

By Sarah Porter

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Zachary. the little boy born in 2003 at 3.03, who wore the number three, and will always make us the three Porter siblings. Though we now only have memories of holding and hugging our baby brother. He will always complete us. 3 will always be our magic number.

My little brother, who I affectionately called my little big brother. Not only because he's towered over me for many years, but because of his incredible maturity, insightfulness and unwavering sense of self. I'll admit, Google became my best friend after conversations with Zachary, after which I would always need to look up at least one word. I'd be lying if I said this never once annoyed me as a big sister.

I got to rewatch you grow up all over again as I read the letters you left us and taped down each picture of the memories that filled your life. From the bright carefree smiles of your youth, to the surly teen years where we were lucky to catch a smile on camera, and of course those awkward years in between. As I taped down each picture I remembered all the wonderful things we experienced together, from boogie boarding til our stomachs were red in cape cod, performing plays, dances, and musical performances with our cousins, hundreds, if not a thousand baseball and softball games, countless road-trips across through the corn fields of the great Midwest, relentlessly harassing each others friends, building leaf piles and igloos in the park, and skiing down moguls in Salt Lake City on our last trip together

It's impossible to imagine that I'm standing here with you all memorializing my little brother after just 20 short years. But in those 20 years Zachary lived an authentic, beautiful and full life and taught countless invaluable life lessons all along the way. Thankfully, he wrote a lot of those down.

I'll share with you the last letter my brother wrote, exactly a week before he passed, a message to our mom on Mother's day, sent at approximately 2:23 am.

I wanted to be the first to tell you happy Mother's Day tomorrow (today?!) But seeing as though I will not be awake within the first 4 hours or so of your day, I didn't like my odds. And so a text will have to do for now!

Thank you so much for all of your help during move out and this entire semester. From helping me plan and coordinate spring break, to encouraging me to go abroad this summer (and let's not forget encouraging me to pick up an instrument) you (and dad)

have helped me push my horizons and be the best version of myself. A version that I know makes you proud and I am so grateful for that. Everyday I find myself thankful for the way you raised me to be.

I hate to talk about myself so much on your day but I'm afraid, among your many great works, my life is the one I am most confident complimenting you on. But really, I cannot say enough, truly, how much I appreciate having such a great mom. Love, your favorite son.

Zachary left it all on the paper. I don't have to tell you he was thankful for his life and loved ones, and a self-aware, compassionate, humble, devoted, and brilliant kid. Zachary was incredibly talented, and no doubt on his way to make the world better for us all. But together, we can continue on his legacy, and turn his tragic loss into an infinite ripple of good for the world around us.

Thank you Zachary, for every moment and memory of the life we lived together on this earth

I am so proud to call you my baby brother. Be with us all as we try to live life without you, and just a bit more like you. I love you to shreds.