

# Cappy's Day Was Special For Father Bill, Too

## John's Fans Weather Sleet

By MICKI KERGINES  
NEWS Correspondent

It was so cloudy Saturday afternoon that John Cappelletti couldn't see his shadow but unlike the groundhog, Cappy wasn't about to give in to any kind of weather.

Saturday was his and as far as Cappy was concerned, the sun shone all day. Feb. 2, better known as Groundhog Day, now belongs to John Cappelletti so says Upper Darby and most of Delaware County. It was the day his hometown chose to honor the Heisman and Maxwell Awards recipient.

A ONE MILE LONG, two-Hour Parade, organized by Commissioner Emil D'Alesio (R-5), Police Lt. John Morris, who served as parade marshal, and Police Officer George Tague, with the cooperation of the entire police department, displayed the love Upper Darby has for John Cappelletti.

When one of the string bands struck the chords of "Anything Goes", the parade watchers were almost certain they were playing about the weather, for by now it had changed to rain and later to sleet.

But, in spite of the miserable conditions, more than 30,000 men, women and children lined the parade route to welcome Cappy home. The hatless native son rode in an open-top Cadillac and greeted everyone with that award-winning smile. The kids, most of whom were wearing buttons reading,

"Can't Catch Cappy", ran along side of his car wanting to touch or talk to him.

When stopped by one newsman, Cappy said, "Just didn't expect this much. It's just great. The people put so much effort into it (the parade), I don't care if it rains."

THE PARADE ended at 3:15 p.m. at his Alma Mater, Msgr. Bonner High School. The presentation of awards followed in the auditorium of the sister school, Archbishop Prendergast High School.

For one hour the accolades went on. The ceremonies began with the Innovation delivered by the Rev. Harry J. Erdlen, principal of Msgr. Bonner High School, followed by the National Anthem played by Archbishop Prendergast Orchestra conducted by Vito LaMonaca.

Mr. D'Alesio then opened the program expressing thanks to all who participated in the parade, numbering about 3,000. The Cappelletti family and guests seated on the stage were then introduced.

The presentations that followed included a plaque given by Fred Bilotta of the Upper Darby Little League; a Bell and Howell movie camera and projector from the neighborhood friends and the Highland Park-Kirklyn Street Hockey League; a check from Richard Wittington, Manager of J. C. Penney, Inc., on behalf of the 69th Street Merchants Association; certificates from the Upper Darby Lions and Jaycees Service Clubs; a

JOHN

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JOHN CAPPELLETTI  
in uniform

By MICKI KERGINES  
NEWS Correspondent

The Ordination of the first quadriplegic took place Saturday at St. Alice Roman Catholic Church in Upper Darby. A vast host of family and friends attended the 9:30 a.m. Ordination ceremonies conducted by John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia for Augustinian William E. Atkinson, Msgr. Bonner High School graduate.

Totally paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair, Father Atkinson fared well in the realization of a dream that nine years ago seemed an impossibility.

His physical condition, due to a broken spine brought about by a toboggan accident involving four young seminarians Feb. 22, 1965, a year after he entered the Novitiate of the Order of St. Augustine in New Hamburg, N. Y., prolonged his desire, but never deterred his will to become a priest.

BORN 28 YEARS ago, the son of Allen and the late Mary Atkinson, he was educated (along with his six brothers and sisters) in St. Alice Grammar School. He graduated from Msgr. Bonner High School in 1963, a strapping 190 pound, muscle-bound football player, after which time he entered the minor seminary of the Order of St. Augustine for one year of post-graduate study. In 1964, he joined the Novitiate of the Order in New Hamburg, New

## UD Quadriplegic Ordained

York, just north of West Point on the Hudson River.

While his older brother Al, a middle line backer with the New York Jets, was studying and becoming an All-American football player at Villanova, Bill and his 40 classmates, prayed, studied, worked and played in the quiet and seclusion of the rural monastery.

Feb. 22, 1965, brought a rare free day to the young novices and the beginning of a new life to Bill Atkinson.

It was the season's last snowfall.

Bill and his three friends took a toboggan ride on which he was riding first.

Lost in the light, blowing snow, the toboggan left the trail and slammed into a tree.

He sustained a broken spine which should have killed him, the most seriously injured of the four. But, apparently Bill was saved for a purpose.

THE DOCTOR'S PROGNOSIS was that Bill was dying, and his fate would be determined only by the supreme being. Bill's parents, and their faithful friend, Father John Melton of Msgr. Bonner High School, had one recourse. Prayers. Upon hearing the sad news they immediately visited the chapel.

Bill was to live, but as the doctor predicted, he would never walk again. After three months of hospitalization and weight loss of 100 pounds, he was transferred to Magee Hospital in Philadelphia,

BILL

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REV. WILLIAM ATKINSON  
famous 'first'