



The Takeoff- August 2020

We first met Zach through our son Alex when he was in his freshman year at Mountain Ranch High School. Alex never seemed to have much interest in organized sports but once he started high school he decided to go outside of his comfort zone and try Lacrosse. Since this was new and unknown for our son, there were a lot of nerves leading up to that 1st day of practice not just for Alex but for us as well. When he came home that night we were not sure what to expect but we were pleasantly surprised when he was lit up with excitement and was looking forward to the season. He told us about this other kid on the team that played the same position and that he clicked with immediately, this kid that left such a great first impression was Zach. Zach had played Lacrosse before and took Alex under his wing so to speak. Soon after Alex had Zach over to "hangout". He was a bit conservative and a bit shy the first time we met but he had the most contagious smile. Over time Zach was around on a regular basis and warmed up to our family. He started to join us camping and boating. One memorable time, they were drinking and Zach split his foot open on something he stepped on. Alex decided to play "doctor" and Zach was laughing to the point that he was hysterical, gut laughing with tears streaming down his face.....uncontrollably for what felt like hours. This was not the only time Zach had us all laughing uncontrollably.

Tubing wars... have we had some days where our cheeks hurt at the end of the day because of the shenanigans of Alex and Zach competing on tubes behind the boat. They would both want to be pushed to the limit with the intent of getting the other person off their tube first. They would push, kick, shove or just hold on for their lives with a grin so big you couldn't help but return the smile. But after the long day of fun at the lake, Zach some how would always end up RED because he would forget to reapply the sunscreen. The poor white boy would get caught up in the activities and unless someone told him to put on a shirt or some more sunscreen it went forgotten. There were not many weekends that he did not go home burnt! One other thing you could always count on from Zach was the Jalapeno Poppers! He always made sure to bring all the ingredients and when the time came, he and I would sit at the table, prepping the poppers and have some great one on one time. This become known as the "Zach Special".

The College years came sooner than any of us expected. Both Alex and Zach checked out several schools together both in state and out of state, both thought Adams State was the PERFECT fit. Little did they know the smallness of the town was not nearly large enough for both of their personalities. They ended up rooming together which gave us some peace of mind knowing they were together and would take care of one another. These two were definitely best friends before graduating high school and are the years that formed an irreplaceable bond between them.



We don't know the exact moment it happened but Zach became a part of our family. He called me Mama Laura and it was fitting for sure because we definitely felt that he was a second son for us. He always made sure to make time for us without Alex even being around. These are the relationships that you are lucky to have in any friend and cherish no matter the age difference! Even when he joined the Navy and only came back for a couple of days, Zach always made a special trip to spend time with us, check in and catch up. I love that we had that special connection and we made sure to stay in touch while he was in Pilot school.

We are so thankful that Zach came into our life so many years ago. We gained a second son, and a friend who is an inspiration to all that knew him because of his dedication, focus and his heart of gold. We miss and love you Zach!!

Love,
Bobby and Laura Nelson