

Dear people from San Francisco, dear bicylists, dear friends

I am very happy to hear you are participating in the memorial vigil tonight. Until today I did not really understand that my brother Yannick actually died. Maybe the shock is too big – maybe all the organizing distracts me too much... But I simply cannot imagine a future without him, so that's maybe why I'm also not trying to. But I'm sure - sooner or later I have to.

Simply put: Yannick was a happy person. He had bright blue eyes and a big smile that could lighten the tension or lift the sadness from a room. Being his older sister, I can certainly recall arguments and fights during our childhood, but he never held grudges, never held on to anger, and all misgivings were soon forgotten. He liked to joke around but took things serious when it had to be, he was a reliable person who would be there to help someone who needed it. He was also a person that stayed in contact with his friends all over the world. While there were extended periods his friends and family would go without seeing him, he always managed to send e-mails, call or just leave a message on your facebook wall; He was always a part of our lives even while away on his travels.

Yannick grew up in Berlin, loved it, and knew it by heart. Despite his love of his home, his interest in travel was never-ending and though he only reached 22, he had already lived in two countries, and visited a number of others. At age 15 during secondary school he studied abroad in Switzerland for an entire year. He enjoyed Switzerland so much that he returned every summer for the past six years as a staff member for the Montreux Jazz festival. He spoke fluent French and English, and this (French) not only allowed him the job at the festival, but his knowledge of English, as well as his love of languages allowed him to reach out to all different people from all different parts of the world, which is exactly what he did. Upon finishing secondary school in Germany he embarked on a half year journey that would take him from the salt flats of Bolivia, to the carnival in Buenos Aires, to the unscathed beauty of South American better known as Patagonia. The trip continued to New Jersey to visit a friend, then to Portland, Oregon, and finally back home. When he came back to Germany he decided to move to Vienna and study there. I went to visit him there this Easter and we had a wonderful time. It was nice to hike in the vineyards close to the city and he showed me the city like a professional tour guide. (What other places would Yannick have discovered had he stayed with us?)

While remaining stationary, a big hobby of his was sports. He stayed active both in Berlin and Vienna playing for local handball teams. When matches were on TV he would inch closer to the television set like a five-year-old boy. He truly loved the competitive aspect of sports, and the best that it can bring in an individual. During the Olympics, he would devote time to almost all the events and I often found it funny how excited he could get over an event you might not have even known he would care about. (His last post on facebook noted he had just learned how to play American handball during his stay in New York.)

While he loved to play sports, he never would be confused for a sports-nut, as his real passion was clearly and proudly music. He loved to listen to Jazz. I remember when he was a small boy (maybe 10 years old or younger) my parents went to a Jazz concert with us for his birthday. I found it really boring but remember that he loved it! Even as a child. But he was an open person and also listened to any other kind of music. Whenever I saw him, he gave me a CD with the newest songs he just got and sometimes he just send me one or two songs via skype because he thought I should listen to them.

When he was in Berlin it was always a guarantee that we will see each other. He cared for his family, his dad, mum and younger sister Merrit, who is 17 years old now. Well, I will be with you tonight and I hope that Yannick is with us too. I would like to quote him by saying: "We are stardust, billion year old carbon."

