



The Takeoff- March 2020

I will never forget the first moment I saw Zach Capra. I was standing on a balcony of an impossibly cute bed and breakfast in the bucolic hamlet of Provincetown. I stood, peering down over the white railing watching the passers-by, anxiously awaiting our planned meeting and the opportunity to introduce someone new to a beloved family of aviators. The moment our eyes met, that infectious and impish smile was beaming ear-to-ear and in the presence of his impossible-to-resist charm we began a wonderful adventure which was for me, far too short in duration, but rewarding enough for a lifetime. A beautiful flower bloomed in life's garden that day. But in the words of the late Leonard Nimoy: "A life is like a garden. Perfect moments can be had, but not preserved, except in memory." And I deeply cherish every memory I have of Zach.

From that day forward we talked nearly every day. We would talk about everything under the stars from families to flying, silliness to sadness, fun to frustration, and everything in between. We shared the most incredible bond built on a foundation of love, respect and mutual support, and I would venture a guess that everyone who had the pleasure of knowing Zach feels exactly the same way. We laughed together. We cried together. And on many an occasion we laughed *until* we cried, often at silliest of things, like me butchering recitations of Dr. Seuss poems.

Often our phone calls would begin after I had just landed from piloting an airliner back from Europe, and he would want to know all about the technical side of the trans-Atlantic crossing; ever the curious mind. We would talk about what he was working on in his own conquest of the skies; the common bond of aviators. We would talk late into the night, often for many hours.

When he, ever the perfectionist, would be frustrated by something in one of his courses, or some part of his flying lessons I would remind him of the Henry David Thoreau quote: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams, live the life you have imagined." I would remind him that he had already successfully fulfilled two great aspirations, serving in the Navy, and to become a pilot, (as he had already flown many times by himself by that point), and that he absolutely could therefore achieve anything he set his mind to. And he did. And there were many times when I too faced a challenge and he would motivate me in return, telling me to ride faster, push harder and never give up on anything.

Zach was a constant source of motivation and inspiration to so many. He loved his family and his friends with incredible depth. He celebrated our victories as our biggest



cheerleader, always so proud of those he cared about. He could hardly contain his excitement when he would call to share some achievement of his family or friends.

In the time since Zach left us for eternal flight that fateful Spring morning, beckoned back into the loving arms of God, I have found solace in the L.R. Knost quote: "Life is amazing. And then it's awful. And then it's amazing again. And in between the amazing and the awful it's ordinary and mundane and routine. Breathe in the amazing, hold on through the awful, and relax and exhale during the ordinary. That's just living heart-breaking, soul-healing, amazing, awful, ordinary life. And it's breathtakingly beautiful."

Having Zach in our lives was amazing. Losing him was awful. And with him, in the in-between, through all of our own ordinary and mundane days, he made every day more beautiful. We were very blessed to have him blooming in our garden for awhile. Now, the passing of time has dried the flow of tears a bit, and every thought of him once again brings a smile to my face. Memories of him make me laugh, and his words in my mind motivate me still to keep going: better, stronger, faster. And that is exactly as he would have wanted it.

Steven Reynolds
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