, 72, died August 28 in Superior. Bill Strum was the only three-time U.S. world champion (1965, 1974 and 1978) and was an Olympian (demonstration sport) in 1988 and 1992 (bronze medal, defeating 2010 gold medalist team Kevin Martin). He was inducted in the USCA Hall of Fame in 1989. What made Bill such a formidable competitor, who managed to remain at world medal level for over 27 years? This writer had the privilege to observe Bill over many years and concludes that he had a "championship mentality," a certain mental toughness that helped him perform well enough to win at all levels (while being a truly nice fellow). It's hard to define, but in this writer's opinion, it's the most important single characteristic an athlete can have, because it leverages the effects of natural talent, intelligence and work ethic. Championship mentality in a team sport also includes an innate or developed sense of how best to be a part of a winning team. Before sports psychology became popularized, Bill Strum and his Superior teammates had developed the mindset they needed to be consistent winners at world level.

Gunther Hummelt, 78, died July 3 in Europe. Born in Innsbruck, Austria, Hummelt started curling in 1959. He was instrumental in founding several clubs in Austria, the Munich, Germany Curling Club and the Austrian Curling Association (circa 1980). He rose to lead the World Curling Federation as president from 1990-2000. A man of great charm and broad vision (in the view of this writer, who was fortunate to have observed Gunther Hummelt in action), he combined an astute political sense with a practical acumen, resulting in great progress for curling around the world under his leadership. Hummelt, coordinating the efforts of many effective people, was a key component of the ascension of curling to full-medal status in the Olympic Winter Games, and the elevation of curling as a respected member of the world amateur sports

community. Immediately after his presidency, Gunther was named the WCF's first Honorary President in recognition of his achievements. He remained active and influential in world curling affairs until falling ill shortly before his death. For several years around the 1980s, Hummelt was a regular participant at the Milwaukee Kiltie Mixed Bonspiel.

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In memoriam

Edward A. "Eddie" Wanta, 84, was lifetime member of the Clintonville, Wis., Curling Club. He was also a World War 2 Navy veteran, a florist, a Rotarian, and otherwise active in community affairs.

Forrest Moseley, 100, of the Portage Curling Club, who was recognized in the *Curling News* last season in his 100th year, died over the off-season. He's the fellow whose doctor made him quit curling, for fear of a fall, in his late eighties, but who still, as a hundred-year-old fan, drove himself to the club to watch curling.