

Beres says bike accident altered outlook on life

By Greg Sutherland

Of the Emerald

Once in a while, George Beres wonders what came closer to killing him — the bicycle accident or trying to stay at his job during the recuperation.

"It was touch and go in both situations," he says.

On May 26, 1981, Beres lay unconscious on the pavement near 30th and Hilyard streets. He had slid across the blacktop after colliding with a car on his bicycle, opening a huge hole near the top of his head.

His left ear completely dislodged along the way.

Beres was unconscious for three days and hospitalized for two weeks before going home for a short period to wait for surgery. To protect his exposed brain and skull, he had to wear a helmet around the house. The double vision he acquired from the accident could have caused a dangerous fall. He also had to treat his newly sewn left ear gingerly.

Finally, on July 11, Beres went into surgery and had a large acrylic plate inserted into his head to cover the exposed brain.

End of story? Not quite. There was still another transition to make, one that has made his world much broader and his contributions seem more valuable. As Beres himself says, "Breaking my head was a good break."

Except for a couple of short periods, Beres had been involved exclusively in sports for 27 years — until the accident. Then things had to change.

At the time of his accident, Beres was in his sixth year as Sports Information Director at the University. He wanted to keep the job badly.

"I went back to work on a half-day basis during the 1981

football season," Beres recalls, "and it came close to killing me. The job was too stressful."

University Archivist Keith Richard is a close friend of Beres. He describes Beres in 1981 as a man with diminished energy trying to do a job that was already too big for someone with high energy.

"His effort level was reduced," Richard explains. "He couldn't survive in a pressure cooker like that. You have to realize the current SID works 14 to 15-hour days sometimes and has three full-time assistants. George had one part-time assistant."

It became obvious to Beres that he would have to leave the SID job. He is still grateful to the University for giving him a position in the News Bureau, where he took two small programs, the speaker's bureau and the "Inside Oregon" faculty letter, and revamped them.

During this transition, he had to adjust not only to his physical limitations but also to leaving a realm in which he had lived and worked since 1954, when he became assistant to the SID at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

Even in 1957 when he went to Korea for 16 months, Beres managed to stay in sports, serving as radio announcer and sports director of the Armed Forces Korea Radio Network. Upon returning to the United States, he worked for the Decatur Herald-Review as a sports columnist before going back to Northwestern in 1959 to work in the news bureau there.

But the call of sports was still strong, and in 1960, Beres once again took a job as an assistant to the SID at Northwestern. For the next 20 years, Beres was associated with some of the biggest names in college athletics,

moving up to become SID at Northwestern (1968-1973) and Oregon (1976-1981).

Some students who worked as his assistants became major media personalities. Two of them were Skip Myslenski, now a sports columnist at the Chicago Tribune, and Rick Telander, a writer for Sports Illustrated. "I like to think I had something to do with Telander and Myslenski making it in the big-time media," Beres says.

Still, something about the sports world wasn't completely satisfying. Beres did not fit into the "good old boy" mold of athletics, and he was only subconsciously aware of the broad world that existed around him.

"I think we pay a disproportionate amount of attention to sports," he says. "I still like athletics, but there's a much broader world out there, with so many exciting things that mean a lot to society. Let's face it, sports are a very marginal part of this campus."

"I really needed to get out of the narrow confines of athletics," he says. "I don't think I would have been smart enough to do it. I've had the opportunity to do it and see everything much clearer because of the accident."

Richard thinks Beres is being too modest. "George has always realized there's another world beside sports," he said. "We could talk about classical music and good books together and have a glass of wine. He was never a typical SID. He could always go home and leave the job. I think the accident has just enabled him to put sports into perspective."

It certainly set him off in a different direction. He took on two "easy" part-time jobs at the University to facilitate his recovery, the "Inside Oregon" newsletter and the speaker's bureau.

Beres, however, did not take his new responsibilities lightly. Instead, he built the speaker's bureau up from practically nothing, and both programs became his new source of strength as he breathed new life into them.

When Beres first took the "Inside Oregon" job, he was in



George Beres

Photo by John Giustina

charge of a monthly newsletter. Slowly, he began to enlarge it and now the newsletter has evolved into a weekly. Although he recently left "Inside Oregon," Beres says it is no longer a part-time job and that the new editor should have a full-time assignment.

Beres is currently embarking on yet another new project. He is now the assistant director of community services at the University. Already he has established himself in his new position, directing a campaign for the hungry and arranging for the Greek Prime Minister's wife to speak to the Mortar Board last month.

In his own quiet way, Beres is

proud, but also thankful of his achievements despite all of the personal adversity that has plagued him. "I dealt with it through my wife, Sylvia. She understood and kept a level head, even though we had to cut back because of my reduced income."

"Really, I was just glad to be alive. I was patient; I knew it would take a while so I trusted my doctors."

Underneath the modesty is a determined man with a dry wit and clear perspective of his strengths and limitations. "I'm not good at being the judge of whether I'm spreading myself too thin or not," he says.

Petition

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accelerate the present trend of driving the best teachers out of the profession."

Foster said most faculty members he has approached have been favorable to the letter of the declaration, which he

said takes a sociological position in favor of education.

"I believe, and so do others who are signing this, that education can't be determined according only to economic rationale," Foster said. "You

don't want to look at the cheapest price with which you can buy teachers. It's the kids who are at stake... the future of the country."

Foster said he hoped to have enough money donated by Thursday evening to purchase an ad today.

Leave

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cumulated sick and/or vacation leave before using parental leave. They can take no leave longer than the child's 12th week of life or the 12th week of custody of an adopted child.

Employees are also required to inform the employer whether the other parent is also seeking leave for child care purposes.

Both parents will not be allowed to take the leave simultaneously.

The bill is expected to come before the Senate next week.

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