



Tristan Gioia Hughes

August 26, 1990 - January 4, 2023

Tristan Gioia Hughes, of Narberth, PA, died at home on January 4. He was 32. He is the beloved son of Samuel Hughes and Patrice Raccio Hughes, and the brother of Jesse Hughes, all of Narberth. He also leaves many loving uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends.

Born August 26, 1990, in Philadelphia, Tristan was proud to be the only native Philadelphian in his family. After they moved to Narberth in 1992, he attended Merion Elementary School and Bala Cynwyd Middle School, and graduated from Lower Merion High School in 2009.

Tristan had a luminous heart and a poetic spirituality. He loved all manner of music and could always pick out quality, from New Orleans R&B and reggae to Nick Drake and Fela Kuti to Kevin Ayers and Syd Barrett. He devoured a broad smorgasbord of movies, from Cagney & Bogart to Pauly Shore, from Rhinoceros to Stepbrothers. A talker even before he could form coherent sentences, he had an outstanding ear for dialogue—and a genius for storytelling, as his family and friends knew so well.

Tristan packed more into 32 years than most people do in much longer lives. Early on he developed a passion for the outdoors, as vacations took the family from Maine to Colorado to British Columbia and beyond. As he grew older, he combined that passion with a love of adventure. He spent three summers with

The Student Conservation Association, which sends high school students into state and national parks to do trail and conservation work. On crews in the White Mountains National Forest, Yosemite National Park, and Glacier National Park, he nurtured his love of the outdoors, hard work, and fun — witness this video of him dancing and singing “La Bamba” on a picnic table, the result of losing a bet, while his fellow crew members choke with laughter. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v3pj0-IN0A>

After one semester at Green Mountain College in Vermont, Tristan decided the academic world was not for him. He made the outdoors his classroom, starting with a paid six-month SCA internship with the U.S. Forestry Service on Prince of Wales Island, studying the regrowth of clear-cut sections in Alaska’s rainforest. The youngest of his crew by several years, he was soon taking float planes to remote areas, camping in the wilderness, measuring trees with laser equipment, and having wild times with locals and crewmates at tiny backwater bars and festivals—all of which he recounted in hilariously evocative letters home. The next summer he drove back to Alaska with a friend for another four-month internship, then met up with another friend in California and road-tripped home with her.

Peaks Island, Maine, was his home the following winter, and he was delighted to learn that winter island life is conducive to multi-generational backyard bonfires. He commuted by ferry to Southern Maine Community College, but he had lived so intensely in the hardscrabble world that the college experience struck him as “adult day care.”

The next year he found himself in charge of high school kids as an SCA crew leader—first in Kenai Fjords National Park near Juneau, then in Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota’s Black Hills. He had many happy memories of the experience—but (he confided to his mother) he was never so relieved as when he got the last student on her plane home. His final SCA adventure was

an internship building a rock turnpike on California's Pacific Crest Trail, where he survived an errant boulder and a hair-raising drive to the nearest hospital.

Then he switched gears. Having fallen in love with New Orleans when his family did post-Katrina recovery work in nearby Mississippi, he caught The Crescent at 30th Street Station with no plans beyond becoming a cook. In the train's lounge car, he met two kids who had reserved space at the Marquette House hostel on Carondelet Street. Why not join them? He ended up living there for almost a year, and his tales of hostel life and revelry—with a cast of characters straight out of Tennessee Williams or John Kennedy Toole—would have made a terrific film or novella. After seeing a “help wanted” sign in a Subway shop, he told himself: “You didn't come to New Orleans to work in a Subway.” Instead, he walked into Roux, a small Creole cafe on Magazine Street, and talked his way into a job. He soon parlayed that into a line-cook job at Meauxbar, a quality bistro on Rampart Street.

His love for New Orleans did not include its sweltering summer weather, and soon he and a friend were on their way to California and the WWOOFing life. Working first at The Rocking 7 Ranch in Coalinga, and then at The Orchid, an organic farm near Santa Barbara, he fell hard for California. Another friend had moved to Humboldt County in the state's northern Lost Coast area, and Tristan decided to join him. There he became a cannabis grower, reveling in Arcata's retro-hippie lifestyle and mastering the intricacies of growing outdoors.

In 2017, Tristan and his brother, Jesse, took a memorable road trip from Boulder to San Diego, taking in Zion National Park and the Salton Sea — an area that became a source of fascination for Tristan.

That summer, at work in Humboldt, a back injury combined with the lonely

grower's life and the sudden deaths of two close friends led Tristan to dull his pain with opioids. He was able to stop using, relapsed in 2019, and stopped again. The pandemic year, so horrible for so many people, was a relatively good one for Tristan, who divided his time between the Arcata house he rented with friends and his grow site in the hills. But by then the Humboldt magic was gone.

In November of 2021, he moved back East for good. Working first as a delivery driver for Real Pizza in Narberth, he then took a line cook job at Feast Your Eyes Catering in Philadelphia, where he enjoyed both the work and his coworkers. "We loved working with Tristan," said his employer, Lynn Buono. "He was a hard worker, clever and picked up tasks easily, but above all he was kind to everyone, no matter their station in life. He was universally liked, which isn't always the case in drama-filled kitchens."

The relapse that claimed his life was, by all accounts, very recent and well-hidden from family and friends. His heartbroken parents and brother have a message for everyone dealing with a loved one's substance use disorder: Never think they're out of the woods. Never let down your guard. There is no cure.

Memorial donations may be made to the Tristan Hughes Memorial Scholarship at The Student Conservation Association (thesca.org)

A celebration of Tristan's life will be held February 19 at 2 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House in Merion. All are welcome.

Previous Events

Life Celebration

FEB **19**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Merion Tribute House
625 Hazelhurst Avenue
Merion Station, PA

Tribute Wall

JE

“ I was recently looking through old SCA photos and went to see what Tristan was up to. I was so sad to find this news. I imagined him frolicking in the woods quoting Trailer Park Boys. But I'm so glad to know that in the 10 years since we worked together that seems to be exactly what he did. I wanted to share a few photos I have of him from the month we spent together in 2012 on a SCA leader crew on the PCT in Southern California. We had so much fun joking, build huge rock walls and adventuring around southern California and Los Angeles.

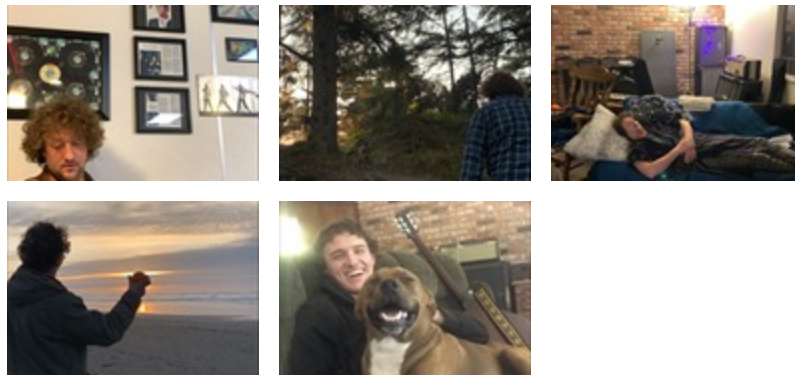


Jean - February 18, 2025 at 03:31 PM

CI

“ Hello, my name is Christopher Michael Iorio and I met Tristan Gioia Hughes after I graduated from Humboldt State University and moved into the Arcata House atop of Hilltop Avenue. When I met Tristan, we instantly formed a friendship that I will cherish to this day. When I learned of his death it filled me with much grief, and finally stumbling across his obituary made me want to share my memories of him. When you think of Humboldt county, Tristan had every characteristic to match. He was that friendly, kind, and loving hippie that you envision. He quickly became one of my best friends because we bonded over our similar Italian heritage and cultural interests. He quickly became one of my best friends who took care of me and introduced me to the beautiful lifestyle the county had to offer. Everyday I got off work, I looked forward coming home to Tristan and spending my nights with him. We watched many movies, ranging from the old time flicks like Casablanca and Gone with the Wind, Joe Pesci movies like My Cousin Vinny and Casino, and many many Adam Sandler movies, who was his favorite comedian. We watched every movie starring Adam Sandler, we watched Hubbie Halloween which has become one of my holiday traditions. We also loved watching the Simpsons whenever we were bored. We connected sharing stories of our Italian surnames, in which he showed me the proper way to eat “Gabagoo” and other fine Italian cuisine. When we weren’t at home, we spent a lot of time going to Manila dunes with his beloved dog, exploring the mighty forest of the wonderful Redwoods, and even played baseball on picturesque summer days at the baseball diamond at HSU, where he show cased his skills with a bat and glove and boasting his love for the Philadelphia Phillies that were very much better than my New York Yankees at the time. We took road trips, where he showed me where he grewed in the snowy bald hills of Humboldt county and displayed his talents as a natural born skier on the volcanic Mt. Shasta. The Mt. Shasta trip was on of my fondest memories where I got to see Tristan free, young, and wild in the adventurous frontiers of California and how it reminded him of his days of the east. I got furloughed from work the year COVID hit and almost stayed back home in the San Joaquin Valley, but I am very

glad I went back and lived with Tristan and made all these great memories. I have a younger brother, but I loved Tristan as if he was the older brother away from home. These memories will always live in my heart and I have the pictures framed in my room where I will remember him for as long as I live. Tristan is walking with God in heaven, because He too saw the kind and compassionate soul he would display to the people he met. He will be very much missed being gone too soon. I hope the family doesn't ever feel like they failed him, because he told me much about the love and affection he missed before breaking the news he was leaving me to head back home to the ones he loved. He will be missed by many and I know I will shed a tear of joy when he comes across my mind again like he does. P.S. he showed me Kevin Ayer's and I still listen to him thanks to Tristan. RIP my phone is (209)-481-2885 for any family member that wants more information about his life in the redwoods



Christopher Iorio - September 06, 2024 at 02:07 AM

TK

“*Dear Sam, Patrice and Jesse, I wish to convey my heartfelt condolences for your loss. I am away and cannot attend the memorial but certainly would if I could. Tristan was such a good friend of Kuba and we all enjoyed so many moments together. He was such an easy going, good humored, and open minded person. This is an inconceivably tragic loss and we miss him dearly.*

Tim Kerner - February 19, 2023 at 04:33 PM

DC

“ I extend my deepest condolences to Sam, Pat and family. Because of my mobility constraints, I'll not make the service. But, I'll be with you in spirit.

David Cress - February 18, 2023 at 01:35 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Tristan Gioia Hughes.



February 17, 2023 at 11:51 PM

MD

“ Mike Devine purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Tristan Gioia Hughes.



Mike Devine - February 17, 2023 at 09:57 PM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Tristan Gioia Hughes.



February 13, 2023 at 09:16 PM



“ *Rose Remembrance was purchased for the family of Tristan Gioia Hughes.*



February 12, 2023 at 06:02 PM



“ *My deepest condolences to Tristins family and all that loved this young man! Im sorry I don't know him or anyone In this young man's life but my heart and tears go out! Like the family said DONT assume or continue beating the hurtful negativity your absolutely right don't let your guard down don't turn your back Support and help get them more focused on living each day meaning hey sun came up your alive and another adventure focus on simple and not overwhelm sadly I lost my baby brother and dad to Heroin/fentanyl OD and it never gets easy for sure! Again so sorry I was looking up my dad's memorial site to post thoughts love and it's the 3rd year of him loving this earth! Take care to his family beloved friends! Fly high Tristin you got your Wings baby boy continue with you Love*

Ashleigh - February 11, 2023 at 05:15 AM



“ *Peter Harrison lit a candle in memory of Tristan Gioia Hughes*



Peter Harrison - January 27, 2023 at 11:23 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Tristan Gioia Hughes.*



January 23, 2023 at 08:54 PM