

# JOE: His Fight for Life



Lena Roth

## A mother reflects

By Bill Dickens  
of The Daily Californian

**M**UCH HAS BEEN written about the life of former Granite Hills High School and Grossmont College quarterback Joe Roth. Most of those stories concerned Roth the football player.

Roth was a candidate for the 1976 Heisman Trophy in his senior year at the University of California-Berkeley. But he never reached his full athletic potential. He was struck down by malignant melanoma, a highly virulent form of cancer, as he stood on the threshold of life. He was 21.

Roth was more than just a gifted athlete. He was as kind to his fellow man as he was successful on the football field.

He had it all. He was a tall, blond, handsome, All-American young man who accomplished more in his few years on earth than most people do in a normal lifetime. He remained untarnished and natural through fame and glory. There seemed to be a mystique about him that drew out the best in those around him.

Joe Roth never asked for anything. He worked hard in all that he attempted, whether it was selling popcorn, throwing a football, passing a class or painting a mural. He didn't yearn for fame. It found him. And deservedly so.

Joe was religious, but he wasn't a Bible thumper. He didn't force his beliefs on others. He accepted people for what they were. It was because of his faith in God that he was able to accept most any challenge. He didn't want sympathy — even when faced with death.

His mother, Lena Roth, has written a book about her son: *JOE: His Fight For Life*.

It's a story about love, courage, determination and football; how Joe's family and friends faced, adjusted and coped with his illness. It's a story of faith and strength under the most adverse of conditions. It's a sad story in many ways, but makes the reader realize that his and/or her everyday problems really aren't that devastating.

The story of Joe Roth is nourishment for deep thought. What would you do if you were in the shoes of Joe's parents? Decisions had to be made without much time for deliberation.

□ Roth 3B

## ROTH From 1B

The reader relives Joe's life through childhood, high school, junior college and college. It follows his highs and lows on and off the football field. The book devotes many pages to Joe's brothers, in-laws, teammates, coaches, nonfootball friends, roommates and how he touched their lives. Anyone who knew Joe Roth realized he was one of a kind.

Mrs. Roth writes about the unparalleled closeness Joe had with Dave Jordan, his coach at Grossmont College (1973-74), and Mike White, Paul Hackett and Al Saunders, his coaches at the University of California (1975-76). How Jordan treated him as a son and built up his confidence. How the Cal coaches molded him into a star on the football field and then stood by him in his darkest hours.

What makes this book unique is that it's told through a mother's eyes. Mothers seem to notice the slightest of detail. No one worries more about their children than a mother. Lena Roth treasured her son.

It must have been difficult for Mrs. Roth to relieve these memories as she wrote the 212-page book. It took her a year to complete it.

"Writing this book has been therapy for me, but putting it down on paper was agony," Mrs. Roth said. "It is difficult to explain, but there seemed to be some inner force driving me. I had to do it. After I got it all

down, I felt a cleansing — a release. I was better able to understand why."

The hardcover book sells for \$13.95, plus \$1.50 postage and handling. Copies can be obtained by writing to Lena Roth, Route 2, Box 2697, Jerome, Idaho, 83338. It also can be ordered by calling Phil Morell, retired principal of Granite Hills High School where Joe was a standout quarterback (1971-72), at 445-8423.

Less than one week after Joe passed away (Feb. 19, 1977), media from all over the country began inquiring about the possibility of writing a book, a song, a TV movie and a motion picture. Lena Roth, and her husband Lawrence felt as if they were "being pushed and pressured into making decisions before we were ready — decisions we later regretted."

It is possible that the writing of the Joe Roth story will provide a spark in Hollywood. A movie about a young man of Joe's qualities would be a refreshing change from the overbearing abundance of soap operas that plague our television sets today.

To anyone who knew Joe Roth or his family, this book is must reading. It is a sensitive and inspirational story that had to be told by the person who knew him best.