



Bryan Zollner
Class of 2022

Bryan graduated from Las Plumas High School (LPHS) in 1980 and was an outstanding three-sport athlete, playing football, basketball and baseball all four years. In football, he earned the Coaches Award as a senior, was Player of the Week and the starting quarterback as a sophomore, junior and senior. As a junior and senior, he earned All-League honors in baseball, was team captain as a senior, as well as being named the Most Valuable Player in his senior year. His junior year saw him pitching a no-hitter. He was a four-year member of Block LPHS. Outside of school, Bryan mowed lawns and worked at Damon's Athletics in his last two years at LPHS.

Immediately following graduation from LPHS, Bryan played two years on the Oroville American Legion Post 95 Baseball, and was scouted by the Vancouver Canadians, the AAA team for the Milwaukee Brewers. He then spent four years, attending Butte, Hacienda LaPuente, Sacramento and American River Community Colleges.

Bryan's firefighting career began in 1981, when he was a seasonal fighter for the California Department of Forestry (CDF). Next was firefighting with the City of Oroville Yuba City Fire Departments and Fig Garden in Fresno County. In 1986, he worked as Fire/Apparatus/Engineer in San Diego County and in 1989, was promoted to Fire Captain. He served at Bautista Conservation Camp, Riverside Unit, and then Alder Creek Conservation Camp in Humboldt County.

In 1991, at age 32, he earned the rank of Battalion Chief with CAL FIRE formerly CDF in Moreno Valley and was one of the youngest in the history of Riverside County. While in Riverside, in 1995, Bryan violated all standard operating procedures and departmental policies when he crawled through a tiny window to enter a burning house and saved the life of a two-year old boy who was not breathing when found. The boy was in critical, but stable condition in the hospital by all accounts lived, thanks to Zollner. Bryan then transferred to be chief of the Norco Conservation Camp where he remained for one year.

In 2001, Bryan was named Deputy Chief in the Public Education Department of CAL FIRE in Sacramento, CA. The next year he was transferred to the Conservation Camp in North Region in Redding, CA. and in 2005 he became Assistant Chief of Operations in the Glenn/Tehama Counties Unit, remaining there for one year before becoming Staff Chief of the Northern Region Operations. Two years later in 2007 he was appointed Northern Region Staff Chief of Operations for CAL FIRE and very soon he was offered the position of Unit Chief for San Diego County.

Unfortunately, the Unit Chief position never became reality as on April 12, 2007, at age 44, Bryan lost his life when his fire vehicle hit a patch of ice on State Route 44 in Lassen County. Then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger ordered flags at the Capitol and at all CAL FIRE facilities be flown at half-staff in honor of Chief Zollner. The governor personally attended Bryan's memorial service. He stated, *"Each day California firefighters put their lives on the line assisting and protecting our citizens. Chief Zollner gallantly served our state with courage and skill."*

During his career, third generation firefighter Bryan was widely recognized for his exceptional service. In 1998, he was honored by the State of California with the Gold Medal of Valor, presented to him by then Governor Pete Wilson. The Medal of Valor is the highest honor in the State of California and Bryan won it again in 1996. Other notable honors awarded Chief Zollner were the California Governor's Clarity award in 2003, and in that year, he also shook hands with then President George W. Bush, following the Cedar Fire. In Lone, CA, the CAL FIRE training facility created Bryan Zollner Road.

Bryan was also a sworn California Police Officer and graduated first in his class.

Bryan was active in communities where he lived as a member of Kiwanis International, the Tehama County Peace Officers Association and served on many community advisory boards and councils.

Following his accident, the family and friends of Bryan and the Butte College Foundation established The Bryan K. Zollner scholarship account to benefit students with a serious interest in the Butte College Fire Academy. A \$1,000 scholarship is awarded annually to two graduating cadets.

Bryan's family includes his wife Dr. Pamela Ikuta Zollner, son Ty, daughter Alexia, five grandchildren, his parents Bob and Brenda Zollner and his sister, OUHSD Hall of Famer, Tracy Zollner.