



## *Stillwater Pioneer Athlete Memorial*

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### CRAIG KENNEDY LAWLER

November 25, 1975 - September 26, 2008

Stillwater High School Class of 1994

14th Annual Memorial Induction Ceremony

October 10, 2009

Craig Kennedy Lawler lost his brave battle with cancer September 26th, 2008 at age 32. Though young, he held the wisdom of many men his senior. He was a master of the esoteric and the absurd. Always ready with a clever quip, or an obscure quote, Craig was one of a kind in intellect and wit.

Born in Stillwater, OK, Craig spent his childhood building forts, playing music, and reading bulky novels by the likes of J.R.R. Tolkien and other obscure writers. He was imaginative. He wrote a short story on vampires at the age of 6 and would often regale the family with fanciful tales of far away galaxies where people spoke backwards. He created his own language to lend legitimacy to his story. His mind was unique, matched only by his sense of humor.

By junior high and high school, Craig had moved from Tolkien and vampires to Nietzsche and Hegel and to crafting difficult rhetorical arguments for the high school debate team. He played trumpet in the junior high band. In high school, he became involved in student politics and was eventually elected Governor of Oklahoma Youth and Government. He was an athlete all the while.

Craig began swimming with the YMCA swim team at age 8 after being introduced to swimming by his mom. His specialty was breast stroke though, over the years, he also swam butterfly and individual medley (IM). He joined the high school swim team under coach Goebel in the 9th grade and continued swimming until his senior year of high school, swimming at the High School state competition each year. At one point, all four Lawler children were on the swim team. Craig was not only a role model in work ethic but served as an impenetrable "line blocker", blocking other teammates as the sisters ran to be first in line at a restaurant after a swim meet. They were a silly, fun loving team unlike any other.

Craig went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Philosophy, summa cum laude, and a Bachelor of Science in Economics, summa cum laude from Oklahoma State University, and was a state finalist for the Rhodes scholarship. Craig earned a Juris Doctorate from the University of Michigan in 2003, and began working as an attorney in Denver the same year.

He had a gift for language and persuasion. Craig was unconventional in his thinking and would often apply the persuasive prose of Seneca and Shakespeare and other philosophical and literary greats to legal briefs. A Michigan law professor once referred to Craig as uncommon in his creativity and ability to apply the tools of language and literature to law. He was a great attorney; a gifted blues musician; a writer; an avid traveler; and a philanthropist. Most of all, he was an athlete.

Craig rediscovered his love for swimming in law school and was known to fit in workouts during his lunch breaks at work. He continued swimming throughout his illness until the progression of his cancer forced him to quit. For Craig, to give up swimming was a difficult loss.

Craig was an exemplar of what it is to be a good human being in the face of extreme adversity. He was goofy, kind caring and courageous. He was a supportive friend, a loving brother and an ideal son. Who knows where life would have guided Craig. At 32, his paths and opportunities were boundless.

Quoting his sisters, "To say he is missed would be an understatement. His feet were the first in the sand, and our prints to follow."

Presenters

Erin and Jill Lawler, Stillwater High School Class of 1998

Diane Lawler, Stillwater High School Class of 1996