

Eric Bolen - a fine man and a fine musician died on Wednesday, October 27, 2004. With permission we are printing a letter sent by Chris Malinowski, his great friend and bandmate, to Eric's friends to inform them. Anything more that I can say about him pales against this heartfelt message. Eric will be missed. -M



"This will be brief.

In Spring of 1979, when I was nine years old, my mother divorced my father and brought me and my sisters to live at my grandmother's house in Newport, Delaware. I was incredibly angered by her decision and spent my first couple of weeks in absolute misery. I was a son-of-a-bitch to anyone who came near me, familial or otherwise. One day, my uncle introduced me to a boy named Eric Bolen, who lived two houses away from my grandmother. I had no desire to befriend him and often ignored his knocks on my door. He was too open, happy, and smiley. I hated his new-ness, his want of a new pal, and his persistence... but he did wear a really fucking cool jean jacket, and he dug Kiss almost as much as me... almost...

Within weeks, with my dad's aid, Eric and I started a band together, Ezra. He played bass because I told him he had to, and we, at least once a week, began working on cover songs and originals with other young musicians.

Ezra became Purgatory (teens... battle of the bands... grease paint... hair statues). Purgatory became Freakshow (larger shows, enormous hair, well-crafted make-up, megalomaniacal stage and lighting design... this was predominately Eric's child... always so fucking perfect, also...). Freakshow disbanded in 1990. I lost touch with Eric. I started college and played in a band named The Absurd. He performed with an outfit named For Souls on Fire. We saw each other infrequently and talked rarely.

This was the case until August of 2002, when I needed a bass player for The Collingwood.

When I first called him to join the band, he was elusive. He refused to phone me (paybacks). Finally, he complied. He brought a fresh drive to the band, and his resourcefulness, passion, dedication, and vision propelled The Collingwood in a manner that inspired me to care about the music of the band in a way that I hadn't cared in the past.

Eric was a showman, a professional, a heart, a giver, a romantic, a creator, a listener, an altruist, a perfectionist, a gentle being, and a really fucking terrific friend... ... and I would give anything right now to be twelve years old again... sitting in his room, so meticulously decorated with the mugs and bods of Lita Ford, Motley Crue, Iron Maiden, et al... drinking his grandmother's iced tea... Rush's "2112" in the background... talking about girls... performance... song craft... underarm hair... our parents... love... hate... stage props... and the future... and a hope...

Eric died this week. The Collingwood shows that are scheduled will be cancelled. We will continue... sometime...

I love you, Eric. Thank you for being you."

Chris