

# WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

*A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.*

## The 1974 Patriot 4-Mile Relay Team

**A**t Indiana University fieldhouse March 9, 1974, four Terre Haute North Vigo High School athletes astonished the track world by establishing a national high school indoor record in the four-mile relay. Nearly 25 years later, that record has yet to be broken.

Seniors Jeff Claretto, Joe Ofsansky and Jim Rice and junior John Reedy ran the relay in 17:29.6, improving their existing mark. A year earlier at Bloomington, the "Four Js" ran the event in 17:41.2 to surpass the national record of 17:50.6. These four runners all had exceptional individual careers and were essential members of Coach Bill Welch's 1972 Indiana High School Athletic Association cross country championship team.

Still Vigo County recordholder in the mile (4:12.5) and 1600 meters (4:11.0), Claretto was tripped during the 1974 IHSAA finals in his specialty. The following week, he vanquished all Hoosier rivals at the Tri-State Meet of Champions, bettering the winning state meet time. Twice All-State in cross country, he was seventh in the 1972 IHSAA state meet, improved to fifth in 1973 and finished third in the 1973 National AAU cross country championships. Now regional representative for Wyeth-Ayerst Pharmaceutical, Claretto later

competed for Purdue University. Daughter Emily is a sophomore on North's 1998 girls sectional cross country championship team.

Ofsansky was second in the two-mile at the 1974 Indiana state track meet,

earning All-State renown. Now a teacher in Hillsdale, Mich., he was the 1975 national junior college cross country champion for Southwestern Michigan and ran for Wisconsin University and Hillsdale College. His son Michael currently competes for Ball State.

While excelling on the track in the mile (4:17.8 in the 1973 Columbus Regional), Rice achieved All-State rank in cross country by finishing 13th in the 1973 IHSAA meet. He is an electrician for Evan & Ryan Contractors. Sons Justin, an Otter Creek cross country runner, and Jared are promising athletes.

Twice All-State in cross country, Reedy finished third in the 1974 IHSAA finals, earning scholastic All-America recognition. He won the 1974 Indiana AAU cross country title at 10,000 meters. He was sixth in the 1973 IHSAA two-mile run and fourth in 1975, the year he was ranked among the nation's elite by *Track & Field News* in the six-mile run. Now living in Elkhart, he was a 1975 junior college cross country All America at Southwestern Michigan.

All of the "Four Js" have been inducted into North Vigo's Athletic Hall of Fame. Claretto, Ofsansky, Rice and teammate John Roscoe all beat 4:20 in the mile. No Vigo County high school athlete has bettered 4:20 in the 1600-meter run (formerly the mile) since 1983.



*The Four Js: Joe Ofsansky, John Reedy, Jim Rice and Jeff Claretto.*

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