

Ricki Getzschman Memorial Scholarship Required Reading

This scholarship exists to honor the memory and life of Ricki Getzschman who was a 2009 graduate of Benson High School. It exists to help another graduate of Benson High School achieve his/her academic or vocational goals which Ricki was unable to do. In order to help us achieve this goal, we want you to know something about who Ricki was and we want to know something about who you are and how you hope to impact the world around you.

Ricki was born on February 5, 1991. His entrance into this world was a difficult one, but he quickly began to grow and entertain us which is something he would continue to do for the rest of his life. He was very smart and was the funniest of the three babies born to our family, making faces and dancing at every opportunity, especially to the song, "Bad Boys". We should have known then... Honestly, he really wasn't a bad boy, but he was mischievous and definitely managed to drive his mother and more than one teacher a bit crazy over the years. He was often a "behind the scenes" pot stirrer and prankster throughout his life, but it was almost always in good fun. He also developed the ability to tell the most amazing stories. He could embellish with the best of them! Over the years we often wondered how much of the stories he told was true. As it turns out, in talking with his many friends after his passing, much more was true than we had ever dreamed!

Wherever he went, Ricki had a way of making himself at home, rarely knocking but rather just walking on in to friends' homes as if he lived there. He started doing this at about the age of four and continued to do so for the rest of his life. Rather than finding this irritating, all have told me that they found it endearing and they welcomed him and treated him as one of their own. This is what you must know as you read on. Ricki was more than a friend to all who knew him well. He was family. He would stand up for and help any one of them whenever they needed him. He was greatly loved and he is greatly missed. He was a unique and very special person who made an impact on the people and world around him in his short time on this earth and there will never be another like him.

As a young boy, Ricki was outdoors a lots and always very busy. He loved to be on anything with wheels going as fast as he could and usually on fewer wheels than were actually attached to the toy. He also did puzzles and read books. He was a great organizer and builder of things. He always had a project of some kind going involving legos or scrap wood, glue, nails and paint. He built small things and large things from little cars to big forts. As he grew older, he and his friend, Andy Hillmer, built tents, a lean to, marshmallow shooters, potato guns, bows and arrows and even a rather large boat that we were all convinced would never float. That boat sat in one garage or the other for many years until they were off to college. One fall, they finally loaded it up and took it to a lake. Much to our amazement, that boat did float! Ricki and

friends also made a number of video presentations for school projects that may have been somewhat less than educational, but were loved by the teachers because they were hysterically funny. I was often asked by teachers at conferences if I had seen this video or that and if I hadn't, the teacher was quick to let me know that I absolutely should not miss them!

Ricki participated in many activities. He was a member of Junior National Honor Society and National Honor Society. He took many honors and AP classes. He participated in science and technology fairs and robotics competitions. He participated in the MOBA homebuilding competition, Model UN where his team won best costume two years running, Rocket Club where they won several competitions earning them trips to Alabama and Washington DC. He was a member of concert band and marching band in which he played the oboe and drums. He was a member of the track team, swim team (making it to state in relays and individual back stroke) and played soccer and tennis in his senior year. Throughout his childhood he played baseball, soccer, football and lacrosse. Later he enjoyed Frisbee golf and ultimate frisbee. He continued to love the outdoors, camping, fishing, hunting, etc. He was strong and fiercely competitive in all things. He definitely pushed the envelope but he had a soft heart. He also served dinners at the Sienna Francis House, shoveled snow and mowed lawns for elderly neighbors and his grandparents, but he didn't just do the work. He stopped to visit. He could be found helping a stranger change a flat tire on the side of the road, helping a stranger get a lawn mower started, helping a friend move or pull their car out the snow, the mud or a ditch. He worked jobs at Pepper Jax Grill, CoCo Key, and the YMCA. He especially like the YMCA because in addition to lifeguarding, he got to teach swimming to kids with special needs. He was a very busy young man who participated fully in life and usually with his big smile, bigger laugh and loads of energy and enthusiasm.

He went to college at UNL, but eventually became frustrated with the cost as well as the difficulty in trying to schedule classes in a way that would allow him to hold down a job. He decided to take a break and just work to earn some extra college money and it was during this time that he decided to join the United States Army. He was a paratrooper serving proudly with the 82nd Airborne Division in Ft Bragg, North Carolina. He served one tour in Afghanistan. He was known as a hard worker and a team player who was never afraid to sacrifice himself. Again he was fiercely competitive, but he was also one of the first to pick someone up if they were down. He had become a very good man, not a perfect one, but very very good. When he was home on leave he could be found helping the Benson band and rocket team and visiting family, friends and old teachers. He even visited the grandmother of his step father at her assisted living facility because he wanted to see how she was doing. He had helped her move in the year before. Oh how she loved him for that visit!

Ricki returned home from the army for good on August 7th, 2013. He spent time with his family and friends that week and was making plans for his future. On the morning of August 14th, 2013 he was killed in a motorcycle accident. The loss is more than we could ever convey to you here. We know he had great impact on the people and the world around him and he was

greatly loved by more than just his family as you will continue to read. We will never know what else he might have achieved, but through this scholarship, we hope to help others achieve their dreams and have great impact on the world in memory of Ricki. Please continue to read what others had to say about Ricki and then do your best to tell us who you are and how you might embody some of Ricki's qualities. Tell us how you participate in the world now and how you hope to impact the world in the future. Please be honest. You don't have to be perfect. Ricki wasn't. He was just awesome in spite of and sometimes because of his imperfections! We hope you enjoy getting to know Ricki in these pages. It was very difficult to limit our words and you should believe us when we tell you it does not even begin to scratch the surface of who Ricki was. Thank you for sharing your story with us and we wish you the best in all your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

The Family and Friends of Ricki Getzschman

What Friends and Family Had to Say

Ricki was a very interesting individual. As well as many people can say that they knew him, we all had our own unique experiences with him. Looking back even though I spent my entire life with him I still never fully understood him or grasped the person he was. I used to only know him through my own eyes, but recently I have gotten to know more about him through many more perspectives. My brother was a huge pain in my butt, but that's kind of what I enjoy about him the most and I couldn't even tell you why. He had this huge, infectious laugh... which I'm thankful for because I can still hear it replaying over in my head. His laugh is almost always the first thing that comes to mind when I think about him. Ricki and I were very different, but very much the same. When it came down to it he was always there for me... mostly he was just upset that his sister wanted to fight all of his battles for him. Ha-ha. Go figure. He was mine. If anyone thought otherwise, I was there to be reckoned with. Ricki was my big brother and nothing was going to hurt him. We both joined the Army around the same time which is how we ended up in Fort Benning, Georgia at Airborne school together in the fall of 2011. I can't tell you the details of the mischief that occurred during that brief 3 week period of time, but know that getting to be one on one with that trouble maker made me feel like we were kids again and what we did terrorizing the town must have been how my mom felt when we were little. I guess if there are things you should know and that I would want you to know about my brother they are: He was selfless, although stubborn with his beer. He was handsome, but he had the prettiest of feminine eyes. He was smart and not just any kind of smart... he was musical, political, mathematical, scientific, rocket science creative, knower of all random facts existing. He was funny. He was tree trunk leg strong, but if he let you in he was gentle. He was guarded, but he knew how to love. Ricki was simply one in a million. He left you feeling like you had never met anyone like him, he was a one of a kind experience. That's what you should know.

Sincerely, his one and only, little sister,

Alicia.

My brother, Ricki, was a very powerful man. He used his skills and his heart to make other lives better. He reached out to many people and may not have even realized how many people he touched so deeply. He was a "game changer", willing to sacrifice so many things for others. He was a rebel in many ways. If he was going against a rule, it was to prove a very important point that sometimes people didn't understand, but once he proved his point, it opened other's eyes to realize he had done it for the better. He was one of a kind. During his military career, as stated by one of his commanding officers, he was called upon to do the tasks that needed to be done right the first time. Not everyone could handle such tasks, and that set him apart from other soldiers. He was a leader, a darn good one. (Geoffrey Getzschman, Brother)

Ricki was a person who everyone wanted to have on their team, regardless of the situation. It would be selfish to call him my best friend, as many people considered him to be their best friend. This is a true mark of his character, as he impacted the lives of many people by truly being energetic, passionate, and kind. Ricki was always willing to take on new challenges and encourage others to pursue opportunities as well. Whether success was achieved or not, the experience itself was always something to grow and learn from, Ricki would point out. Intentionally or not, he transformed people around him. His spirit was large, his smile wide, and legacy immeasurable. (Greg Meyer, Friend/Family)

"I knew Ricki as a friend and rocket club teammate in high school. One of the things that will always stand out in my mind is the focused energy that Ricki had in just about everything he did. Whether it was designing a rocket, building his own potato launcher, or just bringing levity to a situation, Ricki's fervor never waned. He was smart, sometimes the prankster, and always a loyal friend." (David Austerberry, Friend)

Hello, we are the Ramms. Marty and Cheri and our children, Harris, Nicholas and Lucas. As adults we got to know Ricki through band and swim team. The boys were friends with him at school and in sports. We want to share our picture of Ricki with you. It was hard to get the memories and emotions of 5 people edited down to reasonable length. Please take the time to share our thoughts and imagine yourself as a friend of this amazing young man. Ricki was not a child of privilege. He was raised by a single mom, he had no contact with his father. His mother worked and went to school, so Ricki helped out with his younger sister and brother. He never expected a hand out, so he was always grateful to those that helped him. He went to school, worked part time jobs and still found time to participate in many activities. Ricki was not a saint. He tested the limits of authority. His mom, his teachers, his coaches, his friends. He pushed, but he never liked or respected you less if you pushed back. Yes, he sometimes stirred things up on purpose, but he always accepted responsibility for his actions. Ricki was enthusiastic. He built a robot for open house and a cart for band. He mentored new kids at school and stayed in touch with old friends. When he got his license he stopped by to drive our son around the block. When he got a car he stopped by to drive us around the block. When my father was ill with cancer, Ricki spent time with him, driving robots around the house, setting up rockets in the yard, discussing politics. We called him "Amazing Ricki". He was startlingly handsome, with a big smile and bigger laugh. He was popular and a robotics nerd. He was a state level athlete and a band geek. He played the drums and the oboe. He had 2 speeds, faster and higher. He lived in a tent for a week in the winter, just to see if he could. He knew where he was going but he never forgot where he came from. You would have liked him even when he was driving you crazy. He would have ticked you off, but he would be the person you went to for advice. He was so smart and had so many ideas, but he was practical. It was his practical self that guided his decision to join the Army to finance college. The years will pass and some of memories of Ricki will fade, but we will never forget how loyal he was to his friends from grade school, the kids from summer swimming, the band, the Rocket and Robotics club, the

swim team, the Army and his family. We will think of him and hope that you achieved your dreams with his help, his enthusiasm and the loyalty of his friends. (The Ramms, Friends/Family)

Ricki will always have a special place in our hearts. We remember him as always full of life. From little on he always had a project he was working on: building a fort, playing a game, making a catapult, working on the rocket for the rocket club! But busy as he was, he always had time to help us if we needed it. He would mow grass or shovel snow without ever complaining. The most loved thing about Ricki is that he always had time to visit his grandparents! These weren't just run in and say "Hi" visits. He would come in, eat some cookies, sit down and have a real conversation with us. He was loved and important to us and he made us feel loved and important to him! (Ed and Sheila Osterhaus, Ricki's Grandparents)

A person applying for a scholarship in Ricki's name should have enormous school spirit. The applicant should live and breathe school pride. They should be well rounded in school activities with honors classes or high achievements in academics and participation in extra curriculums such as band, junior varsity or varsity athletics and other clubs. Participation in these activities demonstrates the same pride, spirit and drive Ricki had for school. Ricki was a best friend to all and passionate about everything he did in school. Outside of everything he participated in he was also in attendance to many games and events for sports and activities he was not involved in. Perhaps to gauge the applicant's worthiness they could be asked in a question or essay to recall the number of games attended in support of spirit (or participated in the student section, etc). Ricki was a team player. He rallied people into whatever he was doing and could speak to all aspects of what he was doing in all of his activities. He had such purpose no matter how big or small the task at hand. Ricki was involved in the classroom and quite a participant (though not always to the benefit of the curriculum). Everyone knows he could get on any side of an argument and run in circles, but he was active nonetheless. Ricki was not in ROTC, but demonstrated the same required discipline in band (when called for) and of course he eventually was a soldier so a ROTC applicant who meets other qualifications would be a quality candidate. Finally - Ricki was an adventurer and outdoorsman. The candidate could be a hunter or hiker or something along those lines. We all know about the boat building and I do recall he wanted to just be a national park ranger when he first went to school - a career very fitting for him. (Nick Daehling, Friend/Family)

Ricki was a captivating story teller. He had a magical way of drawing you into his imaginative tales about some extraordinary life event or new discovery. His whole body communicated each tale, excitement oozing from his pores. He invariably made you laugh and left your heart feeling lighter. We will certainly miss the zest and passion he put into everyday life. (Steve Hillmer, Friend/Family)

I heard these song lyrics on the radio when I was driving to school the day after I received the tragic news about the loss of my former student, Ricki Getzschman. "This is how it starts1 brighter than the heart1 lightning strikes the sun." Instantaneously, I thought to myself how perfectly these words described the Ricki I knew. I first met Ricki during his freshman year of high school in my Honors American History course. I remember him as being a quick-witted, bright, inquisitive and somewhat

mischievous young man with incredible amounts of never-ending energy. In spite of his mischievousness, I became quite fond of Ricki. He would frequently stop by my classroom after school to "debrief" me on his latest project or undertaking which could consist of anything from explaining to me how his latest homemade rocket launch turned out to telling me that he pulled an entire car engine out over a weekend to overhaul it "just for fun." Ricki even continued these impromptu visits after he graduated and pursued his career in the military. What I remember the most though was how positive and full-of-life Ricki was every single time I saw him. There literally was "never a dull moment" whenever Ricki was around. He truly was the type of individual who really enjoyed every single moment of life! Once again, I believe it to be apropos that the words that I now remember him by warrant repeating: "This is how it starts, brighter than the heart, lightning strikes the sun." (Valerie Wagner, High School /Teacher)

Ricki was very coachable and an extremely hard worker with a goal of qualifying for the state swim meet. He was able to achieve that goal, and competed three years in relay events and in the individual backstroke event his senior year. He was the second fastest back stroker ever at Benson and put his name on the record board as a member of the 200 yard freestyle relay. Ricki had an infectious smile and was well liked by his teammates and coaches. Ricki didn't neglect his studies and became a member of the National Honor Society. It was a true pleasure to know Ricki and watch him mature from a good kid to a really nice young man who left his mark on Benson swimming. (Bill Henry and Judy Kennedy, Benson Swim Coaches)

He was just an all-around great guy. He always had my back. I remember on deployment he was always able to make me laugh with some ridiculous antics. I always had to be on my toes, lol. When it was time to work, he would get in and get it done. He never hesitated to bust up his hands or get dirty, but he could always separate. When it was time to play, we played just as hard as we worked. (SPC, Christian Cunningham, Fellow Soldier and Friend)

I don't know what to say. He was a brother. He was easy to talk to, but to sum up what he meant to us as a company, let alone to me as a friend, is simply impossible. I wish I could have had his back and saved his life, like he did mine so many times. He was a man of many words. He could talk to anyone about anything. He was the first to offer a helping hand, no matter if it was simply working on a car or as stressful as grabbing the extra 40 pounds before patrol. He always strived to make a friend's life easier. Not having him for the past few months has made me realize what an impact one man can have on a soldier, a friend, and a brother. (SPC, Braden Johnson, Fellow Soldier, Friend, Brother)

I wanted to let you know that even with all he had going on, getting ready to leave, he was on the phone with me late the night before. He was worried about a friend's health and he wanted to make sure

somebody was going to follow up with his friend when he was gone. (Rob Belton-Batallion Chaplain, 82nd Airborne Division)

Oh, no. Not Ricki.

It was my second year of teaching, and although I had a class full of good kids, I knew that keeping everyone focused was an essential part of classroom management. Once a roomful of 11-year-olds knew they could start making up their own directions, the jig was up, and it wouldn't be long before the principal would appear, asking questions like, "What in the Sam Hill is going on in here?" That would be bad. I needed this job, and I needed the kids to help me keep it until I could figure out how to do it. And there was Ricki-not helping me. He was one of the ones I counted on: to do the right thing, to be conscientious, to be respectful, to be responsible, and to be a role model for his peers. But now he and his friend Andy, who sat next to him, had the tops of their desks raised-for far longer than it should ever take anyone to find anything inside a school desk -with their heads bowed in the universally-recognized posture of clandestine conversation. To make matters worse, they were giggling. "All right, gentlemen," I intoned, hoping to put a quick end to this mini-mutiny. "What are you two talking about?" Slowly, the desktops closed, just enough to reveal the blushing faces of two boys who were unaccustomed to being in trouble in school. They glanced at one another, and then looked at me sheepishly. "Magnets," Ricki admitted. "For our science project." That was the first time I learned that Ricki Getzschman would find a way to surprise you, as often as not. Even then, he had a way of looking at you as if there was a bright flame within him that grew even brighter when talking about his ideas and interests. Generally, even people who look you in the eye don't do it for long, but Ricki always did, in a way that suggested to me that he was completely dialed-in to whatever he was doing at that moment . After he left elementary school, I didn't see Ricki until he got to high school. He and his friend Andy would stop by occasionally to see their old school and former teachers, and it was always a nice surprise to see them when walking out with my class at dismissal. I probably always kept them longer than they planned to stay, but it was so much fun to learn of what they were up to - and they were always up to something: such as building a working trebuchet in their spare time (I forget what object it was that they launched, but I remember that the event itself was epic), or attempting to determine the inflammability of snow. More than once, when the talk was done and I let them go their way, I would discover that the post-dismissal crowd had long since disappeared, and the parking lot was nearly empty. No matter how good of a day it had been, the opportunity to catch up with Ricki and Andy made it even better. Once he graduated, he stopped coming by, and I figured he was probably off at college and pretty busy with that. Then one day, at dismissal, I walked out the front door and there he was, just leaning against the building waiting for people to come out. I asked him what he'd been up to, and expected to hear stories of college life. "I just got back from Afghanistan," he said, as casually as if he was telling me his middle name. I took him inside and made sure a few people knew Ricki was here, and then found Hird Stryker, our school's health aide, who I knew would be especially glad to see him. The three of us talked until Ricki had to leave, then Hird and I stuck around and talked about Ricki some more. While some people might have wondered why he left school to join the military, we knew: Ricki Getzschman will find a way to surprise you. He could do college anytime he wanted, standing on head - and do it well. But that would be too easy, too predictable -- and the bright flame wouldn't allow him to settle for success when

he could have significance instead. Time passed, and it had been awhile since anyone had told me much of anything about Ricki or anyone else from the group I enjoyed so much in my second year of teaching. It was the first week of a new school year, and a new group of fifth-graders followed me at dismissal -- down the stairs and out the door, where they each went their way. I saw Mr. Stryker, and as I approached him, he said, "Did you hear about Ricki Getzschman?" I started to smile in anticipation, because I learned long ago that any story that had Ricki in was bound to be a good one. Then he told me.

Oh, no. Not Ricki

The visitation was unlike anything I could have expected. The line to view his body was so long that by the time you got anywhere near the casket, you had already seen so many photos and overheard so many stories that you felt grateful to have been even a small part of his life. After searching the crowd for his mother, sister, and brother, I searched for words that might be a comfort to them. I found none, but it didn't matter, because they spent the evening comforting everyone else, although I still struggle to understand how that could be possible. When I left, there were nearly as many people lined up waiting to get into the room as there were in the room itself -and there were a lot of people in that room. Afterward , I made one more stop - the scene of the accident - just so I could stand in the place where that bright flame last burned, and was overwhelmed by the evidence of the love of so many who knew him best . Other relatives of Ricki were there, also, and as I looked upon the scene -with its mix of debris and devotion - a woman handed me a piece of metal from Ricki's motorcycle, and commented on the sudden, violent force it must have taken to bend and twist it to such an extent. I considered this, and in that piece of metal I saw a parallel to what occurred in the lives of those who knew Ricki best: they have been bent and twisted, but not broken. The woman turned away to say something to a child, and I slipped that piece of metal into my pocket. I keep it where I can see it often -- and when I do, I remember Ricki, and say a prayer for his family. In the midst of grief and loss, they insist on not only finding good, but in making good. May their efforts be joined and blessed by many who seek to do the same. (Jeff York, 5th Grade Teacher)