

OLD BOY QUARTERLY



The Old Boy Quarterly

is targeted to the alumni rugby players of the Kansas Jayhawks Rugby Football Club.

These issues chronicle both interesting parts of the club's 50 year history and inform the readers about the club's current status & future plans.

It is meant to supplement and not replace the information on the club's website <http://www.kurugby.org/>

The club also has actively managed information on Facebook.

We are seeking to expand this publication's distribution. If you are aware of KJRFC alumni who would like to be added to the distribution, please forward this e-mailed newsletter to them.

If you are interested in financially supporting the club, charitable gifts can be made to:

The Kansas Rugby Foundation, Inc.
PO Box 1074

Featured In the next Issue:

**1975 - 1979
Allen Chapman &
England Tour
1977**

INSIDE THIS EDITION

- **JAYHAWKS BEAT KC BLUES @ KC
PHOTOS OF KEY TRY BEING SCORED**
- **JAYHAWKS ADVANCE TO ASPEN
RUGGERFEST SEMI-FINALS**
- **RETROSPECTIVE: 1973 - 1975**
 - **ARTICLES BY:**
 - **STEVE LANGE**
 - **ROGER WALTER**
 - **ANDY SIBBERNSEN**
 - **INTERVIEWS WITH:**
 - **STEVE SWALWELL**
 - **RICK WHITSON**
 - **COMMENTARY ON CC BUCK**
 - **BIG 8 TOURNAMENT 1975**
 - **SAGA OF PLAYING AGAINST K-STATE**
- **RUGBY SHORTS**
 - **{NEW SECTION FOR LETTERS TO
EDITOR & SUBMITTED SHORT PIECES}**

Did you play for the club between 1975 & 1979 or go on the 1977 Tour of England?



This newsletter needs your scanned photos and your personal stories. Send material to pd4bicycles@aol.com before December 1, 2012.

Please provide your contact information.

Jayhawks' Club Side Defeats KC Blues' First Side

10-3 Victory on the KC Blues Home Pitch

The Jayhawks played the game "old school" instead of playing "10-man rugby". It was the Jayhawks' first victory over the Blues in about 10 years and is a great way to start a season. Next up, the Aspen Ruggedfest.

You know the currently popular 10-man rugby game?...The forwards deliver the ball to the scrumhalf, who makes a pass to the first back, who gets tackled, the forwards ruck over him and deliver the ball to the scrumhalf, who makes a pass to the first back, who gets tackled, the forwards ruck over him and deliver the ball...ruck-pass-tackle (repeated ad nauseum). It's boring to watch as a spectator. I can't imagine the experience of playing that way if you wear a jersey numbered 11 or higher...Seriously, what do they think about while the pack and 2 backs play the entire game in a confined space?

The KC Blues "own" the above style of play. They have a big pack that drills this to death in practice. So why would the Jayhawks want to get into a grinding match of "10-man" on the Blues' home pitch? Well, the Jayhawks didn't. Coach **Joe Kieltyka** and the Jayhawk club president **Collin Rollins** tipped it before the game that they would focus on quickly spinning their ball to their centers, to get the ball away from the Blues 10-man sphere of power. This is "old school", because the Jayhawks historically (and currently) have great backfield talent and in the past eons made a hallmark of working the ball fast through the backfield. Who better to teach the lost art of this style of play than contributing coaches **Billy Pryor & Doug McCauley** who played for the Jayhawks in the late 1970's? Kieltyka said with typical irony "Imagine that... a game of running and passing the ball!"

The game was played at Mid America

Park in Shawnee. Conditions were perfect; sunny, high 70's, light swirling wind from the sidelines.

The first half was a grinding defensive test of wills. Both teams ran their respective game plans. The tackling of both clubs was fierce.

The game was still scoreless 20 minutes in, when the KC Blues' flyhalf was dispatched to the "sin bin" for sassing the ref. The Blues dropped a flanker into the backfield to fill the void as they played a man short.

The Jayhawks threw a skip pass to outside center **Cody Weber** who kicked ahead to the downwind left sidelines, getting the ball to touch 10 meters from the Blues' goal line.

The Blues lost a 2nd row to the "sin bin" for another sassing of the ref. At the same time, the Blues' flyhalf returned to play from his time in the box.

Play raged on the Blues' goal line for a few minutes, until the ref called a penalty kick on the Jayhawks for "feeding" the ball to their hooker in a scrum. The Blues then kicked the ball to touch at midfield.

Jayhawks wing **Tonderi Kamparami** (TK) was fed a good ball by his centers and managed a breakaway run down the left sideline. TK was without support as the Blues closed in, so he pop kicked ahead and bounced the ball out of bounds, 22 meters from the Blues' goal line.

Moments later, the Jayhawks were awarded the first penalty kick opportunity for their fullback kicker **Sean Rothwell**, at center field, 30 meters from goal. Rothwell's attempt sailed

left with the wind.

Halftime: 0-0 tie

Whatever was said at the half-time break was magic.

The Jayhawks kicked off to the Blues to start the second half and the Jayhawks forwards managed to recover their own kicked ball. It was quickly passed left to inside center **Jack Vogt** who managed a penetrating run up field. Vogt then executed a beautiful pass to outside center **Cody Weber** who was supporting him along the left sideline. Weber streaked the distance and scored a try next to the left upright. Rothwell made the easy conversion. Less than one minute into the half it was **Jayhawks 7-0**.

A few minutes later, the Jayhawks were awarded a penalty kick at center field that was a good 30+ meters out. Rothwell's kick was good. **Jayhawks 10-0**.

The Blues managed to rally the play to the Jayhawks end of the field, but were called for laying on the ball. The Jayhawks kicked for midfield touch.

The Blues were then awarded a penalty kick 22 meters from goal. They went for the points and the kick was good. **Jayhawks 10-3**.

Play returned to the Blues end of the field. The Jayhawks were awarded a penalty kick. They went for the uprights for insurance, but the ball sailed wide.

The Blues attacked the Jayhawks' goal line nearly the entire final 5 minutes of the match, but the Jayhawks' ferocious defense kept them from scoring.

Final: Jayhawks 10-3.

Anatomy of a Try on the
KC Blues
{Jayhawks in Crimson &
Blue}
Game Played September 8, 2012

See blue text in story on page 2.

The Jayhawks' Sean Rothwell
kicks a very high ball and the
Jayhawks recover their own kick.

The ball is quickly passed back to
the backfield side, where Jack Vogt
executes a terrific pass to Cody
Weber who scores.

Pictures continue on page 4.

Story & Photos by Steve Lange



1



2



3



4

ANATOMY OF A TRY ON KC BLUES...CONTINUED



Jayhawks Advance to Semi @ 2012 Aspen Ruggerfest



The Jayhawks in a lineout in Wagner Park against the host Gentlemen of Aspen.

The Jayhawks were paired with the **Glendale Raptors** for the first game of elimination round. The earlier games were hard on the Jayhawks' starting 15. The club did not dress their flyhalf, flanker, and wing for the game, due to injuries in the prior activity. In the first 5 minutes of the Glendale game, the Jayhawks lost one of their props. **The result was a 61-7 shellacking loss**, but the scoring slowed in the 2nd half as the Jayhawks dug in to focus on defense and

The Jayhawks went to Aspen the weekend of September 15, 2012 and continued their wide-open style of rugby. The format of this year's Aspen was that the 9 top-tier clubs entered were put in 3 team pods to play round-robin. The 3 winners of the pod's round-robin and the second best club of all pods advanced to a single-elimination, 4-club playoff. The Jayhawks were put in the same pod as the host **The Gentlemen of Aspen** and the **Denver Highlanders**.

Game 1: Jayhawks defeated The Gentlemen of Aspen 23 – 15 in a game that was more Jayhawk-dominated than the score indicates. The Jayhawks got a 12-0 lead early in the game and were never in

doubt of the win.

Game 2: Jayhawks defeated the Denver Highlanders 39-21. The play featured attacks by all 15 and scoring came off great passing to open players.

At end of round-robin play, the pod winners were: **Jayhawks**, a club called **KILN**, and **Glendale Raptors** who are the reigning Division 1 national rugby champions. The best #2 was the **Denver Barbarians**. The town of Glendale, Colorado has built a rugby stadium that seats 4,000 with an artificial turf field. It is the setting of the national team champion games and dubs itself "Rugby Town".

strong tackling.

The Glendale squad went on to a similar fate in the final game against the Denver Barbarians the following day. Glendale lost 73-21.

Jayhawk coach Bill Pryor reported that throughout the weekend and in the airport on the way home, he was repeatedly told by folks who had watched the tournament how great the Jayhawks played.

This is looking to be a fantastic season. ****

Story & Photos by Billy Pryor



Fall 2012 Schedule

Date	Day	Club	College	B-Side
8-Sep	Sat	at Blues	at UCM	
15-Sep	Sat	at Aspen	at Aspen	
22-Sep	Sat	Home/Topeka	SEVENS Tourney	
29-Sep	Sat	at Truman	at Truman *	
6-Oct	Sat	OFF	Fall Break 6th-9th	
13-Oct	Sat	Looking	Home/OSU	
20-Oct	Sat	at K-State	at K-State *	
27-Oct	Sat	Home/KCRFC	Home/KCRFC	OSU/Truman
3-Nov	Sat		at MU *	
10-Nov	Sat	at Ozark Tourney		
17-Nov	Sat			

* = merit table games

The Jayhawks are underway on what appears to be a very promising season. Consider dropping by a game this fall. Watch a game and catch a beer with some old friends.

For game day details, go to www.kurugby.org and link to the club's Facebook page.

Fall 1974 – The Magic Season



(Back row standing L-R) Jon Mellon (prop), Anthony Reese-Thomas (flanker), Aaron Jensen (prop), Lee Mills (2nd row), Earl Tjaden (prop), Dan Bedora (flanker -#8), Bryan Hunter (2nd row), Larry Beyers (2nd row), Roger Walter (outside center), George Dalke (flyhalf), Steve Gasper (hooker), Steve Lange (prop), Joe Kieltyka (#8), Jerry Brown (prop)

(Front row on knee L-R) Bill McGillvray (flanker), Steve Swalwell (wing), Craig Oliphant (inside center), Andy Sibbernsen (flanker), Bobby Friedman (scrumhalf), Bill Byers (scrumhalf), Rich Coulson (fullback), Rick Whitson (hooker), CC Buck (wing), Rich Coffman (center), George True (hooker). **Not Pictured:** Steve Francisconi (wing), Paul Miller (wing), Bob Kiene (2nd row), Greg Usher (prop), Marv Oller (backfield), Bill Altman (flanker), Larry Bond (wing)

“They began to perform as links in a chain, or fingers on a hand. Passing skills were honed so the ball moved with lightning speed to the person with the most opportunity....More importantly we were having the time of our lives. The feeling on the team was an indescribable, collective joy and pride in doing something well as a unit.” - Outside Center, Roger Walter describing the Fall 1974 Season

If you were to ask the fellows pictured here **what was their favorite season of rugby**, no matter how long they played or where they played...they would all probably pick this one. They may have played on better teams or won big matches, but nothing replaces being part of a team that goes through a metamorphous. They won 11 games...most by shut outs, the guys all got along, their women had fun on the sidelines. The team was deep, with two full sides of talented players. The second team sported the same kind of record. Something was happening and we knew it at the time. At the end of this season, we did something that had not been done before; maybe ever before at KU. We had a banquet to celebrate a season that had been an experience. The banquet was emotional.

This was one of the finest college sides to ever play at KU. They had the ability to totally change their playing style mid-way in a game to account for weather and the opponent. The practices were devoted to fundamental skills and a different playing style as coached by one of the aging founders of the club, **Joe Kieltyka**. The playing style featured ball control, fast passes, and rangy forwards who would quickly start a supporting maul.

This edition of this newsletter serves as a cautionary tale. College rugby clubs tend to fall apart in cycles due to the turnover of students. From this edition you can see this recovery didn't just happen. There was a journey over the prior 18 months that had mistakes

and epiphanies that lead to a great season. Here is an overview, followed by interviews with, or stories by, some of the players.

Spring 1973 –Downward Spiral

The club's roster in the fall of 1972 was one of its best ever; it was also nearly entirely seniors. Most of them played their last game for the club at the end of that fall season. The following spring had no luring event such as a trip to Aspen or a Heart of America Tournament. What was left of the club was now in the hands of mostly social players. There were still a few very good athletes from 1972 like the **Miller brothers, (Luke and Paul), Dave Moore, John Hart, and CC Buck**, but the overall experienced talent base, and

number of active playing members plummeted. The impact of this was partially masked because the spring season begins in winter, with little practice time to expose how weak the club had become. By the time the weather got warm, the remaining players realized they were in a different world. **There had been an erroneous assumption that the club would automatically self-perpetuate itself with returning past players and talented new players who would just show up.**

The practices frequently had less than 15 players, whereas the prior years consistently had 2 full sides who would scrimmage. There were home games where less than 15 would show to play the waiting opponent. The Jayhawks would scramble to Lawrence apartments to plead with inactive players to fill out the side. If that failed to get the club to 15, then there would be an offer to let spectators play. The club's playing record was awful. After years of success; the club nearly folded.

Fall 1973 & The Scottish Ringer

The fall season had better player numbers than the prior season. We got new players such as **Bill McGillvray, Jon Mellon, Andy Sibbrensen, Lee Mills, George Dalke, Marv Oller, Roberto Friedman, Bob Kiene, and Roger Walter.** These players would be key members of the club in future years. Former player, **Bill Mills** coached the club in the fall of 1973. Bleachers were

erected at the field behind Oliver Hall. The university newspaper ran some feature articles with photos; one wherein a reporter practiced with the club for a week and then played in a game. This got the club some much-needed publicity. We won a game now and then. As 6'4" flanker **Craig Frazier** said, **"Winners' beer tastes better than losers' beer."** What was needed was some sort of spark to get the club going again.

That "spark" occurred after the first game of the fall 1973 season. A curly headed fellow about 5' 7" and 145 pounds walked into practice wearing a

bulky sweater and shorts. He was **Ian Henry** from Stirling, Scotland. He would be the most complete rugby player the current team or most of their opponents had ever seen.

Henry could swerve and dummy pass, making opponents tackle only air. He scored dropkicks on the run in open play. His ability to placekick was nothing short of phenomenal. During practice, he would walk to the left end of the goal line and take two paces up field along the sideline. From there, he could hook it through the uprights. We saw him accomplish it enough times out of ten tries to realize it was no fluke.

Rugby Team Downs River Quay, 35-9

Ian Henry scored 19 points Sunday and led the University of Kansas rugby team to a 35-9 victory over the River Quay club of Kansas City, Mo.

Henry, a graduate student from Scotland, scored on two 35-yard runs, a four-yard run, two conversions and a 40-yard drop kick.

The ruggers will travel to Aspen, Colo., next weekend for the Aspen Rugger Fest which will match 40 top teams from the United States, Canada and Mexico.



Henry played flyhalf, so we could constantly feed him the ball. The opponents realized that shutting down Henry was going to be the key to beating the Jayhawks, so he received all their defensive attention. They hit Henry their very hardest, they double-teamed him, and lay on top of him long after tackles to keep him from rejoining play. Henry continued to put on heroic performances as a prolific scorer, single handedly beating opponents. **You never see a rugby player carried off the field on the shoulders of teammates... Ian was hoisted off several times... He was that good.**

1974 & 1975– Blueprint of the Resurrection

Alumni Game -The club celebrated its 10 year anniversary in the spring of 1974, by initiating its first ever "alumni game". This was important, because it linked the current players with its successful past. **Rick Whitson** was able to get addresses and contact the past players. The returning alumni were still young enough to suit up and play against the current team.

Selective Recruiting - In the fall of 1974, the club did something important that had been done in prior years, but was (incredibly) neglected in 1973. A recruiting table was set up in Allen Field House during enrollment. In that pre-internet era, students enrolled for their semester courses by walking from table to table in the various hallways of the Field House, pulling paper enrollment cards. After turning in their cards, the students exited the building by walking down a hallway gauntlet of student organizations. The club hung a "Play Rugby" sign on a table and yelled to athletic looking students who passed by. The immediate result was that the number of players more than doubled at practice.

In 1974, the club got new players **Rich Coulson, Dan Bedora, Steve Francisconi,** and a talented freshman **Craig Oliphant.** We also benefited from transfers to KU of K-State Rugby Club's 2nd row, **Bryan Hunter** and Topeka RFC's former Captain, **Steve Swalwell** who played wing. The Jayhawks were now flush with talent and experience at every position. They also had a very strong second side that lead to lively training scrimmages. **Joe Kieltyka** became the club's player/coach and taught the whole team his style of the game.

Regular Publicity - We established a connection with the school newspaper's sports department. The paper's student base had as much of a turnover issue as we did as a sports club, so they needed to be re-introduced to the club every season. The paper provided the name and phone number of a reporter who agreed to follow the club. The details of "when, where, who, what, and how" were phoned in every Sunday along with the

spelling of player names. The articles provided a positive image of the club and helped attract and retain players. **That is the reason for the collection of photos and articles in this newsletter edition.**

Personal Commitment to Fitness – Starting in the fall of 1974, competition for a starting spot became so fierce that all players worked out beyond practice time. For instance **Jon Mellon** and I (**Steve Lange**) were the team’s props and we both weighed about 205 pounds. That was significantly lighter than some of our opponents. Mellon learned that ordinary students could enroll in the KU football team’s winter conditioning course. He talked me into joining him, so all winter 1974/75, we spent a couple of afternoons a week rotating through 90-minutes of Hell, weight lifting & running circuits with the football linemen. When those linemen learned we had enrolled **VOLUNTARILY**, they thought we were nuts. We didn’t put on any weight, but our strength & conditioning improved radically for the spring. **Rick Whitson** ran daily 2-mile circuits, **Roger Walter** ran wind sprints between telephone poles as he jogged and **George Dalke** played full-court basketball year round.

In fall 1974, the club won 11 of 14 games; 7 of the 11 wins were shut outs. The only losses came in hard-fought games with the Kansas City Rugby Club and the KC Blues.

3 Memorable Games

K-State @ KU Fall 1974

The K-State team featured a number of former West Point rugby players that came from Ft. Riley. They had beaten KU several times since their founding in the early 1970’s. This 1974 victory began a string of KU wins over the cross-state rivals. (Game details in “K-State Saga” story at the end of this newsletter.)

St Paul RFC @ KC Heart of America Tournament – Quarterfinals Fall 1974

The St. Paul club was a top 4 seed and enjoyed a first round bye. We met in our 3rd round of the day and had the tournament’s #1 ref. The St. Paul side featured a particularly fine group of forwards. Much of the match was a tribute to the lineout play of Jayhawk 2nd rows, **Bryan Hunter** and **Lee Mills**, who consistently fed the majority of balls to our backs. The ref called the match tight, allowing no penalty kicks

within easy distance of uprights. The game was a stalemated 0-0 tie at half. The game remained scoreless deep into the 2nd half, until the ref awarded the Jayhawks a penalty kick in almost the exact center of the field. It was beyond the range of either **Bill McGillvray** or **Bryan Hunter**. Our scrumhalf, **Roberto Friedman** had grown up playing soccer in Uruguay. He offered that he might be able to kick the distance.

He made the 50 yard place kick with a running start and scored the match’s only points. That quarterfinal win was the best of all college clubs in that tournament and the best HoA finish for the Jayhawks in a number of years.

Big 8 Tournament @ MU Spring 1975

(Tournament details in “Big 8” story in this newsletter.)



The KC Blues’ jumper, **Pat O’Neal** (on right) jumps against KU’s **Luke Miller** in the fall of 1973 or spring of 1974 behind Oliver Hall. **Steve Lange** in front of Miller is trying to jump into O’Neal.

(Luke Miller’s younger brother **Paul Miller** played wing for KU and scored the game’s only try in the 1975 Big 8 final against MU.)

Check out **Hal Edwards** in the background as the ref. (He had graduated the season before.) He is wearing a **striped KFC shirt** as a neutral uniform!



Spring 1973 to Spring 1975

By Roger Walter



My first contact with rugby was in the spring of 1973. It was the end of my first year of law school. I was 25 and had only a vague concept of the game from my years in the Army. My impression was that it resembled football, but had different rules, and the participants dressed like soccer players (no pads). I was intrigued.

I persuaded one of my class mates to go with me to a practice. He was smaller, but quick and an excellent athlete who had played college basketball. The practice was a rag-tag affair with no structure. All we did was scrimmage. The strategy seemed to be to get the ball, try to run over people, and pass the ball when you couldn't go any further. I played one game that spring. I was attracted to the game. My friend wasn't. He clearly had more sense.

The following fall, I was committed. The team was a little more organized. There were remnants of the glory of past teams who were excellent players. One was **John Miller**, a big-boned farm kid who played wing; six foot, 190 lbs. with explosive speed. When he got the ball with space; he was impossible to stop. Another was Crazy **Dave Moore** who played inside center. Clearly, though, the team standout was a transplant from southern Scotland, visiting his girlfriend who was a student at KU. **Ian Henry** was 5'6" and perhaps a 145 lbs. soaking wet. A hooker on his home team, he played fly half at KU. He dazzled everyone with his skills, both offensively and defensively. Quick and deceptive, he ran with a halting, stutter step, common to Scotland rugby, utilizing dummy passes. He weaved through traffic, untouched, with ease. He fearlessly dropped men twice his size on defense. He also introduced the drop kick, scoring from 25 to 30 yards out. The early highlight of that season was the Aspen Ruckerfest. I was injured with a deep thigh bruise in the first game, and was out for the season. But I was hooked. I loved the game, the camaraderie and the rugby sub-culture. However, I was continually asked "what happened to that other guy who came out with you last spring."

The following spring of 1974 the team continued to improve. Ian Henry was gone, but the team recruited **Tom Oakesen**, a former Lawrence High / KU football linebacker. He played insider center, and lifted the team with his individual athletic performance. The season high-

light was a trip to the Mardi Gras tournament in Hammond, Louisiana. During that time the heart and soul and organizational structure of the team were **Steve Lange** and **Joe Kielyka**. However, the team continued to rely heavily on individual talent and performance.

The following fall of 1974 witnessed a fundamental transformation of the team. Certainly this was influenced by an influx of talented new players: **Steve Swalwell**, **Bryan Hunter**, **Steve Francesconi**, **Craig Oliphant** and **Dan Bedora**. Hunter, a transfer from K-State, was a tall, agile, imposing second-row forward who gave the forwards some offensive punch. Oliphant, a freshman who had been an All State high school football linebacker in Texas, played inside center. Francesconi and Swalwell played on the wing and were always an offensive threat.

Style of Backfield Play

But the team's transformation was more than the addition of individual talent. Through Kielyka's tireless effort in working with the backfield, he molded the backs into a cohesive unit. They began to perform as links in a chain, or fingers on a hand. Passing skills were honed so the ball moved with lightning speed to the person with the most opportunity. Everyone learned to take the ball at full speed, going directly up field to create space on the outside. Set plays were introduced: scissors, dummy scissors, skip passing, dummy passes. The concept developed into quickly distributing the ball to the outside center (my position), who in theory would take the ball at full pace with space between him and his opposite number, and then attempt to option the defensive wing and spring the offensive wing loose. Possession became paramount, and kicking was frowned upon.

During one practice early in the season, I reverted to my old habits and

tried to run over the defenders. Unfortunately for me it was Kieltyka defending. He laid me out, unceremoniously dumped me and drove me hard into the ground. He then stood over me screaming, “pass the f@#king ball”... I got the message.

The results were evident. We started winning most of our games and were at the top of the Heart of America union. More importantly we were having the time of our lives. The feeling on the team was an indescribable, collective joy and pride in doing something well as a unit. It is something that stayed with me the rest of my rugby career. Even today it evokes a smile and fond memories of those halcyon days of youth, and friendships forged on the field of competition. KU rugby was again a force to be reckoned with.

The following spring of 1975 the success continued with most of the same players. **Bill McGillvary**, a stocky flanker, moved to fly half. **George Dalke**, a Ph.D. in electrical engineering, moved from fly half to play a skillful inside center. McGillvary, broad in the beam and a silky smooth runner, would execute a dummy scissors, hide the ball behind his butt, and glide through the defense undetected. It was mesmerizing. He quickly earned the nick name “skillet butt.” The team continued to evolve and win. Team play and skill trumped individual talent. KU became known for introducing an innovative, distinctive style of play to the Midwest. It would later be described as blue collar, workman’s rugby.

In the fall of 1975 **Allen Chapman**, a Cornish graduate student in architecture, became affiliated with the club and took the team to the next level. His message: to play quality rugby required a commitment to an extreme level of physical fitness. He also introduced players to the broader world by telling us it was realistic to consider international touring. That began another era in KU rugby, but is a story best left to another day..****

10 Questions with Steve Swalwell

Jayhawk Wing Fall 1974 & Spring 1975

BEEP - BEEP Zooommm!!!



Q: Tell me about when and how you got started playing rugby?

Steve Swalwell (SS): It was 1970. I was 18 years old and had just graduated from high school in Topeka. I saw the Topeka Rugby Club practicing and thought it looked fun. I knew a couple of guys on the club from when I wrestled in high school, but about third of the players were ex-military. I showed up at 5’10” and weighing 130 pounds. I had long hair in a pony tail and those military guys at first misjudged me as a “hippie”. They also thought I was too small to play.

Q: What was your first start in a game?

SS: I had practiced with Topeka Rugby Club a few weeks and a team that doesn’t exist anymore called the Kansas City Bulls came to Topeka. The Topeka guys didn’t pick me to play and the Bulls were short a player. I played for the Bulls and scored 4 tries on the Topeka club. That changed the Topeka guys’ attitude about me. A couple of years later, I was the captain of their club.

Q: What position did you play?

SS: In Topeka, I played wing & fullback. After I came to KU, I played wing exclusively and did so through the rest of my rugby career with the Kansas City Rugby Club.

Q: You were the starting wing or fullback and also the captain of the Topeka Rugby Club. So how did the move to KU come about?

SS: Um... you recruited me for one thing...in the spring of 1974 after KU beat us in Topeka. More than that however, I was looking for a way out. I grew up and went to high school in Topeka; I was going to college there and was looking for a change. I always enjoyed coming to Lawrence and the KU rugby club always seemed “big time” compared to Topeka. KU was far more organized; they played a tougher schedule, and had better players. If you are serious about any sport; you want to play with and against the “best”.

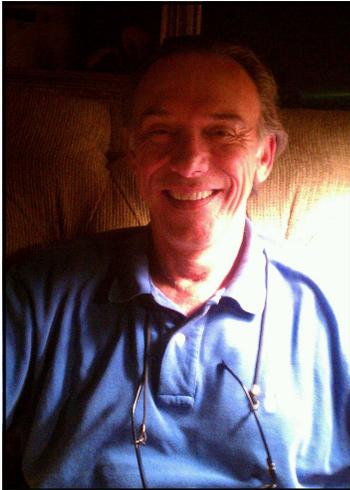
Q: Compare and contrast rugby at Topeka and KU.

SS: Topeka didn’t move the ball out to the wing very well, if at all. As a wing or fullback, I would wait for a stray ball to get kicked my way and then run an open-field return. My other role was to be the last-ditch tackler, if an opponent got through the rest of the team. I got pretty good at both duties, since that was my position, but I saw how the world might be if I played at KU. The KU centers fed the ball to the wing as a base play. I wanted that experience.

Q: What was it like to play rugby in KU’s backfield?

SS: They had a “system”. It wasn’t called-plays like football; it was more of an explanation of what we were trying to do as a group. Everyone understood the big picture. When I was playing outside of **Roger Walter**, our outside center; I knew by the way he was running where I should be so he could pass me the ball. I also knew without looking where our fullback, **Rich Coulson** would be as I moved around. Everyone was on the same page. We ran scissors and fake scissors. If it was a scissors, I’d cut inside Roger as he passed in front of me. I knew Coulson

would be on my outside and the inside center **Craig Oliphant** or the flyhalf **George Dalke** would be on other side of me in support after I had the ball. It was incredible. The base play was to get the ball all the way out to the wing. Once you showed the opponent you could do that, they had to bite on everything else you did in the game. They talk about “multi-phase rugby”. We didn’t start counting phases until the ball got to the wing.



what was your best game in rugby and why?

SS: It wouldn’t be a single game. I think it’s the entire fall 1974 season at KU, when we went deep into the Heart of America Tournament and won all those regular season games. We weren’t all that big, but there was a concerted effort to make everyone on that team a good ball handler. I felt every time I got the ball, I had an opportunity to do

something with it. It may have not been a score for me, but I could set up someone else for a score. It was a very unselfish team. I felt that we could play in a game where the other guys were bigger and faster than us and we would still win the game due to our teamwork. I mean, where else could a 130 pound guy have success? I’d say the club was also so “nurturing”. **Kieltyka** looked after everybody like he was your mom, you organized everything, and **Whitson** had been with the club forever and was an institution. We had that banquet at the end of that season and I guess it was the first time in my life I ever “got” the whole team thing. The guys were incredibly close, even though they were incredibly different from each other. I liked the practices as much as the games; I just really liked hanging out with those guys.

Q: Everyone seems to play “10-man rugby” today, where the ball is only passed out to one back and after he’s tackled, the forwards push over the ruck and then the ball comes out to just one back again and again. How do you think our old style of rugby would fare today playing against a team playing “10-man”?

SS: First off, I would never play wing on a rugby team today that played the “10-man” format. That would be like the experience that drove me off the Topeka club. I mean what do you do all day at wing... stand there with your thumb up your ___? I know that there have been some rule changes over the years that have made 10-man thinking so preva-

lent, but I still think you could attack with your backfield and score a lot of points. What’s troubling is that the skills of running and passing on a breakaway seem like a lost art. That used to be the whole idea; to have a breakaway run and feed the ball out to an uncovered teammate. Now you see games where a guy starts a breakaway and the whole play falls apart when they try to pass it to somebody. Another thing that seems to be a lost art is the soft pop kick. I used to get past my opposing wing and would be running alone with just the opposing fullback in front of me. I would put a soft kick 5 feet over his head, run around him, catch it, and score. You don’t see that done anymore.

Q: Great interview. Do you have anything else to offer?

SS: My son, Ian is in college now, but he used to go to high school here in Kansas City at Rockhurst. Ian did well in school, but I always made it a point to go to the “Meet the Teacher Night” wherever my kids went to school. I went to the event and Ian had a PE class, so I met with the teacher, who happened to be the varsity football coach. He was the legendary Coach Severino.

He started the conversation off by saying, “You look fit...are you an athlete?”

I said, “Mostly, I like to think that I was a pretty good rugby player in my day.”

Severino asked, “Where did you play?”

I said, “KU”

Severino’s eyes got big and he leaned forward in his chair and said loudly “**Renfro & Hassig!!!** I used to coach at Shawnee Mission West and those were the two best football players I **EVER** had at that school!!!”

Severino and I talked about Renfro, Hassig, and rugby for a full half hour. We didn’t talk about Ian at all until the end of the meeting. Severino apologized and offered, “Your son is a terrible bowler.” I said “I know; it runs in the family.” We had a good laugh. ****

Q: What about other players on the team?

SS: To start off with, **Bobby Friedman** was a great scrumhalf. He fed out terrific passes. **Bill McGillvray** was always a guy you could count on in a crunch and he was tough as nails. He was a fantastic kicker. He made some place-kicks that I never thought would go through. There was a little guy who played all the backfield positions at one time or another, named **Marv Oller**; I always thought he was great. I think **Roger Walter** used to pass up opportunities to score himself, just so he could spring someone else. **Rich Coulson** played behind me at fullback. I always knew that whatever happened on a play, **Coulson** “had my back”. My other wing was either **CC Buck** or **Steve Francisconi**. You know, I think that playing wing and fullback are interchangeable. One thing I was always proud of was the way that the wings and the fullback worked together on that club. If I were to identify one guy who was just an all-around great athlete and played 2nd row just because he was so big and tall, it was **Bryan Hunter**. I am sure the guy could have played anything. He was one of those guys that; pick a sport,...*fishing*...I am sure he was a *great* fisherman. He was just terrific.

Q: You played the last 7 years of your career at Kansas City Rugby Club, walking away from rugby in 1982 when you started playing polo. In your dozen years on the pitch,

Andy Sibbersen - KU's Big Flanker

KU Football

Coming from Omaha to Lawrence in the fall of 1969, I was full of excitement and anticipation. I had pledged at the Sigma Nu house, was on a scholarship for football, and had my first car...wow! Football started prior to school, so we had about a month in Lawrence for freshman football practice. We got to know each other. First I met **Hal Edwards** and **Tommy Oakson** and had a little free time to mess around. It soon became apparent the job of being on the football team as a freshman was full-time.

The head coach at that time was Pepper Rodgers and he had a great staff –many of whom would go on to their own great careers – Terry Donahue, John Cooper, and Dick Tomey to name a few. I was fully engaged and had a great freshman year – at that time you had freshman ball and then onto varsity. Unfortunately at that time the Big Eight was THE powerhouse conference in the country with the great teams of Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, and even Colorado. KU did not fair well and the next year Pepper and most of his staff were gone.

The second year, in late summer, the athletic department made the “wise” decision to move the entire football team, the men’s basketball team, and baseball team into the “new” Jayhawk Towers apartments that were adjacent to the Field House. We got assigned 3 roommates and were given our marching orders. Training table in the basement and we went right into two-a-days practices. It was a zoo. First year head coach Don Fambrough was a great guy and he worked hard to get a team together. I again did well that year, playing as an offensive guard, weighing in to 255. We had John Riggins in the back field. It was Riggins right, Riggins left, or Riggins up the middle. As a guard, I was in the middle of a lot of action. I played enough to letter as a sophomore, but things were starting to change.

Lawrence at that time had become a very liberal campus. Lots of protests, anti-war,



Fall 1973 game behind Oliver Hall

Pictured back to front: Bill McGillvray, John Hart, Craig Frazier, Steve Lange, Dave Gatchel, Andy Sibbersen, and partial of shoulder and head is Dave Hazelett.

anti-everything, riots that lead to burning the student union... It had gotten so bad that they eventually shut down the entire school that spring and we all had to take “pass/fail” grades. I was beginning to think that football and being a football player was not what it had seemed in the beginning, plus our team was miserable.

Spring ball was very hard that year, and I particularly had a big problem with my position coach. By the next fall, I had had it with football and gave up my scholarship. After that I took a year off from KU and traveled and worked construction jobs around the West. I actually hitchhiked all the way to Vancouver. By

the next fall I realized I needed to get back into school and graduate, so I headed back to Lawrence.

Taking Up KU Rugby

In the fall of 1973, Lawrence was still a hot spot. Everyone was protesting something. I got back into the student routine and started to hook up with some old friends. I was still in good shape and looking for something to do and I think it was about then that I first met up with the rugby club. **Hal Edwards or Tom Oakson** may have told me to come by one of the practices, which at that time was always followed by a trip to the closest bar. The first guys I remember meeting were **Steve Lange, CC Buck, Bill Mills, Joe Kieltyka, and Rick Whitson**. Three of them had a house out by the Hallmark warehouse; the "103 Club" and that became the Rugby Command Center for the next couple of years.

Rugby was fun, football was not fun. The rugby guys were a tight group and actually had some good success. The club roster size was usually between 20-25, and me being a "large" person meant I got into the second row or flanker spots. We had a player from Scotland and from Uruguay, who brought a lot of talent and experience and we learned quickly. We

were always broke. I can remember going into the Student Affairs offices at KU begging for a few dollars so our club team could travel to away matches. I think the most they ever allowed us for expenses was \$75 for the entire team, but we still thought we were pretty hot stuff. K-State had a very good team then due to all the army officers at nearby Ft. Riley. I remember playing in the Big 8 Tournament in spring 1974 at Missouri.

Life After KU

After I graduated in December 1974, I moved back to Omaha and was part of the first Greater Omaha Area Touring Side or GOATS. I played for a couple of more years, but then started a family – got very lucky and my wife Deb and I have our 35th anniversary coming up soon. I also got interested in golf. **Steve Lange** and I stayed in touch and have had similar carriers. He invited me down for a club match this year and we were able to hang out and also met up with **Joe Kieltyka, Rich Coulson, and Steve Swalwell**. It was neat to see them and we all still clicked. I'm looking forward for more opportunities to stay in touch. The 2014 reunion should be fun. I hope we all make it there.

Out.



Big Men - (above) 2nd row **Bryan Hunter** has his arm clutched by **Andy Sibbersen** between games at 1974 HoA tournament. Note relative size to players in foreground. The ageless Andy at 61 on right.

CC Buck – Mr. Rugby



In the course of writing the Old Boy Quarterly, we have and will continue to read about players who have contributed extraordinarily to the sport of rugby. Some did it mostly at KU and others stayed with the sport other places and achieved terrific accomplishments. CC Buck is certainly one of the Jayhawks who stand out.

Buck began playing on the KU rugby club as an undergraduate in 1971. The lanky 6'1" 180 lbs Buck started at least one game at every single backfield position by the time he graduated. He was the club's wing during the breakout fall 1974 season. He was one of the lively inhabitants of the "103 Club".

After he graduated in June 1974, he stuck around Lawrence to play that one last terrific season of rugby at KU. That December, Buck gave away nearly all his possessions, climbed into his car with his Old English Sheepdog Toby, and drove to Alaska to live. On arrival, he built his own remote cabin deep in the woods southeast of Anchorage and started playing rugby for the Bird Creek Barbarians.

That club quickly realized he was an enthusiastic and well rounded player. He became their player-coach-president. The Bird Creek Barbarians under Buck's leadership soon became the dominant team in the Alaska Rugby Union, sometimes going a couple of years without a loss to anyone. There was an unsuccessful movement in the union to force a

break up of the club to get parity in the league. Buck's notoriety led to him becoming the President of the Alaska Rugby Union. He continued to play rugby on the composite Alaska old boy team (The Oosiks*) that entered tournaments in the lower 48 & Hawaii, as well traveling on foreign tours. After his union presidency, Buck became a rugby referee and worked tournament games throughout the USA.

CC Buck owns a general contracting company in Anchorage. His fitness remains extraordinary even though he is 62 years old. Last winter Anchorage had a record 12 feet of snow. Buck **HAND-shoveled** (i.e. no machine) his driveway every day it snowed. The plow drivers used his open driveway to turn their rigs around.

Buck returns to the Kansas City area every now and then. Whenever he does, the popular Jayhawk always attracts a crowd of old friends. By the way, if you want to see Buck, he will be in Kansas City the week of November 19. Contact this newsletter's email address.

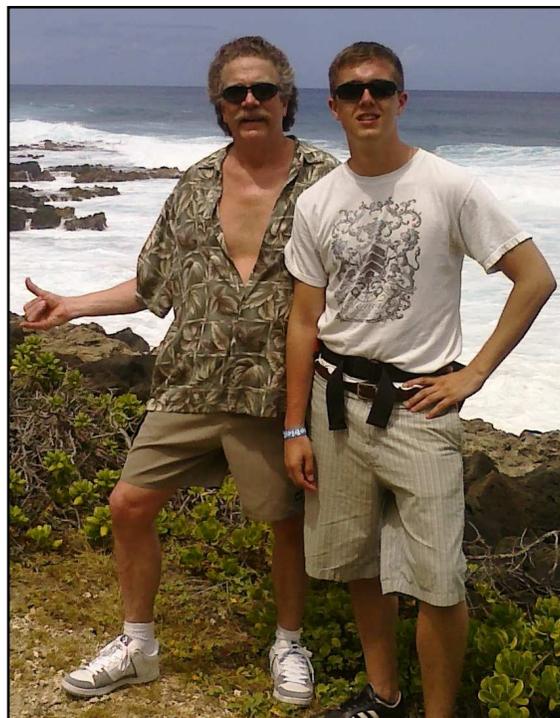
* You should Google: **Oosik**



Left - CC Buck (far) and Craig Haake (near) stand over a clobbered Rich Coulson in a 1974 game.

Photo from 1975 KU Yearbook

Right - CC Buck with son Quinlan on vacation in Hawaii today.



Rick Whitson – The Catalyst



Rick Whitson represents everything that has ever been great about the Jayhawks. Whitson mentored most of the players on the team for years, he was the first rugby player to occupy the rental house at 103 Iowa (which became known as the “103 Club”), he was the key figure in starting the alumni games, he was quietly behind lining up the field at 23rd & Iowa, and he was a fine front row player..

At 5’11” and 185 lbs, Whitson was hardly an imposing fellow. Yet he was drawn to the rugby club as an undergrad in 1965 when he attended a student club recruitment event at the Kansas Student Union. All the participating clubs set up tables. At the rugby club’s table **Pat Rapp & George Bunting** had a board with a big nail started into it. Men passing by were encouraged to see if they could drive the nail all the way into the board with just 1 shot of a hammer. If they did, they got a ticket for a free beer in a bar downtown called the Catacombs. It got Rick’s attention because the board game was so loud. The rugby guys were also a lot more fun than the other clubs.

The whole idea of the hammer & nail game was to get people to stop and talk. **George Bunting** told everyone he engaged to come to practice wearing some shorts and their “boots”. When Whitson

came to his first practice, there was one poor fellow who showed up wearing shorts and cowboy boots. Whitson wondered if his own football cleats were the wrong kind of boots and maybe you actually did play this new sport in cowboy boots.

His first game was at fly half and a former high school friend of his played scrum half. They played a team in Kansas City and both of them got consistently hit the minute they got near the ball. On the drive back to Lawrence, their legs got stiff. When they got home, they were so beat up, they had to sit and go up the stairs backwards. He quit rugby at the end of that 1965 season and focused on his studies...and avoidance of pain.

Whitson graduated and then moved back to Lawrence in 1971 to work for the KU Endowment Association. He decided to start playing rugby again. This time he played tighthead prop. This was the 1968-72 era and his first start on the “A team” was the fall 1972 Aspen opening round game against Air Force Academy. The Jayhawks lost that close game and Air Force won the Aspen Tournament. Whitson recalls Air Force had a kicking game where the sidelines coach would call out a grid coordinate on the field and the Air Force players would kick to that spot; with their team swarming the ball.

Rick moved from tighthead prop to hooker when a larger player named **Jon Mellon** started playing tighthead. Whitson was a terrific hooker and played in the front row for a couple of years between Mellon and **Steve Lange**. Rick retired from the sport in 1977 when his body pain got so bad; he had to lie on the floor to straighten his back. His doctor and (then) wife convinced him to give up the game.

First Alumni Game

It was Whitson’s idea to have the first

alumni game in the spring of 1974 (10th anniversary of the club). In his travels for the KU Endowment Association, he encountered former players that Whitson had met on the club in 1965. Rick used his contacts with KU Alumni around the country to find and contact the former players to invite them to the game. **The alumni game was an important thing for the club, because it connected the current players with their storied history.** The alumni were young enough to play and give the current team a good game. Whitson still has the big trophy cup in his basement that was presented to the winner of that first alumni game.

Game Memories

K-State’s **Jack Kenny** played hooker directly against Whitson for a couple of years. In one game, when the scrums’ front rows came together, Kenny would not duck his head and Kenny drove the top of his head into Whitson’s collar bone. After several scrums, Rick had so much pain in his collarbone; he could barely lift his arm. He asked Kenny to duck his head, but that only encouraged Kenny. So Whitson and tighthead prop **Jon Mellon** started to put their heads together as the front rows engaged which either pushed Kenny’s head up out of the front row bind, or better yet, allowed them to simultaneously hit Kenny in both his temples at once. By the second half, they had Kenny going crazy.

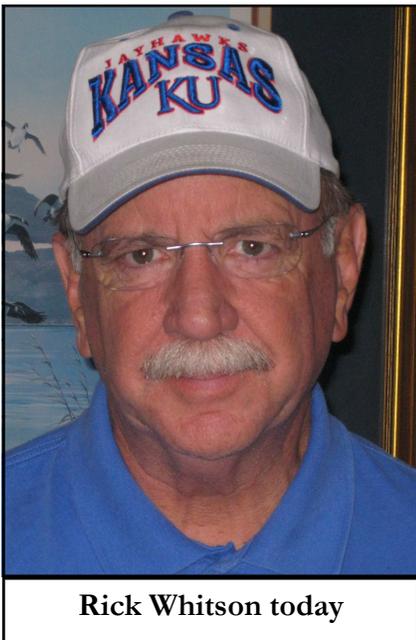
In another game in the fall of 1973, Whitson caught the opening kickoff in a game at Lawrence. He turned to present the ball into his forwards and a big opposing forward ran full speed into Whitson’s back to try to collapse the gathering Jayhawks. Whitson’s forwards had braced Whitson better than the opponent anticipated and the result was that the big forward’s front teeth got knocked out on the back of Whitson’s head. During a brief injury time-out (mostly for a bleeding opponent), Whitson pulled an embedded tooth from his scalp. Both Whitson and the other guy were tough enough to play the remainder of the game.

The 103 Club



Whitson was the first rugby player to live in the Lawrence rental house at 103 Iowa, nicknamed “The 103 Club”. This was a 3 bedroom, raised ranch that sat on several acres of land. It had no direct neighbors, so it was a perfect place for loud parties. The landlord was the owner of a number of large apartment complexes and their only interest was future development of the land under the house. The house was rented for a total of \$135/month.

Rick moved in during the summer of 1971. There were sports car club people living there before and slowly they got displaced by rugby players moving in. **Larry Carden** moved in during the summer of 1972, **Steve Lange** moved in when Carden moved out in January 1973. **CC Buck**, **Bill Byers**, **David Adudule**, **Rick Renfro**, and **Doug Hassig** all lived in this house over the years.



Rick Whitson today

There were two sets of disassembled, portable bleachers behind 103 Iowa that were hidden in a grove of weeds. They had been there so long; Whitson could not recall where they came from. **The bleachers were eventually erected along the rugby field sidelines behind Oliver Hall during the summer of 1973.** This helped raise the profile of the rugby games and gave the spectators somewhere to sit.

The 103 Club was the site of a lot of rugby parties after games. The most memorable party was the first Alumni Game in the spring of 1974. The party itself was just a picnic with a couple of kegs of beer, a big kettle of boiled hot dogs with potato salad etc. The alumni brought their old photo albums and shared the pictures with their former teammates and current players. The day got wilder when the first keg went dry and the group decided that they should have a keg tossing contest in the back yard. The finalists were alumni **John La-Rocca** and **Hal Edwards**. Both men were incredibly strong, but Edwards had the advantage of being a champion discus and shot putter. Edwards was able to spin and throw the keg further than La-Rocca could heave it. Alumni player **Bobby Reynolds** made a lasting mark on people’s memory when he put a ladder up to visit a bird house that was on a tall pole and “unloaded” some of his beer into the doorway of the bird house. (Thankfully, these were the days before cell phone cameras.)

The house’s basement had a big paint stain on the floor that was probably 10 x 8 feet and looked remotely like the state of Kansas. At one party, there was a contest to see if you could jump from Missouri to Colorado and clear the whole state of Kansas. Although you could run the length of the open basement to reach the Missouri line, the Colorado line was only 2 feet from the basement wall. The jumpers landed in Colorado and immediately had to deal with the wall. After a few attempts, there was a whole squad of jumpers who could successfully transit the state and not die in Colorado, so the stakes were ramped up. There was a bare light bulb in the ceiling somewhere over Salina. The game then was to transit the

state and knock out the light bulb with your head as you flew. The game finally had a “winner”, who therefore landed in the dark in Colorado and collapsed onto his back, holding his head. The partying group vacated the darkened basement and reassembled in the laundry room at the top of the stairs. It was noted that the laundry room ceiling was made of drywall and looked fairly soft. The game then shifted to jumping your head through the ceiling. That was quickly managed by at least two. The final act was when a player was lifted upside down and walked his dark footprints across the ceiling, starting at the back door, as through he had the entered the room from the outside. These “party trophies” in the laundry room lasted for years and gave the occupants something to tell visitors.

Whitson was an Army Reserve cook and cooked his squad a pair of large, government-issued turkey’s for a November reserve meeting the following day. There was a rugby club party the same night as he cooked. The players found the cooked birds cooling in the laundry room and started pulling bites of meat from the birds. Whitson discovered the pilfering and had to lock the birds in his car. The birds’ appearance was so modified by the snacking players, that when Whitson brought the turkeys to the reservists, he had to pre-slice them to cover up the crime.

The 103 Club had a screened porch that was a couple of feet off the ground. It had concrete supports at one end and was attached to the house at the other. The keg and so many players were on the porch in one party that the porch snapped from the house and dropped. The players on the porch rode it down and nobody fell down or spilled their drinks.

Years later, the landlord decided to develop the land under the 103 Club and had the rugby players vacate the home. The house was jacked up and relocated to another spot. It was a bittersweet moment. The rugby players such as **Rick Renfro** who had been the last tenants, followed the house on its journey to its new location.

The Rugby Pitch at 23rd & Iowa

After Title IX was passed, mandating more women's sports, there was a need to expand field sports. In 1974 the University concluded that the only logical place to build fields was on the KU Endowment Association's land on the NW corner of 23rd & Iowa. Whitson worked at the Endowment Association and realized that this was an opportunity to have a professionally graded and bermed field made for the rugby club. Whitson also realized that a request for the field would be better heard if it came from a student organization, rather than an employee of the Endowment Association. Whitson talked to the rugby club's president, **Steve Lange**, who then met with the newly appointed Director of Intramurals Sports. Lange took the club's press clipping to the meeting, anticipating that he

would have to explain the sport and the fact that they had a good club. The Director said he knew all about the club and just asked for a diagram with the field's unique dimensions. A regulation-size rugby pitch would be included in the layout of the new fields. (The construction and goal post installation occurred later.)

Personal Commitment to Fitness

When Whitson moved into the 103 Club, he started running 2 miles everyday after work. He ran through the summer of 1971 in the heat of day. By the time rugby started, Whitson was in terrific shape and could outlast most of the other athletes on the club. He kept up with his 7-day a week off season running through his entire rugby career.

The Hard Times and Hard Partying of 1973

In spring 1973, after the end of the 1968-72 era, the club lacked the numbers and quality athletes that had played in the prior years. Yet the club (foolishly) scheduled an ambitious schedule against their usual rivals and teams as far away as Omaha and Rolla. The games were sometimes scheduled for both Saturday and Sunday, in the same weekend, against different clubs. The wear and tear of the games was brutal on the Jayhawks that stuck it out. It was mostly social players who enjoyed the party as much as the game itself and didn't mind living out of their cars. **Whitson, Steve Lange, Jack Fluker, CC Buck** and **Bill Byers** were all part of that group. Whitson said by the end of the spring 1973 season, the pace of games reduced his weight 20 pounds.

The hard-partying club had one (unnamed) player in 1973 that assembled a number of unique "stunts" that enabled the club to be convincing winners of post-game parties. There was the "**Human Torch**", which involved running through a party with a 4 foot length of flaming toilet paper clenched in bare buttocks, the "**Abominable Snowman**" wherein an entire can of shaving cream was worn by an otherwise naked player, and the always popular "**Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**", which featured a willing female volunteer to lead seven players, walking on their knees while singing "Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho". Our hooker, **Jack Fluker** would put a clothes hanger through his horribly broken nose.

Perfect Attitude & Great Player

Over the years, Whitson was a solid player on some of the worst and some of the best teams to ever take the field in Lawrence. He approached his playing duties for both with the exact same enthusiasm. While most players avoid playing in the front row; Whitson loved it. He would always say "**It is the only position where you can grab your opponent and mess with him.**" He was a terrific student of leverage and technique. He shared his knowledge with scores of front row players. **More than anything, the affable Whitson was always the perfect mentor for a new recruit on a rugby club. If you started off working with Rick Whitson; you loved rugby the rest of your life. ******



At the beginning of the fall of 1974 season, there was a full-game inter-squad scrimmage with a referee. The "B team" forwards were matched with the "A team" backs and vis-a-versa. Obviously the new players had been more focused on KIELTYKA's coaching philosophy. That led to a reexamination of players by team and position. After the scrimmage, the combined sides retired to the Hawk for a few beers and songs. The poor guys who scored in the scrimmage were put upon to dance the "Zulu Warrior" which entailed throwing off your uniform, while the team sings a senseless song with a thumping beat.

First KU Alumni Game - Spring 1974

Key Man: Rick Whitson



ALUMNI (Standing L-R) Nick Niewald, Jack Klien, Tom Walls, Bill Chambers, John Brown, Bill Mills, Gene Roberts, Jay Reed, Jay Flanders, Skip Quimby, Hal Edwards. **(Kneeling L - R)** Rick Whitson, John LaRocca, Pat Rapp, Mike Wiley, Dick Holloway, Hank Winslow, Tim Gillan, Larry Carden, Joe Flannery



STUDENTS (Standing L - R) Bill Altman, Larry Bond, Peter White, Rick Whitson, Bob Kiene, Cole Guyer, Rick Langenwalter, Andy Sibbersen, CC Buck, Lee Mills, Jacques Fluker, Steve Gasper, Craig Frazier, Steve Lange, Bill McGillvray, Jon Mellon
(Kneeling L - R) Tom Oakson, John Yost, Stan Mentzer, Roger Walter, Rich Coulson, Marv Oller, Crazy Dave Moore
(Laying L - R) Roberto "Bobby" Friedman, Bill Byers

Scrumdown

THE PUBLICATION FOR AND ABOUT RUGBY

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April, 1975

Here is the story that was published in the spring of 1975 in a national magazine, but the back story is pretty good, too.

The tournament and the final game weeks later were all played on a field of muddy ooze in near freezing temperature. The ball was very difficult to handle and players would slip and fall if they tried to change course. The Jayhawks abandoned its usual ball control, passing game and resorted to giving the opponents a steady diet of short, up & under kicks from scrum-half **Roberto Friedman** and flyhalf **George Dalke**. That kept us playing on the opponent's goal line until we scored.

Kansas University Dumps Missouri in Big 8 Championship

By Steve Lange

Kansas University beat the defending champions, the University of Missouri, March 29 by a score of 7-0 to become the new Big Eight Champions. The date waxes significant to this year's event because the tournament began March 1st. The miserable weather banished the teams after the first day, forcing them to make individual arrangements with the foes they were to face in the consolation and final games.

In the days before the games at the University of Missouri, snow fell melting just before game time, but in time to leave the pitch a virtual impenetrable mire.

In the first round MU drew Oklahoma St., the only team not to show. Kansas St. downed Nebraska, KU defeated Colorado and Oklahoma beat Iowa St.

In the second round, Kansas St.'s backfield quickly scored on MU. But MU ultimately went on to win 10-4. Kansas faced the rookie Oklahoma team and got on the scoreboard first by smothering a ball kicked into goal. At half, KU led 6-4. Two differing game plans showed themselves in the second period and Oklahoma continued to try to run and pass in the ankle deep ooze. Kansas on the other hand elected to keep passing to a minimum, concentrating instead on kicking the slippery ball. An assortment of line drives and high pops into openings kept KU in the attack, and KU eventually won 14-4.

During the night the tem-

perature dropped, freezing the churned-up field so that all the teams refused to play the next day, citing the field condition as being entirely too dangerous. MU could not provide additional fields on such short notice and that is when the remaining, albeit the most important, games were rescheduled on an individual basis. KU agreed to return to MU on March 29 for the championship test.

By then the field had been rolled flat and the only part that still was mud was situated on the spectator side of the field. Reagon Malone, chairman of the Heart of America Rugby Union's Referee's Society, took time off from his calling games at the Easter Ruggerfest in St. Louis to officiate the game.

MU played with the wind during the first half, but was unable to score. In the second half, KU kicked an easy penalty kick for three points. Then with only minutes remaining KU surprised MU with a passing movement from a penalty situation within 25 yards of the MU goal. Throughout the game KU had either kicked for touch booted up and unders. When this penalty was awarded close to the sidelines, MU bunched its forwards across from KU's scrum in anticipation of an up and under. A kick was faked and the ball swiftly fed out to the wing who dashed for the score.

With its win KU has the option of hosting the tournament next year, and has accepted, planning to stage the event in late March or April.



The nearly-frozen ooze of the 1975 MU field.
Note the snowy field in the background.

Some friends of our # 8, **Joe Kieltyka** purchased an old Greyhound bus that had been gutted of seats. At the conclusion of each round, the entire KU team of soaked & freezing players jumped into the bus and got driven up onto campus to MU's field house. The players ran directly into the warm showers, wearing their muddy gear. The uniforms got washed in the showers by the players. The MU athletic department was nice enough to put the clothes in their driers. At the start of each game, the KU players were warm and dry.

In the weeks leading up to the final, we decided that in the final the Jayhawks would disburse a forward or two behind the KU backs in lineouts to help field any MU punts and assure that MU could not run past a KU back who might slip & fall.

The depth of the Jayhawks' club came into play in this important game. Here are some examples:

Roberto Friedman had played terrific games at scrum half in the first day of the tournament, he was out of the country

when we played the final. **Marv Oller** played scrumhalf in the final game. Marv had been a multi-position back for several seasons. He took a beating delivering the ball to the Jayhawk backfield and was a key to the win.

Lee Mills had been the starting 2nd row for over a year. He played in the first games and could not make the final game. His replacement was the impossibly tall **Bob Kiene**, who could reach up and pull down lineout balls even if the mud was too soft to manage a jump.



Dropped into coverage, flanker Bill McGillvray and prop Steve Lange in Big 8 championship's opening lineout



A bloody scrumhalf **Marv Oller** gets a post-game laugh from flanker **Dan Bedora**. Flyhalf **George Dalke** in background.

Steve Swalwell was a terrific wing on a dry field, but he turned his ankle running to practice and was not able to play. **Paul Miller** played wing in the final. We knew the game would be played on a soft field. Miller was a big player at 6'1" and 195 lbs. He had been a hurdling star in high school. He was able to both cover defensively and score the game's only try.



Before game, L - R: Marv Oller (scrumhalf), George Dalke (flyhalf), Steve Francisconi (wing), Steve Lange (prop), Bill McGillvray (flanker), Paul Miller (wing). McGillvray and Miller scored the final game's only points.

The Big 8 victory and other matches from this period proved that the Jayhawks had finally returned to the status of a regional power in college rugby. ****

After game L - R: George Dalke (flyhalf), Jon Mellon (prop), Dan Bedora (flanker), Steve Lange (prop), Bill McGillvray (flanker in background), and Joe Kieltyka (#8)
Trophy is still displayed in the Jayhawks' Clubhouse above Johnny's Tavern.



The K-State Saga (confessions from the front row)

By Steve Lange (1972 -1975)



KU (left) playing K-State in Fall 1974 @ KU

The Jayhawks' #8 **Joe KIELTYKA** snares the K-State scrumhalf as KU flanker, **Andy SibbernSEN** springs to finish him off. KU's other flanker, **Bill McGILLVRAY** is in far left of picture. Scrumhalf **Roberto "Bobby" Friedman** supports. Hooker, **Rick Whitson** and tighthead prop **Jon Mellon** are coming out of front row. 2nd row **Lee Mills** is peering over KIELTYKA's back. Also pictured to right of SibbernSEN's head is K-State hooker, **Jack Kenny**, who is mentioned in this article of the newsletter.

Picture from the 1975 KU Yearbook

The Jayhawks' biggest rivalry in my era was with our neighboring university, K-State. The K-State club was formed in 1972. The heart of their team was not students from the university, but a handful of Army officers from nearby Fort Riley. They had played rugby for years at West Point. Some had also played on the West Point Football Team. They included the team captain & flanker **Steve Scales**, **Mike Ryan** at wing & center (who went on to play rep side), and a big,

tall forward named **Robert Hensler**. The army officers did a great job training the remainder of the team made up of K-State students and had a very good club within a season. Unfortunately, K-State came along at the same time the Jayhawks' dominant 1968-1972 era had passed and KU started out the series in a re-building mode. The games against K-State tell the story of the Jayhawks' 1973-1975 era.

Game # 1

The first K-State game against the Jayhawks was in the spring of 1973 at KU. The Jayhawks' captain, **Hal Edwards** had tried to prep the Jayhawks for the match, but the ranks of seniors on the Jayhawks' side had thinned at practice and games. I was sick the day of the game and probably shouldn't have played. All I remember is K-State beat the Jayhawks in a close match.

Game # 2 – The Penalty Try Game

In the first weekend of October 1973, the Jayhawks played K-State on their pitch. Our front row featured me at loosehead prop, **Rick Whitson** was the other prop and **Jack Fluker** was our hooker. Big **John Hart** was playing every prop's dream at flanker. The K-State hooker was a hot-headed fellow named **Jack Kenny**. The red-haired Kenny was so quick tempered; it was said he once got in a brawl during a pre-game cleat check. Kenny was the most disliked player our club played against and Kenny cherished the role of being the Jayhawks' villain (and still does).

The game had no scoring and was hard hitting. We were finally in a set scrum on their 5 yard line (it was yards back then), K-State was going to put in the ball on the far side of the scrum from me. The referee was also over there to observe the play. This was a classic opportunity to score a try by pushing the other team's scrum over the goal line however; we would need to win the hook.

I remembered a trick that **Rick Whitson** (my housemate and mentor at prop) had told me somewhere along the line and decide that this was the perfect time to try it out. This would be the only time I tried this in my 10 year career. Just before the K-State scrumhalf came to the tunnel to put in the ball, I let go of K-State's prop **Ray Shank**, reached down the tunnel with my left hand, and gently covered the eyes of K-State's Kenny. The ball came in, Kenny was blind, Fluker won the hook, and my hand went back to Ray Shank. The whole thing lasted about 3 seconds. Nobody knew what had just happened except my end of the front row's tunnel. Shank and Kenny were dumbfounded and started to loudly curse. They were drowned out by our # 8 **Joe Kieltika** yelling **"Drive!...Drive!...Drive!..."**. Joe kept the ball in the pocket between his feet and the feet of our second rows as we pushed the squirming K-State pack across their own goal line. When the ball crossed the line, Joe fell on it to score the match's first points. We were near the posts, so the try was converted.

The remainder of the game, K-State's

prop Ray Shank and his flanker behind him **Jim Swift** covered my eyes with their hands in every set scrum. Of course I was not the hooker, it was not a 5-yard scrum, and I knew it was coming. I either swatted their hands away or... better yet... held onto their hands and tried to bite them. (I learned you can't really bite somebody while you are wearing a mouth guard.)

Late in the game, the score was 6-3 Jayhawks, when a K-State back kicked the ball deep down field and it came to rest near our goal line. Jayhawks' center **Craig Haake** ran side-by-side with the K-State back and on arrival at the ball, Haake kicked the ball through the back of the goal area. The ref did something I had never before experienced... He awarded K-State a **"penalty try"** right between the uprights. The moment the conversion kick cleared the posts, the ref whistled the end of the game. The K-State side of the field erupted with joy over the "exciting conclusion". The players and spectators on the Jayhawk side were open-mouth-floored by a ref making a controversial, game-changing call, and then not even giving us the courtesy of a few more minutes to play. The ref quickly gathered his gear and fled the field.

We went to the after-party in someone's front yard in Manhattan, but didn't really feel like singing any songs. After a few beers, we loaded up to go home. I had Craig Haake and a couple of other players in my 1968 Dodge Coronet 440 Magnum R/T. As we got to the car, Haake borrowed some red lipstick from a young lady in our group. He dropped his shorts and we printed a big red "HP" on his bare buttocks. Haake loaded into the front passenger seat, resting his red moon out the window. We slowly motored down the block and came to a stop in front of the yard party. Only one or two at the party initially noticed our salute, so I laid on the horn. The crowd reacted by running towards the car. I revved up the car and left with spinning tires. The whole episode should have ended there, but it didn't.

Misinformation & Threats

I was still angry when I called in the

score to the University Daily Kansan. The article appeared in the school paper like this.

Ruggers Nip K-State

The University of Kansas rugby club yesterday beat the Kansas State University rugby club, 6-3, in Manhattan.

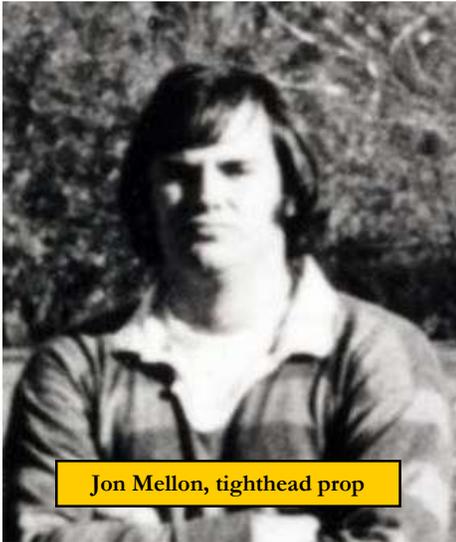
John Kieltyka scored a four-point try for KU and John Hart added a two-point conversion. KU scored all its points in the first half.

K-State scored on a three-point penalty kick in the second half of the closely played match.

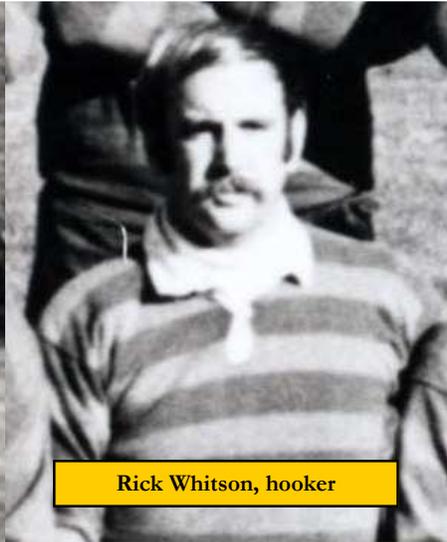
I left out the dead ball points awarded after the last whistle. It was the wrong thing to do and regret it now, but I guess I thought they could screw me in Manhattan, but I didn't need to bring their baloney home with me. OK...this whole episode should have surely ended here, but it didn't.

The next weekend, KU played K-State in football at KU. During a quiet part of the game, between quarters, when all you hear is the murmur of the crowd; the announcer came on the PA system: **"Attention...Earlier today, the KU rugby club played the K-State rugby club in Manhattan and defeated K-State 6-3."** (Followed by the quiet applause for a sport nobody understood or cared about. They applauded just because it was news that K-State took one in the shorts.) I was in the stands and almost blew a drink of Pepsi through my nose. I wondered how this fictitious score on the wrong day had gotten on the PA system. It turned out a spectator on the rugby sidelines had the ability to get things announced on the football stadium PA system. This person shared the belief that we had been "had" and decided to return the favor with the PA announcement. As I watched the remainder of the football game, I wondered where this story would go.

Well... the next weekend was the Heart of America Tournament in Swope Park in Kansas City. I went to the meeting that they hold before the tournament, where the format is explained. On the way back to my team, I was confronted by K-State's flanker **Jim Swift** and center **Rick Holland**. They were of course



Jon Mellon, tighthead prop



Rick Whitson, hooker



Steve Lange, loosehead prop

pissed and said “We understand that you announced at the football game that you won the rugby game... well we feel sorry for you at the Rockhurst Invitational next weekend in Kansas City!” The way they said it made me wonder if the “you” they were talking about was the singular me or the plural club, but I said “We look forward to seeing you there.”

Game # 3 – The Rockhurst Cage Fight

It was the last weekend in October 1973. The event was a 4-team round-robin affair played off Troost in Kansas City. I am sure that Rockhurst was involved in the games as the host, but all I remember is our K-State game, which was the last of the games on Sunday. It was a gray, windy day that stayed in the 40’s. Two teams that hated each other kicked off and proceeded to collectively kick each other’s asses. My memory is that in 1974 this was played on a football field, meaning it was a good 20 yards narrower than a regulation rugby pitch. The small field kept all the players in close proximity and gave the game the feeling of a cage-fight. It was the roughest game I was ever in. Every tackle was a body slam. Players got hit before they touched the ball and after they kicked or passed it. If you had the ball, the oncoming team looked like charging bulls. Both teams took as much as they gave. The Jayhawks had a big forward named **Andy Sibbensen** who had just quit playing guard on the KU football team. Andy got kicked in the face below his left eye. **It opened a horizontal gash deep enough to expose his face muscles, which started to puff**

out through the opening. Sibbensen was so angry; he stopped only to have the gash held shut with a strip of athletic tape. He finished the game before he got 10 stitches at nearby Menorah Hospital. The game’s ref ...by no coincidence... was a former KU player from an earlier era who knew all about the earlier “penalty try game”. He seemed to whistle many of K-State’s backfield passing movements dead for forward passes, which made K-State suspect they were playing in a fixed game. That only added to the merriment. Every time K-State got something going and made a pass; they were whistled back to a set scrum where I faced a livid Kenny in their front row and got to chuckle at him. The score became immaterial. At the end of it, I think K-State won by a field goal. I have zero memory of an after party. However, I remember peeing blood for 2 days after the game.

Game # 4 – Sibbensen’s Revenge

In spring 1974, the local rugby scene became more organized with the creation of a real-live, honest-to-goodness, referee’s society. We played K-State in the old football stadium on their campus. The game had a ref that both teams agreed would not cook the deal. K-State had all three of their iconic army officers on the pitch. For some reason, I ended up playing prop against the weight-lifting, Company Commander, **Robert Hensler** instead of Ray Shank. (Maybe K-State was figuring a way to punish me.)

The game was heated, as they always

were. Midway in the game, K-State was awarded a penalty kick and the ref then made another quick whistle against the Jayhawks for not retiring a full 10 yards. The ref had K-State pick up the ball and advanced 10 yards to a new mark. When the ref then whistled a **2nd time** for another 10 yard violation, the Jayhawks’ big flanker, **Andy Sibbensen** “lost it”. Andy either was mixed up about what was going on (official story) or decided we were getting screwed again by a ref and would take no more (probable real story). K-State’s backfield star, **Mike Ryan** bent to pick up the ball to advance to the next mark of the ref. As Ryan came out of his crouch and had yet to look up field, Sibbensen was in a full-speed charge. Sibbensen drilled Ryan with his big shoulder. Ryan somersaulted backwards, nearly knocked out. Sibbensen was ejected. We were short a player the remainder of the match because it was an ejection. We lost the game. As club president, I had to write some sort of apology letter to the referee society the next week in order to get Sibbensen reinstated as a player. 15 years later, I was at a party with Mike Ryan on a big boat in the Lake of the Ozarks. We got talking about that hit. Ryan told the collective group it was the hardest shot he ever took. He likened it to walking down the street and someone running up and cold-cocking you out of nowhere.

Game # 5 – Exploiting the Brawls

In the fall of 1974, the Jayhawks became a much improved club. We had a core of players who had now been together over a year. We more than doubled the size of

the squad with some good recruiting. We also added two experienced players from other teams. **Bryan Hunter** had been K-State's 2nd row and he transferred to KU. I never fully appreciated Hunter's talent until we had him on our team. He was a terrific jumper and athlete honed from his time spent playing basketball at the perennial state champion, Wyandotte High School. I think that to this day, Hunter was the best player to ever "kick for touch" at KU. The other addition was **Steve Swalwell**. The wispy-built wing had been Topeka RFC captain the prior year and he transferred to KU, so he could be fed scoring passes by the Jayhawks' great centers. Swalwell could softly kick a ball ahead and recover those kicks to keep on going. He was a prolific scorer.

K-State played us in Lawrence in mid-September. The Jayhawks got on the board first with a penalty kick by **Bill McGillvray**. Then K-State was awarded a penalty kick 10 yards from the Jayhawks' goal line. The K-State forwards massed in a shoulder-to-shoulder wall a couple of yards behind the ref's mark. Their backfield spread on the wide side of the field... It was a trick play... Their big flanker, **Steve Scales** sprinted out from hiding behind their wall of forwards. The toed ball was pitched to him and Scales headed for the corner flag on the short side of the field. Swalwell and I were the only two Jayhawks standing in the short side gap. We both hit Scales at once, but he had enough momentum to knock the air out of me and slide to the flag for a try. It was 4-3 K-State at half-time.

The rules were different in 1974 about fighting. If the ref threw you out for fighting, your team played short the rest of the game. It was a draconian game-changer and was especially so if the man kicked out played a hard-to-replace position. The KU/K-State game always had lots of fights. We noticed that whenever there was a scuffle, the K-State players would momentarily abandon their positions and run to break up the fight. At halftime, the Jayhawks resolved that when (not if) there was a fight in the second half, the Jayhawks would ignore it and exploit the opportunity to attack the depleted K-State ranks for a score. We would not do anything that would take

the ball out of play and allow the referee to stop the game. It worked as planned. **In a single 5 minute span of time**, a series of scuffles broke out followed by a quick succession of 3 tries by the Jayhawks' 2nd row **Lee Mills** (no relation to Bills Mills), flanker **Andy Sibbersen**, and then by 2nd row **Bryan Hunter**. It wasn't until the Jayhawks' emotional scrumhalf **Bill Byers** ran by the K-State team and taunted them with "You fight – We score!!!" that they figured out what was happening. The fights and scoring then ended and the game finished out 22-4 Jayhawks.

Game # 6 – Easy Shuts Outs

We played K-State the last weekend in April 1975 in Lawrence as part of a four-team round robin event we hosted that included the University of Denver and the University of Arkansas. The Jayhawks beat all three opponents that weekend by convincing shut outs, including a 20-0 drubbing of K-State. **(Note: At this point, the Jayhawks had not lost to a college club in a year. Most college games were shut-outs where the Jayhawks ran up the score.)**



The game in the spring of 1975 was mostly significant because the KU/K-State game became "**The Governor's Cup**". Newly elected Governor Bennett had an English-born wife named Olivia. She was willing to attend the rugby game and award a large plaque or cup that had been purchased for the event.

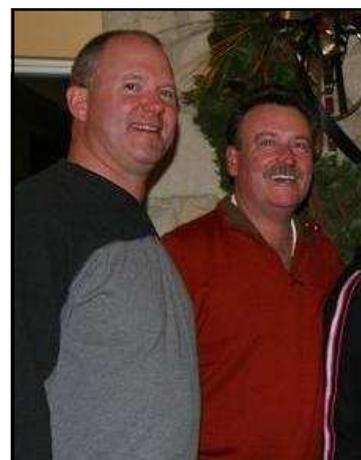
In the week leading up to the game, I received a surprising phone call from my direct opponent, K-State prop **Ray Shank**. We had been beating on each other for years and then catching a beer after the game. He suggested he come up and I show him the bars in Lawrence the night *before* the game. (Mutually assured

dehydration.) I took him up on the idea and we became great friends.

Epilogue

I guess this is what is so cool about rugby (or maybe it's the Stockholm Syndrome)... After I graduated from KU in 1975, I ended up playing prop and being the forwards coach for a new club in Kansas City called Johnson County RFC. It was founded that fall by K-State players, **Jim Swift** and **Rick Holland**; the same guys who promised us/me a stomping at Rockhurst. **Ray Shank** and I were their props. The four of us also played together on a number of composite teams that went to tournaments around the country. Other players on those same composite teams were the Jayhawks' **Steve Swalwell**, **George Dalke**, **Roger Walter**, **Bill Byers** and even **Bill Mills** playing in the sunset of his career.

After living in Wichita a few years, I moved back to Kansas City in the mid 1980's. **Ray Shank** and I shared a house until I got married. Then when Ray got married, I was in his wedding along with **Steve Scales** and **Jack Kenny**. In the 1990's Jack Kenny and I had big cabin cruisers in the same marina on the Lake of the Ozarks. Kenny and his wife became friends with me and my wife. We went on winter vacations with the Kenny's in Florida and have spent a number of New Years at the Kenny's house in St. Louis. As Jack likes to say, "**We were just a bunch of fun-loving rascals**".



(L-R) Steve Lange & Jack Kenny
Recent Photo on New Years
Almost 40 years after "their troubles"

Rugby Shorts

EMail to the editor from Jim Slaughter

Here is an enhancement of the "Gun Story" portion of **Hal Edwards'** interview in the last newsletter edition. Hal noted during his interview that he was foggy on occupants of the car on the way to the 1970 Aspen Ruggerfest and all details. I went with the main points of the story. However, since I now get to name more former rugby players by re-telling the details, here is the "official version" as told by the driver of the car that day, **Jim Slaughter**.



Steve, we were in my 1967 Chevy Impala on the way to the 1970 Aspen Ruggerfest. There were four of us, myself, **Mitch Rainen, Harry Zecy, and Hal Edwards**. We pulled off I-70 on an exit west of Salina and into a closed gas station to put chains on the tires. I had the driver side door open and was backing the car up at Hal's direction to get the chains on. Hal was on his knees by the rear tire fitting them on as I backed over them. I heard the passenger side door open and just figured it was Harry or Mitch getting back in. That's when the gun went into my ribs. The guy had gotten in the car, sat next to me, and stuck the gun in my ribs. He had a wife and kid; they sat in the back.

Hal never saw the couple get out of the VW and climb into the Impala. He had no idea they were there until he jumped into the back seat and saw a woman with a baby in her arms. So we were three in the front and three in the back; bench seats. Harry was the first one to see the

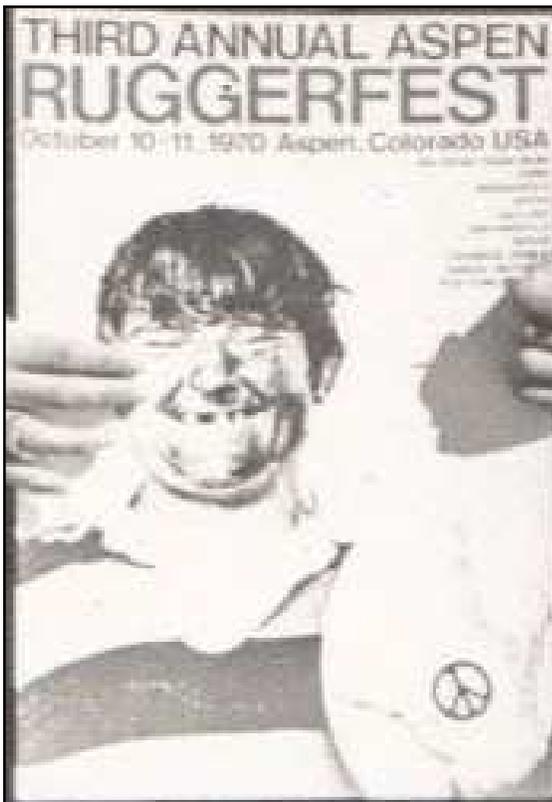
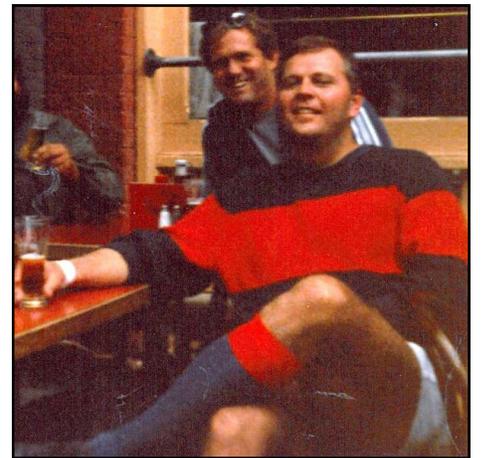
gun (after me of course; having it shoved in my side). I did not say a thing. Harry was afraid to say anything.

We drove on I-70 through the storm at about 10 to 15 mph. When the sun came up, we had gone around 30 or 45 miles. We got off at a gas station, we gave them some food for breakfast, and they went their own way. They were arranging to get back to their abandoned VW, which was still several miles back East off the exit on I-70. They never said a word. Not thank you...nothing.

Steve, that particular Aspen week-end was never equaled in my experience with rugby. Never again found quite the fun and excitement of that trip. It was my first trip into the mountains. An early season blizzard. Great lodge and fireplace atmosphere. That was when Aspen was great skiers, rugby players, and real bars. Not the private jet haven it is now.

Met some great guys from U of Colorado and the guy on that year's ruggerfest poster with the missing teeth...his name was Simpson...former offensive lineman (center) for USC. Best dude I have ever met playing rugby except for guys like **John Brown**. Thanks again,

Jim



Jim Slaughter (in red) has a beer with **Bill Mills** in Aspen in 1985.

Jim was a big 6'3" 250 lbs forward who played during the great 1968-1972 era. Not only a good player who was surprisingly quick at his size, he was also one of the most entertaining players on the club.

Do you have feedback?

Send me an email.

If I like it, I'll post it here in the next newsletter. Please include contact information.