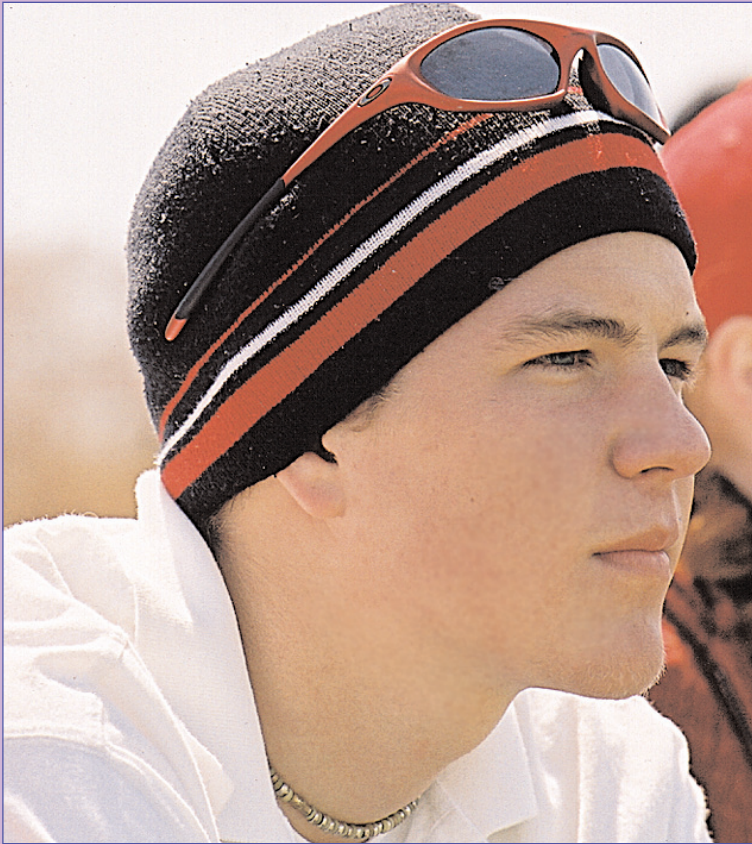


In remembrance of our much-loved friend



Ian Kortbek graduated from the Block Island School in June 2002 with a class of nine. Valedictorian Abby Littlefield said of him on graduation day: “Ian, you just love to have fun. You listen to the music you want to and play the sports you like. You have made life more enjoyable because you find humor in everything.”

And Scott Comings of The Nature Conservancy, who delivered the commencement speech, said: “Ian is like a gray catbird — very creative and inquisitive, with an excellent sense of humor. He is a true pleasure to be around. I want to thank him for making all the basketball van rides easier with his DJ-ing skills, and always keeping a smile on my face with his wit.”

Below are a couple of tributes to Ian from schoolmates.

‘Best friend to a lot of people’

By Hillary Ryan

He was one of the originals in a cast of many characters. From the first day of school he made us laugh with his jokes and outbursts. If you were having a bad day, Ian could change that, causing you to laugh until you cried, and smile until your face hurt. Whether he was reciting lines from movies, or debuting his own original creations, he caused those belly laughs that make you feel joy and pain all at once.

I can’t do justice to someone with such a great personality. I’m just trying to show how much he meant to me.

People were always drawn to his outgoing and welcoming disposition. I don’t think I can name one girl who didn’t have a crush on Ian Kortbek — I know I did, for about six years. He had the power to make you smile when you’d think you’d forgotten how. It’s the kind of gift many people wish they possessed.

We would get in trouble a lot in class for laughing. Well, mostly I would, for laughing at things he was saying or doing. This never made sense to me. Why am I getting in trouble for just being happy? Why would he get in trouble for making someone sing with laughter?

He was an athlete. Though he started some sports later than others, when he took the field or court he looked like he had been there all along. He brought his competitive nature to every game, and also pleased the crowd with his humor and skills. He was sure to give the crowd a little “French pastry” — only his schoolmates will understand the phrase — every game he played.

He would download about 200 songs a day. Mostly, they were songs we hadn’t heard of, but he was sure to spread the word, and by the next day one or another would be a unanimous hit within the school.

He was always online, talking with his summer friends and friends from the island. When I needed a good laugh because schoolwork was getting me down, I would simply sign on, send him a warm greeting, and wait for what he had in store for me.

He started his countdown to summer in September. It was his favorite time of year, and he let everyone know it. I can still hear him asking me, “Hill, are you ready for summer? It’s so close!” while we would be sitting in a snowdrift in the middle of January.

He should have been a comedian; he should have been a professional skater. He should have been a movie star or producer; he should have been a millionaire. With all of his talents, Ian should have been a lot of things. But most of all, he should still be with us today.

It is indescribable, the pain that I felt when I heard this heartbreaking news. I couldn’t imagine going back to Block Island and him not being there, skating in the boat parking lot or at the post office; not running into him randomly and hearing the latest catch phrase he had introduced to the island.

Everyone from the graduating class of 2002 has lost a part of themselves; something that had always been there, and that cannot be replaced.

He was one of my best friends. He was a best friend to a lot of people. He was a great person, and no one will ever be able to forget him. He will live on inside of me, and in everyone who knew him well. I will see him every time I watch a funny movie, and hear him every time I download a new song. I will never forget Ian.

‘He had a passion for life’

By Alicia Martin

Our friendship started later than many, but I’m thankful to have had him a part of my life. I remember the nights he would call me up to see if I wanted to go for a drive and speak what was on my mind. He would often tell his mom he was thirsty and needed to go get a soda, only to return an hour or so later with nothing in hand, but the comfort of having had someone to call up and talk to when he needed it.

Ian was an amazing person. He was the happy-go-lucky guy who always had something funny to say, and could put a smile on people’s faces in even the toughest times. He had a passion for life. He could always make the toughest person crack a smile, even mutter a little laugh.

Ian had a personality unlike any other. He was compassionate, loving, funny; a perfectionist. There are so many words to describe Ian, it’s impossible to write them all. But to all who knew him: you know how he was, how he acted and the lovable person he was. I wish that everyone could have had the chance to have been in his presence.

He was always the life of the party. I never once heard anyone utter a bad word about him. He made friends like it was his job in life. Everyone who met him soon became close friends with him. He could be the funny kid in the crowd, making people laugh — and sometimes, when things got serious, so did he.

Ian will be present in all of our lives; everything we do, he will be a part of Block Island, without him seems so different. The tides move much slower, the streets seem vacant without him on his skateboard, and my mind seems empty without the echo of his laughter.

But I know he’s up there looking down on us all, watching us, looking after us, and waiting for all of us to be together again.