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## Man Leaves a Legacy of Memories

WILSON – Greenwood Cemetery is set in a rural forest, protected by trees and a watery inlet from Twelve Mile Creek, and now covered with tall reeds and broken branches.

There are a lot of names on the stones that peek up from moist green ground: Reuben Wilson, the man who discovered this piece of land on the shore of Lake Ontario.

And others who came after him.

Another name was entered Saturday.

Roger Moore.

He used to ride his sled as a boy in the winter. On Cemetery Hill. Not far from where he is now.

Roger Moore, at the age of 48, my neighbor for a long time, and my friend since I first met him, died last Wednesday in Roswell Park Memorial Institute.

He was the athletic director and head coach of basketball and baseball at Fredonia High School and he used to win sectional championships with boring regularity.

He lost one once. To his former coach, Walter Hutchison, and it was a classic. In Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo, that night of the sectionals, Roger Moore, tall, lean, blonde, and ready, walked across the hardwood floor and grasped the arm of Walter J. Hutchison, tall lean and balding.

The newspapers gave the confrontation what they call “big play.” The coach versus the pupil.

“Hutch” had once described Roger Moore as one of the “best natural athletes I’ve ever seen.”

Rog Moore had once described Hutchison as “one of the most knowledgeable men in the history of sports.” Strong recommendations.

I had sat in the press gallery watching these two men return to their seats and an hour later watched them come back to share that final moment.

Roger Moore slapped “Hutch” on the back and smiled.

If there is anything about him that I remember most, it has to be described in a cliché, Class.

Roger Moore lived in an old, lovely home in Lake Street with a screened in back porch that faced a small pond.

A vineyard stretched back for a few hundred yards before it joined the peach trees. The garage next to the house nestled against high rows of firewood. An old ax that that Roger Moore’s father used to cut the wood was always in the same place. “Doc” Moore’s father knew where everything was.

In the summer, Roger Moore and his brothers Keith and Jack would sit on the chairs in the back porch and take on the kids next door.

There were baseball gloves and a basketball stuck in a corner and Roger Moore could suddenly leap from the chair and grab a ball. Everybody ran outside and the afternoon was made.

He was a schoolboy then. Tall and lean and blond.

And then it was Ithaca College where Roger Moore played baseball on a scholarship and lost a professional career because of problems with his ankles.

The ankle is a very important part of our bodies. It is not to be fooled with.

Roger Moore, who played every sport, and played them all well, decided to become a teacher and a coach.

He was a natural.

He had learned discipline from his parents.

He had received a sense of humor from his older brothers. He was the “kid,” the youngest of the tribe.

Older brother Keith played baseball, and if my memory is correct, he was a fine catcher. A natural. And if Roger Moore was to play baseball as well as he did, it must have begun with Keith. I remember seeing them playing catch in the backyard, between the porch and the pond.

And he sang. Not as well as his brother Jack, who had an opera-quality voice, a tenor. Smooth and natural.

And then came Marguerite from Ithaca. Roger Moore’s wife, now a widow, who someone once told me was the most beautiful woman born near the Finger Lakes.

And then came Danny and Michael and Dennis. Three boys who were the pride of his life.

The boys and girls who know Roger Moore, who were taught by him, coached by him are what we are left with.

Not a bad legacy. Keith and Jack will know what I mean. I mourn his death. A neighbor and friend gone too soon.

But I salute his lifetime and the contributions he made as a teacher and coach, and most of all, father and husband.

With a “big orange.”