

This book is a memoir of growing up around the game of ice hockey and the life lessons which came along. These markers led to the search for the ultimate question and the answers of faith.

Ice Time: The Game of Hockey and a Journey of Faith

By Terry Amann, Foreword by Mike Huckabee

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ICE TIME

***THE GAME OF HOCKEY AND A
JOURNEY OF FAITH***

FOREWORD BY MIKE HUCKABEE

TERRY AMANN

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Chapter 5

The Mighty Voyageurs

The fall of 1976 finally arrived. Our team took to the ice for our first Voyageurs hockey practice. We had a couple of guys from our high school and some players (including my cousin Pete) from Libertyville High, the public high school just a few miles away on the same road, Route 176. There was a natural rivalry between CHS and LHS. Thankfully, we were able to set those emotions aside for the good of the Voyageur hockey team.

At that time, my father worked for The Independent Register, a local newspaper which promised the Libertyville Voyageurs newsprint coverage in the sports section of the paper. There was a catch, though. Dad informed me of what that meant. “We’ll send a photographer to a game once or twice. Our sportswriter has all he can handle right now so we can’t send a reporter to the rink. You will have to write the stories for the newspaper.”

Thus, in addition to being a co-founder of the Libertyville Voyageurs and playing right wing for them, I would also be their sportswriter. I probably should have included sportswriter on my resume over the years, but I never did. There were several games where I was trying to focus on the action taking place while remembering who did what in the game. The only way to do it was to write fragments in my mind as the game went on and then get them to paper right afterwards. I would write out everything by hand and then peck away at the ancient black

Royal typewriter. Remember, there were no laptops or cell phones.

There was one incident where I tried to apply my active journalism skills for another important cause. I used my 'press credentials' to get into a girls swim team practice at Libertyville High School. The swim coach told my friend and me, "You are not allowed in the pool area during practice." I promptly told her I was a sportswriter for the Independent Register – which was kind of true. My self-appointed assignment was that I was interested in one of the young ladies on the team. We were able to get into the swim practice because the ruse worked perfectly. The relationship, however, did not.

Another major obstacle our hockey team had to confront was transportation. I was one of the few players on our team who owned a car. Consequently, we packed six people into my first car. It was an army green, 1966 Mustang. My Uncle Charlie had owned the car for a number of years. He passed it down to my cousin Pete, who in turn sold it to me. Now it had become the team bus of sorts.

The car had significant amounts of rust, especially underneath. In fact, the passenger side floorboard had a massive hole which opened onto the street. An old metal road sign was bent and fashioned to cover the hole. It wasn't even bolted down; it just lay over the hole. The foot pedal was long gone too, so you had to deftly push the metal stem with your foot in order to accelerate.

There were three people in the front with only two bucket seats. We had three people in the back seat made for none. We

had all our equipment squeezed in and piled up on the open trunk. There were sticks and skates hanging out all over. We may have missed the boat by neglecting to contact Guinness World Records about that ride! To this day, I don't know how we were able to get everyone and everything into that Mustang according to the laws of physics.

Even though my first car had lots of rust, a metal road sign patching a hole in the floorboard, and too much weight, it somehow got us to all the games. Soon after the season ended, however, so did the transmission on my car. We simply burned it out. Amazingly, this was the only significant injury we had all hockey season.

Three young men saw the news articles about the Voyageurs hockey team forming and asked to join. Going on gut instinct, and trusting their verbal resumes, I told them they could play on the Voyageurs team. It was a risky move, but we needed some players to fill out the roster. This decision turned out to be one of my better calls in my life. Two of those three men came to be the best players in the league! And the third one was also a very good player. Together, those three additions would come to play a dramatic role in the hockey season ahead.

With time running out, we still had one more hurdle to overcome. We needed a hockey coach. That person had to be a volunteer because there surely wasn't any money around to pay them. Mike and I had asked several good prospects to coach our team but to no avail. We were ready to start without a coach if that was how it was going to be.

Ice Time

The games were to be played at a hockey rink in Waukegan, Illinois, which was also our practice arena. I will never forget how a remark at that very first hockey practice reverberated throughout the whole season...

As we took to the ice for our first practice, the chairman of the league was watching us. We didn't have a coach, nor did we have a whole lot of organization. In fact, I had never played ice hockey anywhere other than pick-up games at outdoor rinks, or when I would hand-shovel snow off of a pond near our house and play by myself. We were making it all up as we went along. The league chairman finally could no longer contain himself. Pointing at me, "Hey, you, come over here! Are you the one who started this team?" he asked menacingly.

"Yes sir, I did," I replied.

"Well, you guys are a disgrace!"

And with that declaration of opinion he turned and stormed off. I just stood there speechless for a few moments. Two years of toil and overcoming obstacles and this was our welcome into the world of ice hockey? Now I knew there was some kernel of truth in what he said. However, dreams which come from deep within give one a desire to press on, no matter what. Thus, press on we did. In the months to come, our fledgling hockey team would surprise the league chairman and everybody else, including us.

As the Libertyville Voyageur hockey season unfolded, it was obvious that two of our "walk-ons" were really good hockey

players. One of them was Eli,⁴ an African American. At that time, there were few African American hockey players, and very few players of his caliber, anywhere. Eli continually dominated the play in game after game, racking up many goals. In one game Eli had a three-goal hat trick, and in another he even scored four!

Unfortunately for Eli, and for us, he also led the team (and I think the league) in penalty minutes. Eli let his temper get the best of him. He would have a penalty called against him, argue with the ref, and then get more minutes added on while he skated toward the penalty box. You could hear a collective sigh from our teammates as we all thought, “Oh no, not again...” Since Eli never appeared in the big leagues, I can imagine that his anger might have held him back from ever going to ‘The Show.’ He clearly would have fit in well with the aggressive bad-boy Philadelphia Flyers.

The start of the hockey season brought on a special challenge which affected me directly. Our high school football coach, remembered for some of his famous sayings, like “Katie-Bar-the Door,” and “Well, golly gee whiz,” issued a decree at the beginning of the football season. He said, “No one will be allowed to play both football and hockey at the same time.” This was, of course, exactly what I was planning to do. The end of the Carmel Corsairs football season overlapped the first month of the Libertyville Voyageurs hockey games. I would finish football practice, skip the shower, pick up everybody in the Mustang, and race over to the hockey rink. Once there, it was a quick dress into hockey equipment, practice, then change

⁴ His name has been changed for this book.

again without a shower because there were none. In between all that, I was trying to keep up with schoolwork and a part-time job. No one else on the football team was playing both sports. I think our coach looked the other way since there were no negative consequences for me. I just had to get through those four weeks of intense extra-curricular activity.

The “Mighty Voyageurs,” as my Dad called us, finally found a hockey coach along the way. We were starting to come together as a team. It happened because we stayed focused and we persevered through many obstacles.

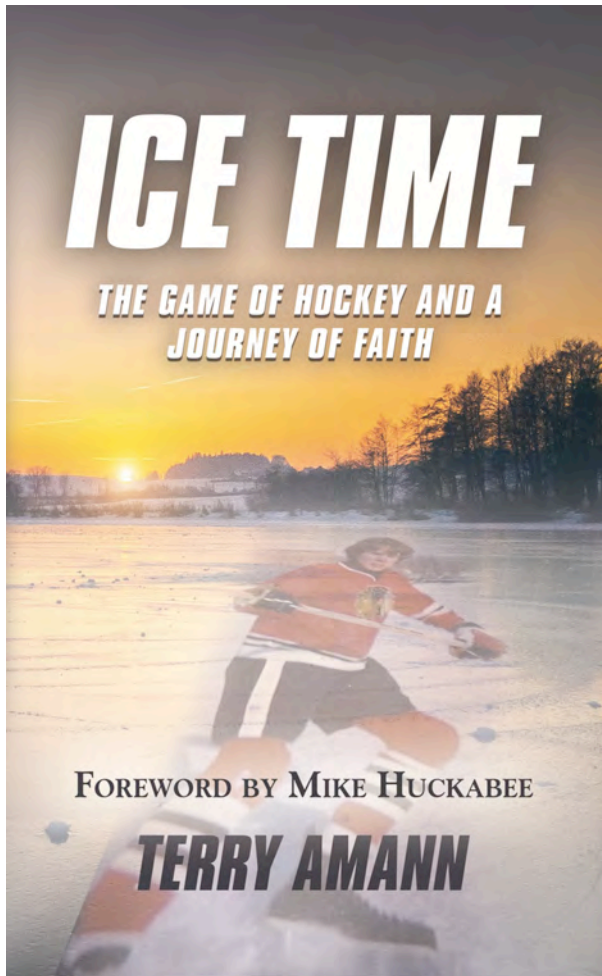
Life takes many turns over the years. Some of those curves are tough to take. It was hard for Mike and me as we had roadblocks pop up and make plans difficult. You get through them and you finally accomplish what you are trying to do. Sometimes that end goal isn’t all that you thought it would be. So you question, “Is this it? Is this as good as it gets?” In God’s playbook, the Apostle Paul explains:

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.
Romans 5:3-5 (NRSV)

Paul is telling us that the person who has put their trust in Jesus will still have trials and tribulations in this world, but they are never without hope. When you have given your life over to Him, and have decided to let God direct your steps, you come to learn that He is using all of the challenges you face. Each one of these trials and tribulations is an opportunity for God to build your character, and to make you more like Him.

God does it all. It is amazing what God has done for us through His Son Jesus. He sent Jesus to live among us and to die on the cross for us. When Jesus left this world, God sent the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of what is known as the Trinity of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of each believer (2 Timothy 1:14). The Holy Spirit acts as a helper and a counselor, which means we always have help if and when we need it (John 14:16, 26). People may let us down from time to time, but God never will!

I did not realize that Divine assistance was available back when we were slugging through the various difficult tasks to put a hockey team together. But what I did come to know later was how God was using those events in my life to build my character. I was learning the timeless value of perseverance.



This book is a memoir of growing up around the game of ice hockey and the life lessons which came along. These markers led to the search for the ultimate question and the answers of faith.

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