

At Foothills, SCRA, and Fremont Hills, I had a tree. A tree that reminded me to appreciate swimming outside, even when it was close to 30 degrees. A tree I could glimpse at in the midst of a challenging set, prompting myself to breathe. A tree I would smile at each time I came back for another year of training. The tree was in sight from every angle of the pool. I still remember those three trees. I miss those trees.

I miss customizing my PASA caps; years ago, when there was a tree over the "S". Swimmers usually choose to have their last names under the PASA logo, but I chose "Call Me", "Thunder Oven", "Lawn Mover", and "Roadkill". I like to believe I started the trend of not choosing your last name under a team name.

I sometimes miss being a PASA swimmer more than college swimming. I was a PASA swimmer for 13 long and rewarding years. PASA swims for a bigger reason than winning. PASA is a driven community of swimmers and coaches setting the standard in youth swimming. I learned how to put my best effort into everything I set my mind to and to never give up; in anything.

After PASA, I was recruited to swim for UCLA. I loved living in Southern California, near the beach, swimming outdoors in warmth, and going to the #1 public university in the nation. At UCLA, I majored in English, with a minor in Film and Media Studies. I will add that it was hard to hold back the "whoosh" at the end of UCLA team cheers.

Let's take a wild U-turn now. After UCLA, I took a year off of "life" to recover from anorexia. Eating disorders affect a large portion of athletes and they often go unnoticed as "just healthy eating and exercise behaviors"; until they are not. After going through intensive treatment, I am proud to say that I am in very solid recovery and plan to be for the rest of my life. I hope to be a mental health advocate for other athletes struggling with body image issues and eating disorders, because I know how life-consuming they are.

Now, I am in grad school at the University of Oregon, getting my M.A in Advertising and Brand Responsibility. With this degree, I learned that brands have a strong influence in how people perceive themselves in the world. Brands have the power to positively impact our biases by fashioning ideas that lead to movements like destroying diet culture or solving the climate crisis. So, yeah, I have to make some decisions about life soon.

Thank you Dave Zapp, Mark Taliaferro, Scott Shea, Bruce Smith, Dana Kirk, and Cyndi Gallagher for shaping me into the person I am today.

