

# JB remembered 5 years later

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*Editor-in-Chief*

On the back of every football helmet are the letters JB. They are the initials of Jason Block, but they symbolize more than that. They symbolize a talkative, hardworking young man. They symbolize how much he was loved. They symbolize how much his class has grown together. Most im-

portantly, they symbolize how his classmates remember him, five years after his death.

On August 11, 2010 Jason Block lost his life when he was attacked by bees while driving an open-cab, tractor-powered shredder. Jason would have been in seventh grade that year. Today, Jason's classmates are seniors, and although Jason is not here with them, his

memory lives on.

"He was always very organized and he was always one to help you," senior Hayden Efferson said. "Whenever he would come over to my house and I'd ask 'What do you want to do?' He'd say, 'We need to clean your room first.'"

Jason often lent a helping hand.

"He was always willing

to help other people before he would do anything for himself," Efferson said.

In elementary, Jason would forfeit his recess to help others.

"I distinctly remember in elementary when he would not go to recess and just help Candy [Sanchez] sweep up after everyone in the cafeteria," senior James Halfmann said.

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*From the sideline, senior Layton Gully watches the Homecoming game while sporting JB on his helmet to honor his friend Jason Block who passed away August 11, 2010. "It might be the last year that we are on this field wearing the 'JB' sticker on our helmets, but we all know that Jason's memory will last forever," Gully said.*

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"And after he was done with that, he would go out. He started a garden out between the kindergarten building and the nurse's office."

Senior Layton Gully said that Jason was a hard worker who would not quit until the job was done.

"It didn't matter if it was his job or somebody else's, he was going to do it and by golly it was going to be done perfect, nothing was wrong about it," Gully said.

Senior Peyton Fischer recalls when riding the bus, Jason would steal senior Whitney Barnett's backpack and hang it out of the window until she would give him a snack.

"So then I would yell at my grandma [the bus driver], 'Jason took my snacks!'" Barnett said. "And then my grandma would yell at Jason and be like, 'Jason, give Whitney her snacks back.' And I'd eventually give him a snack, but we had to go through this process about every day."

Junior Thomas Halfmann said that his favorite memories of Jason also took place on the bus.

"His bus was right next to mine," Thomas said. "Every day, he wouldn't eat part of his lunch and he'd sell me the rest of his lunch for a dollar every day. We'd get in trouble because we'd be reaching out between the buses swapping dollars and lunches."

Quite a businessman, Jason would also sell vegetables from his home garden.

"Jason lived across the street from where my dad works," senior Peyton Fischer said. "When he grew his garden, he would come over and try to sell it to my dad. He would just sit back and get a Coke and put his feet on my dad's desk. My dad would say, 'What are you doing? I'm trying to work.' But Jason didn't care."

Farming was one of Jason's passions.

"I think it was the summer before sixth grade, and I stayed at his house," Efferson said. "He woke up really early in the morning—I didn't—and he went and took care of his garden and everything and he woke me up and asked if I wanted to go see all the trac-

tors. I was like 'Yeah, sure.' The tractors didn't mean quite as much to me as it did to him."

He would talk about tractors to anyone.

"He used to check out tractor books from the library and try to teach me what everything was and I would just be like 'I don't really need to know this, Jason,'" Fischer said. "And he was like, 'You need to know this.'"

His knowledge of tractors and willingness to help provided useful in many situations.

"K r i s s [Kellermeier] got her hand stuck in Melissa [Kellermeier]'s sun roof when they were at my dad's work," senior

Peyton Fischer said. "He ran across the street saying 'Don't move! I'm going to go get my tools. I'm gonna fix it.'"

Jason was very social.

"I remember in first grade, me and Jason were both in Mrs. Noland's class," senior Taylor Hoelscher said. "I don't remember how it happened but he told Mrs. Noland that me and him were going to get married and our first date was going to be on a tractor. That's still in my head."

Memories can lead to wondering what life would be like with Jason present.

"We never did date, you know, but thinking back on it now, I don't know how it would have ended up in high school and junior high, him being here," Hoelscher said. "You kind of think back on that and it makes you think about things."

Students speculate what Jason would be like if he were still here.

"He would definitely have the best farmer's market table there is," James said. "It would be a better place for sure. He brightens everyone's day."

Classmates can only imagine what the social 12-year-old would have been like as a senior.

"I feel like he would definitely still be the businessman he is and he would still be very into gardening and farming and stuff," Efferson said. "But I also feel like if you were sad you could have just any conversation with him and he could lift you up."

Jason's social nature was welcoming.

"I feel like he'd be one

that everyone likes to go and talk to," Hoelscher said.

Jason could have a conversation with anyone.

"There was nobody he met that he didn't like off the start," Efferson said. "It didn't matter what age you were, where you were from, what you looked like, it didn't matter. He was friends with everybody."

Also, he was not afraid to say what was on his mind.

"He had one tone: loud," James said. "He was very opinionated."

Though he was loud, Jason would settle down when it was necessary.

"He knew when to joke around, but he also knew when it was time to get serious like when he was working or in the classroom," Efferson said.

When Jason passed away, donations to Wall Little League were collected to add lights to the baseball fields in lieu of flowers.

"Since he loved baseball, and he was always complaining about how there was no lights at the baseball fields at Fairview, everyone got really generous," James said.

Donations exceeded the money needed for what became known as 'Jason's Lights.'

"They have the concession stand and bathrooms that was built with the leftover money that was donated for the lights," Efferson said.

Every year on the anniversary of Jason's death, his classmates as well as anyone who was close to Jason meet under his lights at the Fairview baseball fields to play kickball and hang out in his memory.

"Now, I really like when we have that on the anniversary of when he died," Efferson said. "We all go up there and mess around, have fun, just to remember him and be thankful for the time we did have with him."

Seniors aim to include Jason in as many senior activities as possible.

"I asked Barbara when we went to Jason's Lights if she and Carl [Jason's parents] would drive the first tractor out on Tractor Day," Hoelscher said. "She said she would, we just have to let her know when."

Several things have been done in Jason's memory.

"There's a bench in the elementary garden," Efferson said. "Our [senior] homecoming shirts [have JB on the pocket], we have a JB sticker on our



1. Jason, on the farm. 2. James Halfmann, Jason Block, Tate Schwartz, and Tyler Gidney spend time together. "Jason was a great kid with a greath work ethic," Schwartz said. "He always worked hard and always had a smile on his face. Jason will always be our best friend."

[football] helmets."

Other plans to show how the senior class remembers Jason are still in the works.

"I think baseball will probably find something to do," Efferson said. "Baseball was definitely his favorite sport, besides farming."

His church, St. Ambrose, also memorialized Jason.

"We planted a tree at the church, in the rosary garden," Hoelscher said.

On each anniversary of Jason's death, a mass is said at St. Ambrose in his honor. The football coaches graciously allow players to miss practice to attend the mass.

"At the mass, you could feel that he was loved," Hoelscher said.

At the first football game, Coach Houston Guy dedicated the season to Jason.

"It was probably something we all wanted to do but none of us really ever said it to Coach Guy," Efferson said. "None of us deserve to have it dedicated to us."

Though the seniors are unsure whether he would still be playing football, they feel he would still be involved.

"If he wasn't playing football, he'd be leading the student

section, that's for sure," Thomas said.

Occasionally students see evidence that Jason is watching over them in their lives.

"I had a friend who got attacked by wasps a couple weeks ago and he ended up just barely living," Efferson said. "I definitely think that Jason was keeping a healing hand on him. I feel like everything that all of us have done as a class together or as individuals — he's always looking out over us."

As for why he had to die so young, his classmates speculate.

"You always pick the best fruit first," James said.

Efferson recalls songs that mention 'only the good die young.'

"It sucks that it happened, none of us ever wanted to go through that," Efferson said. "One thing that really helped me out when he died is that he's in so much of a better place right now."

Seniors agree that the accident brought them together as a class.

"It taught us all a lesson on life and how you should live it while you are still here and don't take anything for granted," Hoelscher said.