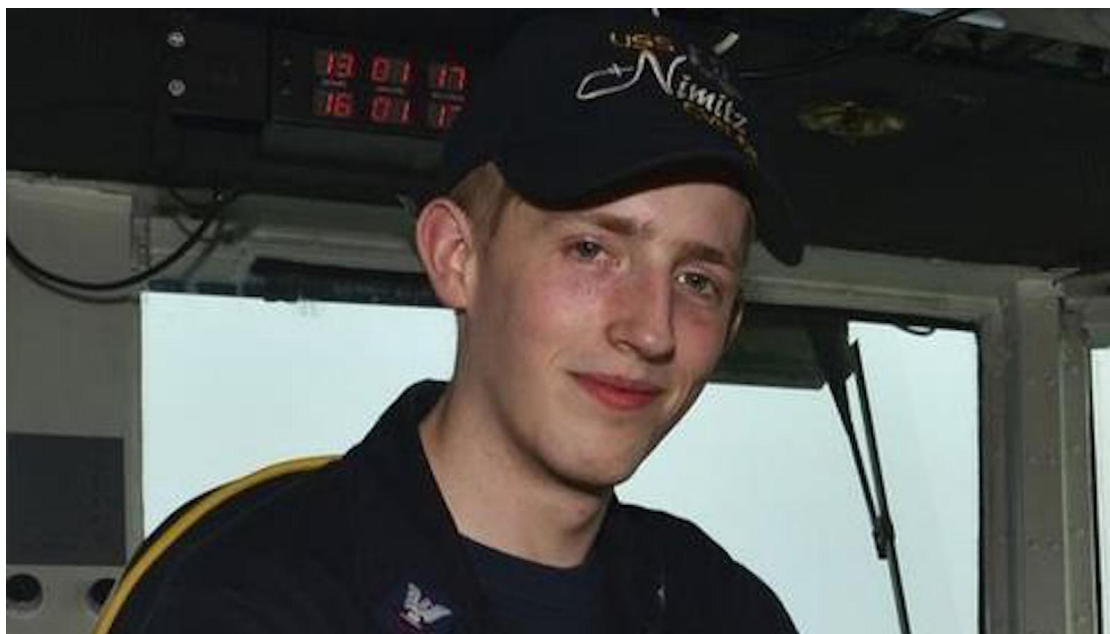


# Missing Fox Valley sailor found dead mourned as 'just the best person'



Jeremiah Adams, a graduate of Oswego East High School, served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz. He was found dead Saturday after going hiking in Olympic National Forest in western Washington. (Adams family)

By **Sarah Freishtat**

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**T**he morning Jeremiah Adams left for his last hike, he had jokingly bickered with a longtime friend back home about elf ears and the “Lord of the Rings.”

He hadn’t mentioned then that he was heading into the forest, but two days earlier he’d told Colleen Hill of Geneva he wanted to try to find time to hike when he had a free day, she recalled Tuesday.

After he left for the hike, Adams, a 2012 Oswego East High School graduate and Navy sailor stationed in Washington, was reported missing. His body was found Saturday after nearly a week-long search at the bottom of an embankment in the vast Olympic National Forest in western Washington.

Adams loved hiking and always wanted to go, even going out when he didn’t feel well, said Hill, who also went to Oswego East. He also loved his friends, and was willing to listen when they needed someone to talk with, she

said.

“He’s one of those people where, even if you couldn’t get the words out, you didn’t have to say anything,” Hill said. “Just his presence was something that was comforting.”

Adams, 24, was apparently hiking a primitive trail when he fell over the edge, according to the Associated Press. The Clallam County Sheriff’s Office in Washington said no foul play was suspected.

Adams enlisted in the Navy in early 2013. He trained in Charleston, S.C., then in May 2015 reported to the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz based in Bremerton, Washington, according to the Navy. He was a nuclear electrician’s mate second class.

After his body was found, Adams’ Facebook page filled with photos and posts calling him kind, sincere and smart. One post read, “So glad I got to talk with you one last time. Your last words to me were, ‘I love you Mom.’ My life will never be the same without you!!”

Adams loved Washington and the mountains, but missed his family and friends in Illinois, Hill said. He was sad to have missed pivotal moments in his friends’ and family’s lives, she said.

Hill met Adams, who was about a year and a half older than her, through his sister when she was in junior high school, she said. Growing up, he was involved in theater, both through school and an outside company, and in choir, she said.

“He is one of those people who you don’t really come across often,” Hill said. “I know that’s very cliché to say, but there’s so much about him, you know, you only ever read about. Where you have that kind of person who’s giving, and he just wants to make sure that everyone else is OK, no matter what he’s going through.”

Elise Thalman said she first met Adams through a show at the Limelight Theatre Company in Oswego. She was 8 or 9 years old and he must have been a freshman in high school, and he helped work with her when she talked too fast or mumbled, she said.

He took her and her sister under his wing, and was a mentor to everyone, she said.

Thalman recalled Adams playing the father in “Ramona Quimby,” a show based on a Beverly Cleary book. The role was fitting, she said.

“He just kind of accepted everybody and he cared about everybody,” she said.

Thalman’s family kept in touch with Adams after he graduated high school, visiting him when they went to Washington for a trip. When he returned home on leave, they would go for pizza and visit her family. He usually wore the same blue shirt, she said.

When Thalman heard he went missing, she tried not to believe what was happening. She didn’t believe her mom when she said Adams had died, Thalman said.

“He was just the best person,” she said. “There’s no other way to describe him.”

After his time in the Navy, Adams wanted to go to college or get a job abroad, Hill said. He talked about maybe working at Elon Musk’s SpaceX aerospace company.

He lived in the moment, she said, but also looked forward to the future.

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