

# BradConklin

February 28, 1973 - September 19, 2011



## Brad's Life Story

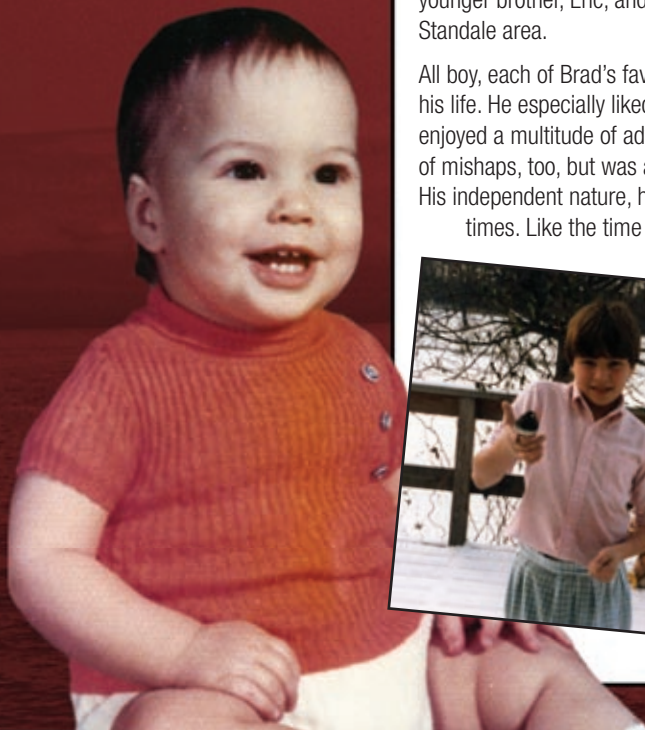
With an independent spirit all his own, Brad Conklin lived fully and completely, warmly embracing each and every moment life had to offer. To Brad, life was an adventure to be reckoned with, all while enjoying the many things he so loved and those he held dear. With faith as his guide, Brad was a man of faithful conviction whose strength of heart and caring ways will be deeply missed.

Brad's story began along the shores of the Grand River in Grand Rapids, Michigan on February 28, 1973. Much was taking place in the world, but none stood out more than the welcome news of troops returning home to their families following the end of the Vietnam War. Months later, the Watergate Scandal reached it's peak and a local born and bred gentleman named Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as our nation's 38th President. As the World Trade Center officially opened in New York City, American Graffiti took movie goers back in time while music of the day lifted spirits bright.

With so much taking place in the world around them, Brad's parents, Joe and Chris (Van Bokkem) Conklin were quite content nestled in the quiet community of Jenison where they eagerly anticipated and prepared for Brad's long awaited birth. A good baby, it seemed as though he was born easy going right from the start. It didn't take much to make him happy, and he loved all the snuggles he could muster from those who adored him. At the age of four he welcomed his younger brother, Eric, and in 1978 when he was five, his family moved to the Standale area.

All boy, each of Brad's favorite toys had wheels, and it remained so throughout his life. He especially liked Hot Wheels as a kid and collected many. Brad enjoyed a multitude of adventures with friends growing up and had his share of mishaps, too, but was always one to get right back up and brush himself off. His independent nature, however, found Brad in some unrelenting situations at times. Like the time he raced out onto the street just after the road had

been sprayed with tar and top coated with a fine layer of stones. He had been warned by his father



to be careful, but the 50 foot stretch of stones he acquired left them picking gravel from his wounds for a week!

Brad attended West Side Christian School through his ninth grade year, but his already anxious mother was wondering if he'd ever make it through the first day of kindergarten! When the bus driver missed Brad's stop that day, he wasn't dropped off until the very last which left his mom on pins and needles. To make matters worse, he was pushed off the slide on the playground, and his all important first day of school was marked by a broken arm. Later that summer he just happened to have "slipped" and found himself in the water, cast and all. Good thing it was to be removed the next day!

With numerous memories, Brad enjoyed his school years and many good friends. By the time he was 15, Brad was part of what was known as "the Moped Crew", often racing up and down the streets of Standale and around town with his buddies on his red, Honda Elite. He enjoyed sports, but from little league on, had a penchant for baseball. Later in life, Brad enjoyed simple quiet time kicking back on his deck during the warm months of summer with a cold beer in his hand listening to the Detroit Tigers.

For 15 years, Brad and his family made wonderful memories and enjoyed great times at their trailer on Pickeral Lake near Newaygo. They also went camping and fishing on a memorable trip to the Tennessee mountains. There was no TV, and he didn't like that much, but once the fishing boat was unloaded, he went on to motor down the river into the night. By the end of the trip, he was sad to leave. Brad later returned to that very area over the next two years on mission trips with his church, Remembrance Reformed.

Brad had several jobs during his youth which gave him a lot of freedom. He was a bagger at D&W for a time and washed dishes at Pop's Restaurant, riding his Moped bike back and forth. Well on his way to independence, Brad was quite responsible . . . for the most part. One time, the story was that a car ran him off the road, but truth be told, while doing wheelies at a local school, Brad crashed his moped, and only recently did his parents learn the real story of what really happened through his brother Eric!

Mathematics was an area where Brad excelled. He liked school, and in 1991 graduated from Calvin Christian High School. A likable guy, he was good natured, easy going and had many friends he hung out with from the Coopersville area. He went to Grand Rapids Junior College for a year where he studied sales and marketing, but was eager to jump into the work force.

Over the years Brad worked for a number of companies, including Pier 33, Borgman Ford, Delta Imports, and lastly, Toyota of Grand Rapids. While at Borgman he became very close with his customers, particularly Sally and







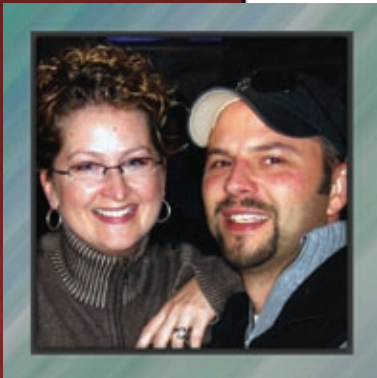
Tom Donaldson, and they later became like second parents to him. His forte was customer service. Whether working as a manager or service writer, Brad always looked out for the best interest of his customers. His employers recognized this vital trait, and what an asset he was to their business. Not only was he described as the "best service writer" ever, his loyalty to his employers were proven by showing up to work 45 minutes early every day to make the coffee, tidy up, and prepare for the day. He always went the extra mile in all he did time and time again.

A longtime bachelor, it was during the time he worked at Delta Imports when Brad came to know the love of his life. August 31, 2002 marked the very day he met Kirstie Van Dyke through a mutual friend while at the Anchor Bar. Although rather shy at first, Brad was quite taken with Kirstie. It was several weeks before he managed to arrange getting together for drinks with their friends back at the bar, but due to a dead battery in her car, she was running late. Even so, the night went well and Brad walked her to her car where once again she experienced difficulty with the battery. He ended up having to jump her car battery twice that night, and their second date was spent shopping for a new battery!

After two months of dating, Kirstie knew Brad was the one for her, and she for him. Even so, Kirstie wanted to make sure she could endure Brad's love for sports over a year's time before committing to marriage. Brad chose The Sierra Room, with its romantic charm, to propose and for many years it remained a special place they called their own. They went on to commit their pledge of forever at the home of Brad's parents on Murray Lake on July 3, 2004. It was a surprise wedding, one that was truly unique and a perfect fit for the two of them. After spending an unforgettable honeymoon in Riviera Maya, Brad and Kirstie began married life living in Kirstie's home.

Brad liked the Nascar scene, too which stood to reason with his longtime love for racing and cars in general. As his wife often said, Brad knew well the infamous, "redneck left hand turn parade!" His favorite driver was Kyle Busch, and the Bristol Night Race and Lights Over Daytona were two of his favorite races to watch. Growing up, his parents always got tickets to the Michigan International Speedway each year. He possessed quite an ear for cars and could easily

figure out what was wrong with a car just by merely listening to it. While working at Toyota of Grand Rapids he served as the Assistant Service Manager, and even though he was partial to Fords, his dream car was a Porsche 911 SC. When it came to actually driving and owning a car, his black VW Scirocco was his favorite by far.



Taking pride in his appearance, Brad usually wore Polo shirts. In fact, he was adamant about having his shirts dry cleaned and pressed with medium starch, which went right along with his Aqua Di Gio cologne. He appreciated relaxation and pampering, and often enjoyed a good men's pedicure with his dad at Sara's Nails. Those who questioned him about it, he'd just say, "don't knock it until you try it!" These are the very things that will bring fond remembrance to those closest to Brad in the days to come.

Among his varied interests, Brad enjoyed playing golf and even traveled to play the Sagamore Golf Course in New York. He took pride in his yard and enjoyed landscaping. In the past, he and his dad even hauled 19 yards of mulch to his home. Brad was very handy, especially when it came to any kind of tool with a motor, and usually tackled most of his own home projects. He and Kirstie also loved to dine out, r enjoying delicious food together at places like BW3's, Roses's, Leo's or Bonefish Grill.

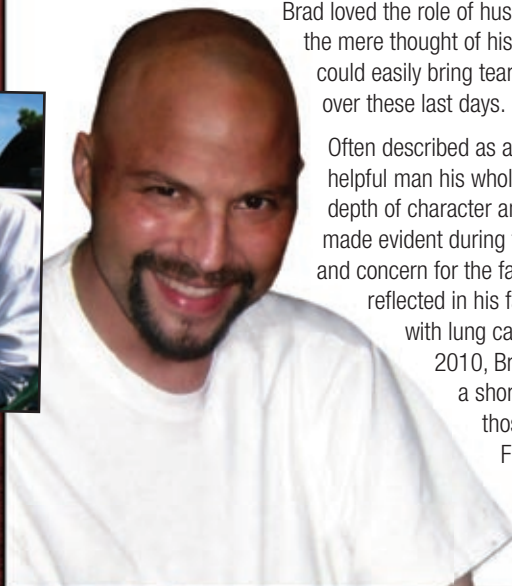
His favorite, however, was a good grilled steak at home on the deck while enjoying a beer. Quite particular, the grill marks on the meat had to line up, and flipping them included a rotated quarter turn. They also loved visiting and going out with friends.

Nothing warmed Brad's heart more than the words, "I love you, Daddy." His precious daughters, Alizabeth "Lizzie" came along on July 22, 2008, and Sofia made her presence on March 30 this year. As family they enjoyed a few short trips to Chicago, Mackinaw Island and even a trip to Key West. Saturday mornings were usually spent together piled into their king sized bed where snuggles and cartoons was the order of the morning.

Brad loved the role of husband and father, and the mere thought of his girls, all three of them, could easily bring tears to his eyes, especially over these last days.

Often described as a loving, caring, and helpful man his whole life through, Brad's depth of character and strength of heart was made evident during the last year as his love and concern for the family he adored was reflected in his faithful spirit. Diagnosed with lung cancer on August 28, 2010, Brad knew he had but a short time to spend with those he held most dear.

From that very day he began planning for the days that lay ahead, organizing his affairs







and putting things in place for Kirstie and the extension of their love, their beautiful daughters. He became active with Gilda's Club which added not only to his emotional and spiritual well being, but that of his family, as well.

While fighting his courageous battle, Brad was placed in Hospice care. During the months he spent at Trillium Woods, he was able to share the joy of friendships, new and old, and spent treasured, intimate time with those he loved. Until the end, Brad Conklin lived fully, warmly embracing each moment he was blessed to have. Surrounded by those he dearly loved, Brad peacefully passed away on September 19, 2011 at the age of 38. He touched many during his lifetime, and leaves numerous memories to be treasured.

He was preceded in death by his grandfathers: Martin Van Bokkem and Joseph Conklin Sr. Survived by his wife, Kirstie; daughters, Alizabeth and Sofia; canine companions: Jack and Kenzie; parents, Joe and Chris Conklin; brother, Eric Conklin (Sarah Kerwin); grandmothers: Lynn Van Bokkem and Rosemary Conklin; mother-in-law, Mona Schuring; father-in-law, Paul (Ruth) Van Dyke; many aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and special friends, David Kuzee and Dean (Nicole) Austin.

A Celebration of Brad's life will be held at Frontline Community Church, 4411 Plainfield Ave NE, 49525 on October 1, 2011 at 2 PM.

Friends may share memories with his family following the Memorial service at church. In lieu of flowers, contributions in Brad's memory may be made to Conklin Girls Education Fund, c/o of any 5/3rd Bank .

Please visit [www.lifestorynet.com](http://www.lifestorynet.com) to leave a favorite memory of Brad, submit a photo or to sign his online guest book.



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