

By Todd Porter

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Zachary spent almost all of his way-too-short life in Lake Bluff—and because of that it was a wonderful life, though nevertheless, unfairly brief. Here are the Top Ten Experiences of Zach's Wonderful Life.

14. Going to midnight, school night, Star Wars movie premiers with 20 friends, a live action cos-play Darth Vader, and two sisters dressed as Princess Leia.

13. The Great Lake Forest U14 House League Dugout Coup, when he baited the coach to abandon the dugout, by insubordinately refusing to pitch, and then managing the team to victory, by pitching the kids that never got to pitch.

12. Building forts and camping out in the ravines, at least until a warm, quiet, mosquito-free bed sounded pretty good around 3 AM.

11. Years of Lake Bluff Youth Baseball in which he honed his skill at questioning authority, especially his coaches. Well, mainly, Dave Kerf, that is. Zachary cherished every keen insight of baseball wisdom that dribbled out of my mouth. That he was better than me at every facet of baseball, when he was nine, I'm sure added to his respect for my opinions.

10. The best job in the world—teaching in the Park District sailing program, which he declared he would do forever—hanging out right here on this beautiful beach; with his friends, cruising around Lake Michigan with a bunch of kids; and only occasionally throwing one in – all for pay.

9. Lovely Anna, who Zach loved dearly and who made the Covid years, years of love. (By the way this sentence, may be the most cringeworthy moment he would find of what he would view as an entirely, embarrassingly overblown production. Though, he would also admit, if forced, that it was one of the truest statements as well, and also he'd forgive me for embarrassing him, which he was well practiced at.)

8. Team Orange Juice winning the Lake Bluff Wiffle Ball Championship against a bunch of grown men, proving once again that the kids are the best part of Lake Bluff.

7. His emergence as a complete nerd when he realized his love of regression analysis.

6. Playing on the high-school soccer team, possibly, mainly because it was contrary to every one of his father's firmly grounded moral, patriotic and athletic principles.

5. His abbreviated three-days at a seven-day debate camp—errr wait, no—that was the Worst Experience of His Wonderful Life. We sent him there against his will because he loved to debate, Nate Blackmer, Drew Irvin, ideologues, his parents, and of course anyone absurd enough to rely on batting

average to evaluate a baseball player. But when he got to camp, it turns out, he really didn't much like other debaters. I'm sure that I was a debater had nothing to do with it.

4. Reluctantly hosting gatherings (never parties) in the basement, a sacrifice he made for the greater good, because he knew, and regretted, that he had the most favorable parental situations.

3. We recently learned that Zach spent more time in the middle school principals office than we were previously aware—but we believe it was quality time. This lack of notice could be because Principal Nate Blackmer had learned from schooling Sarah and Elizabeth of the Porter Rule for Parental Notification. Upon hearing of an alleged infraction, if my immediate reaction would be laughter, then they knew they knew they were in the clear. And I suspect after years of Porter parental laughter and indifference, Nate gave up on receiving the slightest bit of parental support. Zach's greatest Nate debates were over the mandatory lanyard policy implemented in his last year at the middle school. Zach was repeatedly sent to Nate's office for not wearing a lanyard and I suspect arguing lanyard policy with Nate was the highpoint of his school day..

2. Working out at the Royer Weight Room and Gladiator Training Pit, after which he'd note that he was glad his sister sibling rivalries were far more subtle than hand-to-hand combat with two professionally-muscled brothers.

And the number 1 Best Experience of Zach's Wonderful Life was being the ace on the only baseball team that ever really mattered to him—the Lake Forest Scouts. And then winning the first game of the playoffs against Palatine, just before his graduation festivities.

I know Zach would love that this year's Scouts team is making a strong run in the playoffs. We went to a couple games when he was back after college was out. And he told me after he left that in his experience the Scouts always had trouble in the second game of the playoffs. So by you're win on Saturday, you've already exceeded his expectations. And whether his spirit and love is inspiring a bunch of good ballplayers, or he's somehow tipping off the pitches, I don't really know. But I do know he's thrilled to contribute to the Scouts wins any way he can. And I know he'd also want you to stay loose, have fun, play hard, and lay off the high fast balls.

Zach's past two years at Wash U were some of his best. He loved playing club ball there, but he was also growing into new experiences and activities. Three of the best parts were:

Finding his way to a fraternity of brothers that accepted his genetic predisposition to reject all authority and tradition. He was selected to be Pledge Class President, and then immediately impeached for violating some sacred tradition or another. But he stuck it out, and the Pledge Marshall kindly told us recently that he learned to think and reflect more, after butting heads with Zach. And I think that's true of most of us who have butted-heads with Zach, he gives us something to think about, after the concussion's healed.

And at Wash U, he was finally free to adjust to his true and heartfelt internal clock: Mornings start off bright and early at noon, afternoons go until 8ish, and evenings start at midnight sharp.

While at home, Zach had resisted going to guitar lessons, resisted staying home for guitar lessons, never ever practiced guitar, and never even opened the Great Courses online guitar lessons and supplementary tutorials—it was a full-on, organized, 10-year campaign of sabotage, obstruction and resistance to the guitar. But then he left home, and when he came back from Wash U, surely still knowing that his mother still dreamed of having a child guitar player and his father loved the Beatles, he played for us the most beautiful version of Blackbird we've ever heard on his guitar.

In a similar vein, when he came home from Wash U, he was reading Sigmund Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents. When he went off to Alaska, I sent him with Generation of Swine by Hunter S. Thompson. I'll leave it to you to decide who's the better influence.

I noted at his high school graduation party that despite our well-deserved fame as the Northshore's Gateway to Adult Diapers, what Lake Bluff does best is produce great kids. And I, perhaps selfishly, believe that Zach was one of the best great kids Lake Bluff produced. And all of us here, his family and all his many friends, can at least find a moment of solace that we all did our part to help make his wonderful life.

We thank-you all for the wonderful love this community has manifested for Zach his whole life, and especially now, when we all need it the most. Zach's sisters and friends noted that he was a man who chose his own path in life, seemingly indifferent to what others expected or demanded. But it was not that he didn't care about what others thought about him, I think it was that he felt the love of all of us and so could be himself and stay true to his values: compassion, fairness and fun. And it's your continued love and support that will help us survive in this cruel, unfair, but also wonderful life. That love is what we have left to share of him, and we hope we can all cherish it forever.