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Friends, family, teachers gather to remember Daniel Barclay
M-A grad, Quiz Kid star 'made being smart hip'

by David Boyce

Tears flowed here and there Saturday, June 2, amid the hugs, animated conversation, periodic amusement and overarching grief permeating Menlo-Atherton High School's J Building as at least 300 friends and relatives gathered to remember Daniel Barclay — friend, wit, scholar and peerless Quiz Kid.

A 2003 graduate of M-A, Mr. Barclay's body was found April 20 on a Cape Cod beach along with the remnants of a raft and a bailing bucket. He had been missing for 12 days after telling a friend that he was going on an adventure. The cause of death was drowning.

Mr. Barclay, 22, was a polymath; he was to have graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this month with degrees in economics and political science. He had accepted a job as a currency trader in Boston, relatives said.

At the center of the approximately two-hour celebration of his life were video clips from his four years of anchoring M-A's undefeated team in the Peninsula Quiz Kids contest, a college-bowl-like quiz show for Bay Area high schools.

Show host Brad Friedman chose clips in which he was regularly upstaged by Daniel, whose remarkable talent for sensing the direction of a question as it was being asked shone all the brighter for his unassuming demeanor.

"Daniel was one of those very rare people who was so self-realized," said former M-A principal Eric Hartwig. "He made being smart hip, a hard thing to do."

"He put his personal stamp on M-A and he put his personal stamp on our hearts," Mr. Hartwig added. "In some respects, Daniel was what we all wanted to be: right all the time."

His generosity in sharing what he knew with fellow students was exceptional, said Carol Taggart, his third-grade teacher at Oak Knoll School. She described Daniel as "a modest individual with extraordinary intelligence intermixed with his extraordinary brand of humor that made us all laugh."

For all his skills, Mr. Barclay did have a weakness or two. He slept a lot, his father, Michael Barclay, said — a habit the two of them memorialized with sleep-related cartoons on Daniel's bedroom door.

And he always had trouble tying a necktie, said his mother, Sue Kayton, who discovered a pre-tied tie in his closet at MIT.

Daniel's sister Rachel, also an M-A graduate, said she thought her brother would always be there for her. "Living without him is like waking up one day to discover that the world has lost gravity or the color blue," she said.

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