



# MICAP RECAP

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June 2007

(A Publication of the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems)

## Dear Colleagues,

Because MICAP's *Vision Statement* includes tobacco, other drugs, and gambling, as well as concerns for the abuse of alcohol, a Guest Editorial by the Detroit Free Press Sports Columnist, Mitch Albom will help us to think in terms of the many and tight "ties" between sports and booze and tobacco in our nation. Our special Thanks to Mitch Albom and the Detroit Free Press for allowing us to reprint his May 7, 2007 column.

Because of our concern for the abuse of beverage alcohol, we also support for the *Center for Science in the Public Interest's* project to ban booze advertising from NCAA Sporting Events by the year 2015. Almost 250 Colleges and Universities across our nation have already "signed on" to that pact. How can you help? If you are acquainted with a Trustee of YOUR Alma Mater, contact them and "nudge" them to work to sign on to that pact. Mitch Albom's article will also encourage you to do that.

Because our *Vision Statement* includes tobacco, the another item in this MICAP-RECAP tells of Tobacco Companies which are raising the ante on addiction and reaching to the youth of our nation to replace smokers who have quit. Since I have lost a brother because of tobacco and alcohol abuse, I take a personal interest. Our thanks to the American Council on Alcohol Problems for allowing us to use this article. I hope you find your reading of this challenging.

Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, President, AADIF/MICAP Board of Trustees

# CARDS PITCHER'S DEATH WON'T CHANGE CULTURE

By Mitch Albom, Detroit Free Press Sports Columnist

Josh Hancock is dead. That fact does not change. He was dead the day the accident happened. He was dead the day the Cardinals attended his funeral. He was dead the day they glumly returned to baseball, wearing his number on their sleeves.

And he is dead today, with the toxicology report showing he was drunk by nearly twice the legal limit when his Ford Explorer plowed into a tow truck.

He is dead today with the news that he was talking on his cell phone at the time of the crash – talking to a woman about meeting her at a bar.

He is dead today with the news that there were 8.55 grams of marijuana and a glass pipe found in his vehicle.

Josh Hancock, who was only 29, a relief pitcher, a World Series champion, is no less dead this morning and no less mourned by those who loved him than he was when no one knew these facts.

But the shadow thrown by his death has changed, from tragic to senseless. Because we'll never know if he might be alive if he hadn't gotten in that car. Or, hadn't been drinking before he did.

## Same horrible outcome, different athlete

"I think it's probably a wake-up call to everybody," St Louis general manager Walt Jocketty told the media.

No offense to Jocketty, but that wake-up call has been ringing for so long, no one hears it anymore. How many more athletes have to do damage while inebriated? When I got into this business more than 20 years ago, I was writing about Pelle Lindbergh, the Philadelphia Flyers' goalie who died after smashing his Porsche into a wall. Guess what? He was drunk.

A few years later, I was writing about Reggie Rogers, the Lions' defensive lineman. He ran a light, killed three teenagers and was convicted of negligent homicide. Guess what? He was drunk, too.

I can't remember how many booze-related injuries, arrests or acts of violence I've covered in this space. Far too many. Now I'm writing about Hancock.

Nothing has changed. If anything, alcohol is bigger than ever. We drink before games in parking lots. Beer ads blanket stadiums and TV broadcasts. There

are few words more familiar to sports fans than "frosty cold."

Heck, the stadium where the Cardinals play – where Hancock pitched – is named for a beer company.

For years, baseball has laughed in the face of bad booze news, even offering beer in the home team's locker room after games. It was part of the post-game ritual. We all took it for granted. You'd see players swigging brews in their skivvies and you knew their cars were parked in the lot just outside. What did we thank? The vehicles drove themselves home?

## They Think They're Bulletproof

Now the Cardinals say they are banning alcohol from their clubhouse. Hancock's death – and manager Tony La Russa's recent DUI arrest – has given the team religion. But many baseball teams still offer beer in the home clubhouse, as well as on team planes. And athletes still think they're invincible.

How else do you explain Hancock? Just three days before his fatal crash, he'd been in another auto accident. His SUV was sticking out into an intersection when a tractor-trailer sped past and tore off his front bumper. A few more inches and he might have died. It was 5:30 a.m.

When most people survive something like that, they thank their stars and straighten up. Instead, Hancock rented an Explorer because of the damage to his SUV. A few days later, he drank, drove and died. He had enough money. He could have hired drivers. He could have hired the fanciest limousine. He could have called for a cab that night. He didn't.

"He loved being a baseball player," his teammate, Randy Flores, told the media. "...One of the great things about being a ballplayer is you can act like a kid."

Not behind a wheel. It's simple. You cannot get in a car after drinking. You do, and you start driving to your funeral – or worse, someone else's.

John Hancock is dead. That is sad. Heartbreaking. That hasn't changed one bit. But those who looked to the heavens and cried "Why?" should look to Hancock's photo and ask the question there first.

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# HARVARD STUDY CONFIRMS TOBACCO COMPANIES INCREASED NICOTINE LEVELS IN CIGARETTES.

Highlights Need for FDA Regulation of Tobacco.

*(Reprinted by permission of the American Council on Alcohol Problems)*

Washington, DC -- A new study released today by the Harvard School of Public Health shows the Critical need for Congress to enact legislation granting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority over tobacco products. The Harvard study expands on and confirms an August 2006 study released by the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health that found that tobacco companies have deliberately increased the levels of nicotine in cigarette smoke since 1998. The FDA legislation would require tobacco companies to disclose to the FDA changes in their products and provide FDA the authority to require them to reduce levels of constituents, like nicotine that make them more harmful or more addictive.

Manufacturers of food, drugs and even pet Foods are required to disclose to the FDA and the Public changes in their products in order to protect the public health. Only the tobacco industry is exempt from these basic public health protections. These studies demonstrate that what the tobacco Industry knows and what consumers don't, can kill us.

Both the Harvard and the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health studies found that nicotine levels in the three cigarette brands that are most popular among youth smokers (Marlboro, Newport, and Camel) have increased significantly. According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, nicotine levels in R.J.Reynolds' menthol Kool brand increased by 20 percent during (the)1998-2004 (period). The Harvard study uses sophisticated methods of analysis and also includes data from 1997 and 2005, demonstrating conclusively that there is a clear upward trend in the levels of nicotine found in Marlboro.

These studies add to the growing evidence that as smoking rates continue to decline, and more smokers try to quit, tobacco companies are actively trying to maintain addiction among smokers and (also) addict a new generation of replacement smokers. The fact that the tobacco companies have been able to secretly increase nicotine levels in tobacco smoke occurred only because no federal or state agency currently has regulatory authority over cigarettes or what tobacco companies put in cigarettes.

Legislation to allow the FDA to regulate tobacco should be given a high priority and scheduled for action early this year. The proposed legislation would grant the FDA the authority and resources to stop harmful tobacco company practices that continue to addict children, mislead consumers and devastate the nation's health. The FDA would have authority to restrict tobacco advertising and promotions, especially to children; stop illegal sales of tobacco products to children; ban candy-flavored cigarettes, which clearly are starter products for young new smokers; prohibit health claims about so-called "reduced risk" products that are not scientifically proven or that would discourage current tobacco users from quitting or encourage new users to start; require larger and more informative health warnings on tobacco products; and prohibit terms such as "light", "mild" and "low-tar" that have misled consumers into believing that certain cigarettes are safer than others. Enacting this legislation would be a truly historic step in protecting the nation's health.



# THE MICAP ENDOWMENT FUND

Our last MICAP-RECAP told of the Board's dream of having an endowment of \$100,000.00, the proceeds of which would help to partially fund the AADIF/MICAP ministry in the years ahead.

Well, it just got easier to donate monies to a church or charity. The Pension Protection Act of 2006, signed by President George Bush on August 17, 2006, provides a window of opportunity this year for individuals who are 70.5 or older to take tax-free withdrawals from their IRAs as long as that money goes directly to the charity.

Certain rules must be followed in order to take advantage of this tax break, including:

- When the gift goes directly from the IRA, it will not be counted as part of your adjusted gross income so you will not pay income tax on the amount of the gift.
- Private foundations and donor advised funds are not eligible for the tax-free IRA distributions.

- These gifts will count toward the minimum required distribution from your IRA, but the maximum tax-free distribution you can make is \$100,000.00 a year.
- No benefits (such as annuity income) can be received as a result of the gift.
- The gift must be completed by December 31, 2007.
- Charitable gifts must be made from a traditional or Roth IRA. Funds in a 401(k), 403(b), or other type of retirement account do not qualify.

If you are interested in taking advantage of this limited-time opportunity, you are encouraged to consult with your financial advisor. Or, you may call me, Bill Amundsen, at 517.323.2445 and I will help you with details so you may make the gift happen. Thank you.