

Chris Chatfield: remembered

On Monday, January 31st, Chris Chatfield, student-athlete, took his own life. This is a look back at a young man who touched the lives of so many.

Chris Chatfield was an average guy. A twenty-year-old student at Clackamas who goofed around with friends, excelled in sports and wrestled with his little brother.

His friends called him humble, funny, talented and intelligent. But Chris was hurting. Unbeknownst to many of his friends, he had been diagnosed with depression and on January 31, 2000, Chris felt that he couldn't go on with life.

He was a devoted son, loving brother and faithful friend.

Paul Kezes, friend and teammate on the Track and Cross Country squads, reminisced about his time spent with him during the days leading up to his death.

All of the following quotes can be attributed to Paul unless otherwise noted.

Who was Chris?

"He was so humble. He would never brag about himself or anything. That's what was cool about him. I learned this awesome thing about Chris; When he was a senior in high school, he tried pole vaulting and his first year he cleared 12'6." At my school, Blaine, which is single A school in Washington, he would have been like a god or something because his running awesome times and pole vaulting on the side. It's like wait, distance runners aren't supposed to be able to do all of this. Talking to his mom, too, he was able to adapt and pick things up so quickly."

The friendships

"He'd called me up and say, 'Hey do you want to go to a movie?' because he had a friend at the theater that could get us in. Sometimes we'd bring Tim, my roommate, or Krystal [Schneider]. That was really her only experience with Chris and she thought he was a pretty nice guy."

"I feel like I was a really good friend to him and he was a really good friend to me."

"He wasn't two-faced, he didn't trash-talk. He was just a guy raised with good values. He's like Andy Monhead [teammate]. They're kind of similar in the way that they treat friendships. It's really serious to them. Andy's a good friend of mine. Monhead takes things to the extreme and he gets condemned for it. Hell, even I condemn him for it, for doing things seriously. I love the guy, he's a really cool guy but a lot of people don't understand



Chris [on right] running with one of his friends from Oregon City High School, Andy Monhead.



Chris [on right] hanging out with friends and teammates at a birthday party two days before he took his life.

him. Chris was cool, he wouldn't really explode. He was a serious person when it came to friendship and things like that. I think he saw me as a friend but we weren't real close. His friend Justin, who he was friends with for a long time, he would tell him what's been going on—what other people were saying about him. But around me, it was just a time for him to be happy and sort of put on a mask. I see that now. I guess I never really gave him the chance to tell him that I was there for him and that he could talk to me. It was there.

"I think he was hurting emotionally. He wouldn't express emotions around any of us."

The team

"Losing this link in the chain has made us reassess and come together as a whole more now than ever. For those who didn't know Chris, they're thinking 'Well hey, I'd like to get to know everyone else.' It's brought the team closer together as a family now. You could see it at the first track meet. A lot of us would go and watch throwing and high jump. I noticed more people on the team have been watching the distance events too."

His family

"I didn't really know the family all that much. His mom seemed like this really nice, loving woman that cared for him a lot. He had a little brother. Bach, who's really kind of shy and quiet. He's 12 years old. He was pretty close to Chris, they'd always wrestle and stuff."

The day before

"We got together on Super Bowl Sunday to watch the game. He just wanted to get together. He called me up and said 'You and your roommate come over and hang out. We'll eat some junk food and stuff like that.' We were having a good time. We were yelling at the T.V., 'That was a bad call,' things like that. Chris' dad would come over and ask, 'Oh did someone just make a basket?' and Chris would just start cracking up. He was just like a normal guy ... really cool ... he was funny."

The funeral

"When all of the pallbearers were called up during the funeral, I really got the chance to see how many people were there. There were tons of people. A bunch of his other friends, this guy from a Florida university who was one of Chris' really good friends, flew all the way up for the funeral. People were from all over. I looked out and really didn't know a lot of the people. A lot of them came and embraced me and gave me pats on the shoulders. They kind of understand that, 'Hey, you knew Chris somehow. Chris let you into his life somehow.' That was nice."

Monday

"I called him up Monday night to see what he was doing and I talked to his brother and he told me that he wasn't there. So I asked his mom for his cell phone number and she told me that she'd call me back. I got a call back from her and she explained to me everything that had happened. I dropped the

phone. I went for a walk. Thursday was kind of the visual reality for me with the open casket.

"He has a friend up in Birch Bay that just moved there. That's where I'm from. Chris said, 'Maybe on spring break, I'll go and visit my friend,' and I told him, 'Yeah, you can stay with me.' We would hang out at my place. Maybe take him up to Canada. Damn, I just didn't think that he was ready to leave life right now."

From Chris' dad, Randy

"Although he was only with us for a short time, all we can do now is look back and be thankful for the time he was with us."

"To make sure this doesn't happen again, I would tell people to confide in their friends. And friends, give all the strengths you can. Protect your friends, because you can lose them."

"He told us in his letter that we weren't to think we had raised him wrong."

"The hardest time for me is in the mornings and in the evenings. I know he's not here with us...but I have to convince my mind that he's really gone."

"The love he had was so strong and the hurt he felt overwhelmed that love. I guess he couldn't stand the hurt."

If anyone would like to share stories they have about Chris, stop by B104 and let us know.

Then by Amanda Jenkins

Remember then,
Dreaming of when

Our childhood fears
Would be gone with the
years.

Now we look at the past
Wondering why it didn't
last.

Days in the hot sun
Always having fun.

Going for a ride
Letting the bike glide.

Biking, sledding,
Swimming, swinging,

Days of old
Never to be sold.

Signs of change
Widely range.

Moving away
No more play.

Friends forever
Talk almost never.

Through the years,
Our lives shift gears.

Laughter, smiles,
Fears, miles,

Distant souls
Drifting goals.

Friendship the art
Connects our hearts.

Now that it is when
We dream of Then.

The above poem was found on the internet.