

Conner John Van Skyhawk

July 2, 1992 ~ March 12, 2022

Conner John Van Skyhawk, friend, brother, son… grandson, cousin, nephew. Left us suddenly on Saturday, March 12, 2022. His death is an abrupt and tragic loss for all those who knew him. To know Conner truly was to love him.

Arriving July 2, 1992, in Sandy, Utah, Conner was the eldest of five children born to Brad and Rebecca Conover Van Skyhawk. As a son, he was good-natured, affectionate, supportive, and positive. An attentive and encouraging big brother to his siblings, he was especially sensitive to his handicapped sister, Annalee. Growing up he made his parents proud as he set a high standard for his brothers to follow in most every aspect of his life. Hard-working, high-achieving, creative, athletic, courageous, ambitious, observant, funny, talented, and smart, he made it easy for his parents to use him as a positive example for his brothers to follow.

He grew up in Riverton, Utah, and excelled in school while attending Rosamond Elementary, Oquirrh Middle, and Riverton High Schools. He was a friend to all with his patient and accepting demeanor. Subsequently, Conner helped unify any school he attended by befriending students in all different types of groups. He was rather unusual that way—never confined to a category, or a clique, daring to be his own person.

He wasn’t afraid to reach out and remain loyal to those who were mainstream or on the periphery; involved in sports, the arts, academics, scouts, his church, or work, it didn’t matter. He didn’t seem to care if you thought you were different than him, because he almost always could find common ground with someone to become their friend.

Not only that, Conner had a quirky sense of humor, and he liked to be different in his own way. He had fun with surprising people by what he sometimes wore or how he grew his hair. A bit of a trendsetter, he always was style-minded. But forget about trying to define it! He was one of a kind. He didn’t mind standing out and setting himself apart from the crowd. Unique, unusual, and sometimes even a bit weird, this is what endeared people to Conner and made him special.

Conner went on to receive higher education at all three of Utah’s major state universities. He studied mathematics and the sciences with a dual major in biomedical engineering and math. While attending school he worked at the University of Utah’s Orthopedics Clinic after achieving his advanced EMT in a program offered on BYU’s campus.

Conner shined brightest when he was helping others because Conner had a remarkable ability to put people at ease in difficult circumstances. So, employment in the health field working with patients suffering from longstanding orthopedic pain, or work as an assistant soccer coach teaching younger players game fundamentals, or tutoring students who were confused in math, or even waiting tables and serving hungry customers in a noisy, hectic, sometimes demanding, yet fantastic restaurant--these were places where he soared. His patience, calm persona, and his light-hearted approach in life made him a person that people sought. And he excelled under pressure.

Conner made important bonds of friendship at each university while further developing his brilliant intellect. With his many and varied interests, he connected to all types of people in college. He was a bridge-builder; it was truly his greatest gift. His acceptance of differences, easiness to forgive offenses, strong ability to ask questions, a desire to sincerely learn about people, and an encouragement of everyone's success, resulted in pulling these geographically separate and various groups into one very large circle of loving and supportive friends.

And while his friends were incredibly important to him, his other relationships did not take a back seat in his heart. He spoke often of the love he had for his family, and he did what he could to remain close to his brothers and parents, grandparents, and cousins. As a kid, he spent a great amount of time inventing imaginary games, teaching his younger siblings and cousins, taking marvelous trips, and creating adventures with them. Despite being one of the eldest, younger family members and neighbors felt noticed by him. He had a genuine interest in others, and when he spoke to you, you felt listened to and understood.

Conner was a talented musician, playing the piano as a child and moving on to learning to play every saxophone in his youth--participating in bands which performed classical, jazz, pop, and marching band music, among others. Beginning in his youth and carrying on through his adult life, he loved listening to and creating music with his friends. He was great at improvising, and new songs seemed to simply flow out of his fingers as he played. Much of this new music was also created on the computer and focused on electronic and techno music. Sometimes it was used as background music on websites or videos, and in high school, even the morning school announcements! He even collaborated writing folk music and many other styles, including children's primary music with his mom.

A born competitor and a fast runner, he loved to hang out with his brothers, friends, and cousins playing soccer, basketball, and video games. He was a fierce opponent at any chess, backgammon, group party game, or board game. Conner loved a challenge to his mind, and he loved to win, which he often did, so he was a fun opponent!

He had a very active childhood, and he also took clogging and hip-hop dance and was on an all- boys' team with his brother that won lots of competitions. That experience led to an opportunity to perform in the Opening, Closing, and Award Ceremonies of Salt Lake's 2002 Winter Olympics.

He grew up playing many sports including baseball, basketball, karate, and soccer. He was great at them all, but he loved soccer and basketball the most, playing on the middle school and as a guest on his brother's high school basketball team, and as a member of the RHS soccer and track teams. He also was a loyal team member of his ward YM basketball team, and many college intramural and adult teams in both sports. In fact, the night he died, he and his brothers had just finished their last game of an undefeated soccer season, where Conner treated them all afterwards with burgers and shakes to celebrate.

Conner also loved the great outdoors, and he could hold his own while playing a game of pickleball, spikeball, or even wakeboarding on a lake or skiing/snowboarding on the slopes.

He appreciated the beauty in nature. While growing up he went boating and camping a great deal with his family and his Conover grandparents and cousins. He participated in Scouting throughout his youth and worked hard to earn the rank of an Eagle.

Remarkably, while growing up on the "mainland," he even learned to sail with his father and grandfather Van Skyhawk, a native of Washington. Conner spent his last big trip together with his entire immediate family on a boat for a week in the San Juan Islands, acquiring this skill. It is a cherished memory of him and a once-in-a-lifetime vacation.

Conner enjoyed a lot of time traveling the country and learning about our history, seeing national and state parks. and hiking and enjoying recreation outside. He held onto that love of travel as an adult and worked all over the country in the summers doing security system installations. One summer he said he had driven his car to each major ocean in America—Pacific, Atlantic, and even the Gulf of Mexico! He and his longtime love Tess also traveled a great deal, and among many others, he had loved visiting Paris, Seattle, and San Francisco with her.

He was an excellent card magician, wowing friends and family with his sleight of hand, and teaching his skills to younger siblings to carry on his legacy. Along with this hand-eye coordination, he also was a master at memorizing patterns. With that came an ability to quickly solve a Rubik's cube in under a minute, often even doing it behind his back just to show off!

Conner loved philosophy and considering profound matters of the universe! He thought deeply, felt deeply, and loved deeply. Animals gravitated to him. He broke his first arm trying to hold a little stray puppy while getting off of a tramp as a child. (He would later go on to break his arms six more times!) Despite this painful beginning, his connection with animals grew ever since.

He felt very strongly for those things he saw as unjust in the world. He had a very tender heart and simply wanted to help anyone in need. He was gentle, kind, and fun with special people like his Uncle Tim with Downs Syndrome. And he set a trend with his younger brothers who would follow his example for years to come:

Conner would take Tim with him to teenager events and activities where Tim could be the life of the party. He was never embarrassed to do this and enjoyed the fun Tim always added to the group. In fact, Tim was the last person in the family Conner spoke to. He was dropping him off after winning the soccer championship, and Tim had acted as the team's honorary soccer coach. Because of the successful season, Tim was especially excited to be included again with the boys, proclaiming to all that he was "Coach of the Year, Baby!" But what he talks most about that night now, is Conner telling him that he loved him when he took him home.

Conner is survived by his Parents (Brad and Rebecca); brothers (Lucas, Jacob, and Keaton); Grandparents (George and Florence Conover), (Norm and Cathy Van Skyhawk); and many loving and fun aunts, uncles, and cousins. He's preceded in death by his sister, Annalee Jean Van Skyhawk, at age 4 ¾ when he was 11.

A viewing will be held on Friday, March 25, 2022, from 6–8:30 pm at Larkin Mortuary of Riverton, 3688 West 12600 South; and Saturday, March 26, 2022, from 10-11:30 am at the Castlewood Ward building, 12691 South 3600 West.

A funeral will be held on Saturday, March 26, 2022, at 12:00 noon at the Castlewood Ward building, 12691 South 3600 West. (This building is also the Western Springs Stake Center.)

Burial is at Larkin Sunset Gardens in Sandy, Utah, (1950 East 10600 South)
where he will be buried next to his sister in the "Prayer and Meditation Garden."

A music tribute will be held in Conner's honor on Sunday, March 27, 2022, at 7 pm at "The Soundwell," music venue (149 West 200 South). Conner's dear friends and fellow musicians are putting together this concert to share the music he's written, play and sing songs that are reflective of him, and share a night simply celebrating his life on earth and his graduation to the next.

Conner's former employer, owners of the upscale Ivy Restaurant, has graciously donated the space for this event. All Adults are welcome.

Thank you to all who have poured out love and support to our family during this immense loss. It is a tragic accident, and we feel sorrow for not only our family but for the other victim and his family. Yet the kindness and service and prayers from so many people on our behalf is overwhelming. We literally feel strength from your love, and we feel God answering these prayers and carry us a day at a time through Conner's death.

Despite all the turmoil in the world today, there is immense goodness, and love continues to shine light in the darkness. Thank you for inspiring this love, Conner. You are a light to us all. May your spirit continue to shine with your unique and beautiful love for the goodness of life. Farewell, our beloved boy. Be at peace with God and Angel Annalee, and we'll do our best to live well and be with you again.