

Memorial Speech by Elizabeth Porter  
May 27, 2023

How do you sum up the life of someone who meant so much to so many people? How do you do justice to the hilarious, sensitive, insightful, caring, hardworking little boy who grew up to be the most incredible young man?

You can't. You shouldn't even try.

Zach should be up here right now telling you about himself, not us. He would be way funnier, way less cliché, and way more interesting than I would. He would probably digress into a philosophical discussion on the nature of the human condition and teach us all a little something or make us feel better.

But you're stuck with me, so I'll try my best.

Some of you may have only had the pleasure of knowing Zach as a kid, and others only as an adult. But I am among the fortunate few who got to know him all along the way. And I can tell you that Zach has been remarkably consistent throughout his life.

The five-year-old who called his father Todd became the 14 year old who battled a lanyard mandate to the bitter end, despite many trips to the principal's office.

The four-year-old who wrote letters to his loved ones when he could barely write his own name became the guy who wasn't afraid to tell his friends how much he loved them, wrote his mother three paragraphs at 2am for mothers day, and in many letters to his girlfriend, included the quote "Love is when the other person's happiness is more important than you own."

The little boy who said "We've got to get to bed, we have a lot of digging to do tomorrow" while we were on a beach vacation, and immediately followed it with "Wait, one last question, why do burglars always wear black?" Turned into the young man who started his assignments as soon as he got them and who read Freud and Kant and Vonnegut in his free time. Industrious and curious.

The three-year-old who loved the vacuum cleaner above all, became the high schooler that would have his friends start cleaning up from a party, before the party was actually over.

The 5th grader who organized a bus boycott after the driver dared to inflict a collective punishment on all the kids for one kid's mess, became the young man who walked out from the first frat he pledged because they demeaned him and his friends and he never looked back.

But Zach was also growing so much. Finding new passions, activities besides baseball, which he loved for so long. Discovering new favorites among pretty much every genre of music. Learning guitar and then piano. Planning to study abroad. Becoming close to so many new

friends. Getting exposed to new ideas. Actually chose to study statistics and math, math, which he once proclaimed stood for mental abuse to humans.

He was going to be the most incredible adult. A lifelong best friend, I had silently hoped. The fact that we don't get to see what he's like 20 years from now, what impact he would have continued to have, breaks my heart.

So I'll leave you with this thought.

I wonder if love, like matter, can neither be created nor destroyed. Like the love we're given, the inputs of love, over time, becomes the love that radiates out from us. Maybe it's like the Beatles said "In the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make." That was certainly true in Zach's case. Zach felt so much love for so many of us. We can still feel it when we close our eyes. That lives on. All that love Zach put out into the universe is now ours, ours to reflect onto ourselves and each other and the world. Our responsibility to keep alive.