

Swimming Like a Rock

The most heroic person I have ever met was a man named Michael Rischman. Michael (who everyone called “Mike”) was my neighbor by definition, but the truth is, he was much more. He was a friend, a role model, a marine, but most of all, a hero. A hero is someone who voluntarily risks their own welfare for the good of someone else and does not expect praise, and that was Mike in a nutshell. Unfortunately, Mike passed away on November 22, almost three years ago; however, his legacy will live on for many years to come through me, my family, and all the other people whose lives he impacted. He inspired me to be a marine, and that speaks volumes about who he was. To be so influential that he inspired a young boy like me is extraordinary.

One of my earliest memories of Mike was when he saved my life. At this time, we had two other neighbors, Dave and Larisa. Dave and Larisa had a pool at their house, and on one summer day, they decided to throw a block party. All of our neighbors were there -including Mike- and I had been swimming all day and playing pool games with Dave and Larisa’s two kids. I got out to get some food and took my floaty off, for at this time I couldn’t swim. The kids got out and the adults got in for some peaceful floating time. After I had eaten — and waited 20 minutes, of course — the kids started to leap back in, and the adults started to get out, but Mike stayed. I saw my friends jumping in one by one, and, overruled with the need to not be the last one to do so, I jumped in. As soon as I had hit the water, I remembered that my little Cars-themed floaty was sitting on the pool deck, but it was too late. Too short to reach the bottom and too scared to try to swim, I started panicking. My arms waved as I hopelessly grabbed the water as if it would turn into a life preserver. As my head was going under water, I yelled his name

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with my last breath and luckily got his attention. I can still remember hearing him when I was under the water, "Mikee!" as he tore through and got me out of the pool. At this point, I was no longer scared, so I smiled and exclaimed, "Mike, I was swimming!" He laughed and responded with possibly the most legendary dad joke that we still talk about today, "Yeah, you were swimming... Like a rock!"

Mike was a fantastic man, and our family and his family miss him every day. He was hysterical, but serious when he needed to be. Although he died at the young age of 40 due to medical complications, his memory will be immortalized. He was an uncle, a son, and a neighbor, but most of all, he was my hero.