

Before he died

Greg's Disneyland dream came true

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Greg Walsh spent much of his young life dreaming of a trip to Disney World. When it seemed least likely to happen, his dream came true.

Greg, 15, and his mother, Maureen Walsh, went to Disney World on July 5. They came home on July 8. Greg died the next day after a seven-year battle against cancer which had hospitalized him more than once.

His dream trip became more than a dream when Jo Gillard of Bloomfield Hills learned of his illness. Greg's mother is a student in Mrs. Gillard's office worker training class at the Birmingham Center for Continuing Education.

When Greg was hospitalized in May, Mrs. Walsh explained to Mrs. Gillard why she would be absent from class.

"The prognosis was that Greg had three to six months to live because of two massive brain tumors," Mrs. Walsh said Tuesday.

"Mrs. Gillard asked me if there was anything Greg wanted that we could help with. I said, 'Yes, but there is nothing you can do about it.'"

"Mrs. Walsh continued, referring to the cost of the trip. . . Mrs. Gillard told Mrs. Walsh, 'We'll work on it if he gets to the point where he could handle the trip.'"

"I assumed that was as far as it would go," Mrs. Walsh recalled. But Mrs. Gillard rallied again. Mrs. Gillard asked his mother to check with the doctor about the possibility of making the trip.

"The doctor said it would be the best thing in the world for him," Mrs. Gillard said. When she heard that, Mrs. Gillard mobilized a money-raising effort which produced \$1,900 between a Friday and a Wednesday, enough for the trip, a dress for Mrs. Walsh for her son's funeral and clothes for Greg to be buried in.

"I have had an experience," Mrs. Gillard said Tuesday. "I feel God was with us all the way. It has been a pleasure to help this woman and her son."

WHILE Mrs. Gillard masterminded the arrangements, dozens of other people assisted.

Before she knew whether her plan was going to roll or not, Mrs. Gillard made airline reservations for Mrs. Walsh and Greg. The people at the Eastern Airlines vacation planning

desk were "absolutely fantastic," she said. They told her she would need at least \$1,000.

Throughout the money-raising, Greg's identity was kept anonymous. People were told only that money was being raised to send a terminally ill boy to Disney World.

A group of students in her class decided to have a three-day garage sale. Students contributed items to be sold and the sale earned \$150. Parishoners at Church of Christ in Troy took up a collection and raised \$88.

One church member said she owned a travel agency and would like to do something. Diplomat Travel Service donated Greg's flight.

PARISHONERS At Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Beverly Hills raised \$500 and the St. Vincent DePaul Society added \$150.

Some students in Mrs. Gillard's class donated a day's pay to the growing fund.

"Before we knew it we had \$1,300," Mrs. Gillard said. "It just came in." In addition, she contacted Common Ground about a wheelchair and was directed in turn to the Community House in Birmingham which donated one. The airlines arranged for a rent-

ed car in Florida and the Royal Plaza Hotel at Disney World made sure Mrs. Walsh and Greg had first-floor rooms.

"It just seemed like everything fell into place," Mrs. Gillard said. "Some people said it couldn't be done because we didn't have enough time. 'I told them there wasn't any time, that we had to do it now and everyone was with us 100 per cent of the way.'"

Mrs. Walsh waited until a short time before she and Greg were to leave before telling him about the trip. He recalled having read about children who were dying being taken to Disney World and asked his mother, "Am I going to die?"

"Yes, but so am I," she told him. "He said he would rather go to Disney World and come home and die than not to go."

Greg was a student at Covington Junior High. Until his illness prevented it, he had a paper route, enjoyed baseball and was working toward his Eagle Scout rank.

Scouts from Troop 107 formed an honor guard at his funeral. Dr. Carol Turner, coordinator of career/vocational education for the Birmingham Schools, praised Mrs. Gillard for her efforts in making the trip possible.



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Road building cost \$2.5 million

Southfield Transportation Department's 1977 construction program is estimated at \$2.5 million with a cost to the city of nearly \$134,000.

Funding for the projects also comes from the county, state and federal agencies. The program includes a \$1.9 million innkeeper road construction, with a city cost of \$183,414, \$11,900 in local street construction, to cost the city \$18,294, \$18,750 in sidewalk-bike path construction, city cost of \$25,750, \$18,247 for traffic signal improvements, city cost, \$28,327 and \$85,000 for public transportation and related construction with a city cost of \$9.

Major road construction includes:

- Northland and Northwestern Highway: bridge deck repair.
- North Park and Northwestern: bridge deck repair.
- M-39 over Nine Mile: bridge deck repair.
- US-24 north of Twelve Mile: Widening to eight divided lanes.
- Ten Mile and Inkster: improved intersection.
- Twelve Mile and Inkster: improved intersection.

Southfield's roads may not be paved in gold, but a lot of green is being spent on construction this year. Scenes like this will be familiar around town in 1977. (Staff photo)



section.

- I-696, US 24 west: landscaping.

LOCAL STREET construction includes soil stabilization projects on Helen, Bush, Churches and Wabedon.

Sidewalk-bike path construction locations are Civic Center Drive, US-24 to Evergreen; Evergreen, Civic Center to Eleven Mile; Nine Mile, Twining to Laura; Nine Mile, Prosper to Divine Providence; Nine Mile, Brandywine across Levey School and additional locations to be determined.

Scheduled for new traffic signals are the intersections of Ten Mile and Berg; Ten Mile and Beech; Greenfield and Lincoln Center; Lahser at Southfield High School; Nine Mile and Rutland; Ten Mile and Inkster; Twelve Mile and Inkster and Thirteen Mile at Rock Creek. Left turn phases will be at Twelve Mile and Evergreen and Twelve Mile and Lahser. Bus stop pads are planned for 35 locations and bus stop shelters for nine.

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