

## DRUGS COLLECT A FINAL DEBT

**\* Terry Peavy traded his talent and promise for a drug buzz and early death.**

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Tom Archdeacon Column Over the years, so much had been written about him: ``Peavy Steals The Show For The **Teddies**," read one Dayton Daily News headline. "Roosevelt's Peavy is City's Best," read another. From the Pittsburgh Post Gazette came headlines like: "Peavy Leads Point Park to Nationals." And by 1978, the Cleveland Plain Dealer weighed in with "Terry Peavy Joins Cavs." In her small white-and-blue frame house on Ardmore, Irene Peavy showed two scrapbooks full of newspaper clippings about her son, Terry Peavy, who many say was one of the best basketball players Dayton has ever seen. But as you looked at the glorious accounts of old, the family also handed you a notebook filled with 28 pages of Peavy's neat handwriting. It was a treatise, sometimes provocative, often rambling, in which he told his own story. It began: "Every hair of my body, from head to toe, was possessed by cocaine." Those are some of the last words ever written by 42-year-old Terry Peavy. Last Thursday, Peavy showed up at his mother's house and began to pack the few belongings he still had left into his old green-and-brown Ford station wagon. His three beloved dogs were already in the car. He was crying as he told his mom he was heading to Phoenix, where he was going to stay with friends and try to get himself straight after years of torment with cocaine and heroin. His mother - a hard-working woman with a soft spot in her heart for her youngest child - tried to provide once more and slipped him a few dollars for gasoline. "The last thing he said to me was 'I'm tired of hurting you and all the people I love,' " his mother remembered. "I said a prayer and hoped maybe this time..." Her voice trailed off and tears spilled onto her cheeks. Early Saturday afternoon, Peavy was found dead in his station wagon on Boyer Street near Euclid. His coat was gone. So were his belongings, his dogs and the money. Late Wednesday, the Montgomery County Coroner's office said the autopsy report has been delayed for four to six weeks to allow further studies. The family has lots of questions and some suspicions - including that Terry may have overdosed with some of his drug friends and then been placed in the car to divert attention. Yet, the mystery was a minor matter earlier Wednesday when family, friends and former teammates gathered at the Corinthian Baptist Church for Peavy's funeral service before burial at West Memory Gardens in Moraine. As several family members talked of the loving side of Peavy - especially how he doted over the children of the family, including his own two sons - the most telling chord was struck during the eulogy by Rev. Dr. Al Peters, Jr.: "We're in the most heated warfare we've ever been in," he said. "We're living in trying, trying times. Can I get witness to that?" Everyone in the crowded church, many in tears, answered. Some of the loudest responses came from the Peavy family. These trying times - especially the power and perversion of heroin and crack - had claimed the baby boy of a solid family built on Irene Peavy's foundation. Her husband left the family in 1959. Though he stayed in town - running a garbage hauling

business - the financial demands of raising six Peavy kids fell squarely on Irene's shoulders. "That's when I went to work," she said quietly. "Worked 21 years as a clerk at the Montgomery County Courts. I was always proud that I raised my kids without one dime of public assistance. I didn't need it - not as long as I had two hands." "We all learned about work, but Terry was the baby," said his sister Vera Tribble. "Everybody fussed over him. He had a way of winning everybody's heart. And he had that gift." She was talking of his basketball talents. Oldest brother Rick told of Terry dribbling through obstacle courses of Coca Cola bottles. In the winter, one of the girls remembered how Terry would go to the outdoor court at Resurrection Parish, shovel the snow and play all day. Peavy became an All-City player at Roosevelt and then headed off to Allegheny Community College in Pittsburgh. His first season he was the conference MVP. The second year he averaged close to 20 points a game. That got him to the University of Pittsburgh, where he played a season before transferring to Point Park, an NAIA school in Pittsburgh that he led to the national tournament. It was also during his college days, said sister Linda Hunter, that her brother first experimented with drugs. He was drafted by the Cleveland Cavaliers in 1978, was cut and then nearly made the New York Knicks. Once again drugs were the culprit. "He told me they discovered heroin in his system," Rick said. It was around this time that Terry married his wife Nila, a Pitt scholarship swimmer from Puerto Rico. "For a while only Nila knew about his drugs and she fought it on her own for as long as she could," Linda said. Nila and Terry had a son Nathan, who became the apple of his dad's eye. Terry's eldest son, Terry Garvin, was his other pride and it was through these sons that you continually saw Peavy's love of family. "He meant well, but the drugs caused him to hurt those he loved," Rick said. "It was a long battle for him." Terry tried several drug programs, he once joined the Marines - lasting just 14 days - in hopes the regimentation would bring him back to his old self. There were a few drug arrests - jail time in St. Louis and Dayton - and yet nothing worked. With her own teenaged children, Linda said she uses her brother as a lesson on life: "I tell them to learn from his good things and from his bad. He graduated from college, he set goals. The other side is how bad choices and bad friends can bring all that down. Through it all, he was remorseful for what went wrong." Twelve-year-old son Nathan said that's the reason his parents finally divorced: "My dad said he didn't want his influence bringing me down. We still did all kinds of stuff together and he was there for me when I needed him most." In fact, Nathan wonders if his dad wasn't there for him last Sunday - the day after Terry Peavy was found. Nathan was playing his first basketball game for Dayton Catholic. His dad, who had been a fixture at recent practices, had planned to be at the 7th-grade game, especially since Nathan would be playing guard - Terry's position - for the first time. "I showed up and they gave me a jersey," Nathan said. "It was my dad's No. 31." And with a few seconds left and his team down one to Miami Valley, Nathan, who already led his team with 15 points, dribbled the ball down court and launched an ill-advised three-point shot. The ball fell into the hands of his center, who turned, and as if the alley-oop had been intended, dropped the ball in for the winning bucket. "I got mixed up and thought we needed a three-pointer to win," an embarrassed Nathan said. "But the air ball turned into a perfect pass and everyone mobbed me. Right then, I figured maybe my dad had something to do with it. This time he made everything come out just right." **Illustration:** PHOTO: In 1979,

Dayton native Roosevelt High star Terry Peavy led Point Park, an NAIA school in Pittsburgh, to the national tournament. PHOTO CREDIT: None *Copyright, 1997, Cox Ohio Publishing. All rights reserved.* © Copyright 2003 Cox Interactive Media