

Accident brought tragic end to energetic GF 16-year-old's life

By Robin Powell
Herald Staff Writer

A dynamic child at 3 years old, John Beach grew into an eager, enthusiastic, energetic and effervescent young man who was drawn to action and never needed an invitation to get involved.

Beach, 16, 2320 Eighth Ave. N., died Tuesday, Aug. 25, 1992, in an automobile accident near Grand Forks. Services were held Saturday.

Beach was the kind of kid that loved interacting and working with people whether he was showing children a trick swing in golf or writing a program for a football team; he did it all with a rare exuberance, as close friends attest to.

Pat Taylor, a teacher at Schroeder Junior High School, remembers when Beach was about 3 or 4 years old, "John carried the news to the neighborhood . . . he was like a town crier going door-to-door telling the news to anyone he saw."

Taylor said Beach got involved in everything, from small neighborhood projects to city events such as Grand Forks' "Summerthing." He helped Merle Mikkelsen coach children in golf and was starting a statistical printout for Central High School's football team, Taylor said.

Esther Blecha, who taught German at Central and had known Beach since he was a baby, remembered during a fast polka contest at an Oktoberfest, "John was about 3 when he grabbed a little girl and started dancing," said Blecha.

A neighbor, Roberta Gaides, said Beach wanted to know how to build a garbage stand, so her husband, Ed, taught him, "He wanted to build garbage stands for everybody in the neighborhood when he learned how," Gaides said.

Neighbor Kathy Speulda said that after Beach had visited with her 75-year-old father, "My dad said, 'That kid is really smart, unusually smart; he asks a lot of questions and really listens to the answers,'" Speulda added, "He was enthusiastic; and he liked action. If there was movement, he was drawn to it."

The Rev. Gary Cecil of First Presbyterian Church said Beach was one of the first youths he met when he came to Grand Forks, "John was the kind of kid that was full of energy and you could count on him for support. He was committed to his church . . . and felt he truly belonged there."

When Marcia Euren, Beach's physical science teacher, returned to school after an illness, Beach offered to help her after school and was always there to do things for her. "John helped me so I wouldn't get tired. . . . He was a wonderful kid; I don't think I ever heard him say anything bad about anybody. . . . He always saw the good in people," Euren said.

"Once he was so busy helping people, he didn't have time to do his homework. He would say, 'I know I should do my homework, but I have to help these people,'" Euren added.

A John Beach Memorial Fund is being established. Donations can be sent to: The John Beach Memorial Fund, Central High School, 115 N. Fourth St., Grand Forks, N.D. 58203.