

Saxton Dunlap: Say his name.

Death. Even though everyone will experience death one way or another, the word stutters out of people's mouth as they hesitate to use it. Is it bad to talk about it? Is it worse not to? Death is a hypersensitive subject to talk or write or even think about. Banksy once said: "You die twice. One time when you stop breathing and a second time, when somebody says your name for the last time." Saxton Dunlap should only have to die once. That means, you should find an ear and chew it off with stories, memories, or wishes so Saxton can live on in our hearts and in our minds.

There is no real way to determine a person's worth, but if it was measured by meaningful connections and the impact that was left than Saxton would be Rich. Rich in love, rich in friends, rich in memories.

So, who was Saxton? Well, a hero. Saxton Dunlap was a hero.

The definition of a hero is "a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities," and anyone could walk down the halls of Riverview or step onto the lacrosse field and not one person would or even could say differently. Most people think of Superman or The Flash when the word hero arises but we're not in a movie; this is real. Real people like Saxton making a real difference by being a real hero and a truly real friend.

I was blessed with the chance to know Saxton through sports. First, with Sun Devils football and then many years of lacrosse. Remembering back from 7th grade until now, I still don't know what was more impressive, being able to hear Mrs. Dunlap from anywhere and everywhere on the field or Saxton's pure athletic ability.

This past week my head has been flooded with memories. Memories of dancing in the Riverview Locker room after a win, memories of bus rides to take down our rivals, memories of running through the halls of a hotel room, and memories of Saxton cheffing up some breakfast sausage sandwich even though it was 10 o'clock at night swearing it would be the best I ever had. And, surprisingly, they always were the best I ever had.

Saxton was so passionate about whatever he was doing, it didn't matter if that was making breakfast sausage, playing lacrosse, or just being a friend. Characteristics such as this - along with humor, confidence, kindness - is what made

Saxton unprecedented. He was hard not to admire and love. An individual kids of all ages would look up to. A hero.

Time. It feels infinite until it stops. A sudden abrupt screeching stop. Always thinking that there will be another text, another call, another hug, another chance to tell them what you have always wanted to. Time is taken for granted until we realize it's the most valuable commodity. No one tells you to say that last "I love you", make that hug a little tighter, or cherish that win just a little bit more. An extra second with someone wouldn't even enter your thoughts until it's impossible and then that second is all you can think about. All you dream about. Realizing you would do anything to have that extra second back. You would do anything for just one more second.

This is how I feel. This is how everyone feels. Loss, guilt, hurt, love, anger. All these emotions get jumbled up inside and you can flip a coin for which one will erupt and try to escape. For me, the winners are love and loss. Drinking bottle and bottle after water trying to rehydrate after my eyes slowly watered my cheeks.

A small part of my heart is missing. Missing a final goodbye, a final glance, a final smile, one last listen to his laugh. We're just missing. Missing a friend, a son, a hero; we're missing Saxton. But love for Saxton brings us together. Filling our hearts and mending the small missing piece. Love lets us celebrate his life.

On November 7th of 2020 Saxton Dunlap passed away. He fought his hardest battle with strength and courage, like a hero, like Saxton would. He is in a better place, but the memories of Saxton can never be taken from us and no one can stop us from saying his name. I am going to do everything in my power to make sure Saxton only dies once and I hope you will join me in remembering all the heroic and beautiful moments we've shared with Saxton. Share his name and his stories and he will live on. Share his charisma and his love and he will live on. Thank you.