

They were, for the most part, those who had problems of their own. One was recovering from a

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sclerosis. Those who had helped were mainly those who knew real problems in their lives. I learned more about why we have tests and trials than I had known before.

Barton Douglas Smith, South Edgehill, Mt. View 4, Edgehill 1, 50 years

The "Edgehill Juniors" started right after World War II. Priesthood leaders from the Edgehill and Wasatch Wards approached Paul J. Hansen and asked him to start a program for the boys of the area. The Church's M Men and Senior Scouts Basketball programs were already flourishing in the Edgehill Gymnasium. The younger boys, however, needed something to get them involved and keep them out of trouble. A basketball program for boys from ages 8 to 12 seemed like just the right thing. Paul started the "Juniors Basketball Team." It was really intended just to teach basketball fundamentals and team work. The only real games were against each other during the half time of one of the older boys' games during the annual Christmas Tournament.

The Fall after I had turned eight years of age, I joined my friends in lining up outside the southeast door of the Edgehill building waiting for the "gym worker" to arrive and open the doors. As the worker turned the key and opened the door a little more than a crack, we each started filing in to the building, and down the stairs to the locker room to

change into our gym suits we brought from home. There was an excitement in the air each week; a spirit of anticipation.

Entering that big gymnasium was for us almost like a spiritual experience. Even as young boys, we were given the opportunity to help take care of the gym. We would help clean the gym, sweep the floors, and put away chairs. We had so much respect for that gymnasium that we wouldn't even walk on the floor with our street shoes. Even on Sundays we would only walk around the edges of the floor, because we were in our Sunday shoes.

Practices lasted exactly an hour. We would dribble in and out of chairs, practice running without crossing our legs, line up and pass the ball from one line to another, and if we were lucky shoot lay-ups. When we got a little older we got to shoot from as far away as the foul line. Learning "plays" didn't come until we qualified for the "Junior A" team (usually at age 10). We were never tired at the end of "our hour." But for some reason they sent us down to shower and get dressed.

One day, I took a little longer in the shower room and getting dressed than usual. As I finished getting dressed I could hear basketballs being bounced on the gym floor upstairs. My curiosity got the best of me and I just had to venture upstairs to see what was going on. To my excitement I found teams dressed in uniforms, warming up to play a real basketball game. I had discovered the M-Men Basketball League. I went in and sat down on one of the neatly arranged chairs on the sidelines (back then we didn't have bleachers) and watched as the game got underway.

As I sat there by myself with my eyes as big as

saucers, Paul Hansen walked over and sat down beside me. I shared with him my excitement at this wonderful thing I had just discovered. He listened with interest and understanding at my enthusiasm. And I was "discovered" by Hans. From that day on, I joined a marvelous group of boys known as the "Edgehill Gym Rats."

It wasn't really the Edgehill Gym or even basketball that caught our fascination. Those were just the tools. It was the love, attention, concern and caring of Paul J. Hansen that touched our lives. I watched for years, even for the rest of Hans' life, as he reached out and lifted young men; especially those with special needs.

In his book "A Generation of Excellence," Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone recalls a glimpse of what Hans tried to accomplish at the Edgehill Ward Gym:

I recall Paul Hansen, a great youth leader for many, many years. During his time as athletics director and coordinator for the Edgehill Ward gym in Salt Lake City, thousands of boys have gone through the gym, and they all know Paul Hansen. His single objective as he met every boy was to build them, to build testimonies in them. He would often get the boys together and then ask them, "Why does the Church build gymnasiums and cultural halls?"

As the boys would ponder, he would answer, "To build testimonies, to save souls, to develop citizenship. The salvation of every young man who plays on this floor is the reason we build

gyms and cultural halls and have athletic programs.”

Shortly after Hans passed away, an editorial appeared in the Deseret News, written by Richard D. Paul, another “gym rat.” In part it said:

We who grew up in the vicinity of Westminster College always thought we were special for having known and loved Dr. Paul J. Hansen. To us, he was Hans. Little did we know that Hans was not just our treasure but that he, in spite of his quiet way, was really an icon among men. His influence was broad and deep, falling across layer after layer of human strata: and, like a brisk mountain breeze, it was refreshing to all with whom it came into contact.

One very special evening, hundreds of those people who had “known and loved Dr. Paul J. Hansen” crowded the Edgehill Gym, which he loved, to honor him. Many accolades and tributes were paid to him by Church, educational, and government leaders and friends. The planning committee, wanting to present him with the biggest trophy he had ever received, arranged to give him a brand new Pontiac Bonneville automobile. There have been many memories which have been made in the Edgehill Gym, but for everyone who was there, that night will always be something special.

Of the many extraordinary people and events which have created special memories in the Hillside Stake, one of those I will never forget was Paul J. Hansen.