

First I'd like to thank John Minick for brining our son home to us.
We'd also like to thank Jerry Ingersoll and John Radimaker for leaving their families and spend time with us during our time of loss.
I don't want to leave anyone out so, I'd just like to thank everyone for the great support you've showed us.
We've received a huge number of phone calls and emails from those that had worked with him or knew him in other ways.
We cherish all the correspondence and the wonderful pictures.

Tom – what can I say
You were my baby, my big guy, and my best friend
We were always so proud of everything you did.
I always said I brain gets a block when I have to write anything. I'm more of an outline person.
But now I'd like to share a couple of memories I have of his life that have been circling around in my brain the last few days.

I remember when he was two and three, Jon was only a baby, I would have to run out the door as soon as the baby sitter got there and I would tell her – If you need anything just ask Tom he can help you with everything.

As he got older around 4-5 we were doing a lot of camping and boating then. Tom had a whole collection of plant, wildlife and geological booklets. We would constantly be stopping on our hikes for him to identify things.

When we still lived in Southern California, before Tom was 9, we'd have neighbors come to the door. Of course I'd let them in and visit. After a while I'd find out that Tom had invited them to dinner and hadn't told me.

I remember taking him to my Grandparents house when he was 5. My grandfather was a pretty gruff man. One day I found Tom standing beside him having a political conversation about the president and government officials. My grandfather was totally amazed and impressed.

As he got older he became involved with 4-H and Scouts. Of course he'd volunteer to help with everything. I finally had to make a rule setting the order of precedence for all his activities to alleviate the conflicts. Third weekend of the month was Scout campout, and then it was school, scouts, then 4-H.

I spent many a week at fairs just hanging out while he showed his rabbits, poultry, sheep and steer. Through Toms Junior and High School years Steve attended, almost every third weekend of the month and a week during summer with him on Scout Campouts.

When I worked at the fairgrounds he was always the first to jump in when I needed help either in the office of out in the livestock area.

His first long leave from home was when he went away to Coalinga to the Community College. He got a job on the school farm and was soon running the bull test that they did down there. He came home almost every other weekend to help around the house and visit with family and friends. My biggest fear was when he traveled during the time of the year that the fog was in the valley. He'd always check in somewhere along the road and again when he got home. At the school he was well liked and many times he would call only to have to get off the phone because every one was coming over and he was cooking all the food. If it was the night for the city council meeting, whoever was in the house was required to sit and watch the cable TV and then I'm sure he had some discussion about the meeting. He really enjoyed his classes and his instructors in Coalinga. He was probably the only student that had his water and other earthquake supplies stashed away, being that Coalinga sits on the San Andreas earthquake fault.

During his high school and college years he spent many hours and days helping with his father at various Lions club events. Raising money for one cause or another.

After Coaling he moved on to the University Nevada in Reno. As soon as he started there he got a job at the meats lab. He'd get up at 3 AM every morning to get ready and go to work. I think that early morning rising had stuck with him ever since. Whenever he came home it was not unusual for him to be the first one up. We'd awake to him shuffling into our room in his wool socks, underwear and two cups of coffee in his hand. Again while in Reno, he phoned regularly, 2-3 times a week, and came home every weekend he could get away. School came easy for him. It seemed that if he saw it, heard it, or read it it would instantly be stored away in his brain. Must have had a good file system there.

Through out his college years he never missed a holiday or special event. He always made it home, even if it meant he had to drive 5-7 hours to get here and then turn around and get back to school. This continued even when he moved away to Wells. I remember the first mothers day he was gone to school. He called in the morning, asked what I was doing and had a nice chat, he wished me happy mothers day and hung up. About 15 minutes later his truck comes driving down the driveway. His call was just to check and see where he'd find me.

Two thanksgivings ago he showed up at home about 4 hours earlier than expected and went directly upstairs. I could sense something was wrong and went up to check on him. You could tell he was in pain, we took him to the emergency room and at 9 PM they removed his appendices. The next day was thanksgiving and he informed them in the morning we was going home to be with the family.

After graduation he started working on his Masters. The Forest Service snatched him up part way through. Part I think because it was hard to find someone who was actually willing to move to and live in Wells. He loved the Jarbridge and Rudy Mountains. He loved his permittees and the work that he was doing. He loved being part of the families of his good friends there.

He was excited when he called home and told me about a temporary detail he'd seen posted, in Afghanistan. I was concerned, but I always believed and tried to instill in my kids the importance of living life to the fullest, I bit my tongue and asked "what would the forest service be doing over there?" He always knew that in the end I would tell him that the decision to do anything was his, He had to do what was right for him and we would support him in whatever he chose to do.

His leaving to go to Ft Bragg this February was hard. We knew he'd be gone a long time this time. Before he left he spent time with us in Auburn. I remember him getting the email that he was to travel to Washington for pictures with the secretary of agriculture. He contacted them back and said they would have to reschedule. His time was planned with his family. He'd be in Ft Bragg so he could come down there if they wanted pictures.

When he was in Afghanistan we had frequent contact through the computer, sometime instant messages and sometimes voice. He was very dedicated to what he was doing over there. We were told there would be some things he couldn't talk about and many times he would say there was something going on but I'll tell you later. Steve watches the news almost religiously and we all know what the news shows. We'd ask him about his safety and he'd always tell us to stop watching the news. You know they aren't going to be printing anything good. My military guys are taking care of me and I'm perfectly safe. I told him numerous times – Tom, you volunteered to go over there, if at any time you're not comfortable tell them your going home. I knew he wouldn't do that though. What he was doing was too important to him. He told us "STOP WORRYING, I'M BEING TAKEN CARE OF" I promised him not to worry and I didn't, even though I was concerned, until I saw uniforms at the door. And that's what happened the other day. We learned the other day, his last words were "I'M GOOD" Tom was always good.

Tom we'll forever miss you as will all those whose lives you've touched.