

Hazelbaker, Joel Scott

The kindest heart you will ever meet has drawn its last beat. Joel Scott Hazelbaker, 62, of Naples, Florida, died July 8, 2021, following a courageous three-year bout with cancer. His fearlessness, strength and determination made him a tireless fighter on the mat, as a martial arts enthusiast, and in his battle with the disease. But it was his unconditional, all-encompassing love for his family and friends that those fortunate enough to have met him will remember most. Born in 1959, in Columbus, Ohio, to Billie and Ralph Hazelbaker, Joel was the second youngest of seven siblings. A die-hard Ohio State Buckeyes fan, he seldom missed a game. Always resourceful and hard-working, he built and led his own home inspection company. An outdoorsman through and through, he fished, hunted and hiked whenever he could, from the island chains of the Florida Keys to the far reaches of the Alaskan wilderness and beyond. But most of all, he loved his family. Hard and steadfast. Whether you were bound by blood or not, Joel brought you in and never let go. He became a steadying force for you during tough times and amplified your joy during good times. Gregarious and quick-witted, he never missed out on an opportunity to draw a smile or laugh out of those near him. He was a strong man, sharpened by decades of training and physical activity, but at his core he was soft — a gentleness and kindness in his heart that was unmatched. A devoted husband, loving father, caring brother and doting grandfather, Joel leaves a void that is impossible to fill. He will forever be loved by those who knew him. And never forgotten. Joel is survived by his parents, Ralph and Billie Hazelbaker; his wife, Liz; his children, Nick Hazelbaker and Jack and Neal Defossez; his three grandchildren; his six siblings, Jon, Brian, Jana, Gerry, Alison and Leigh; and too many nieces and nephews to count. In lieu of flowers, donations in Joel's memory can be made to the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership at trcp.org/donate. A memorial service is yet to be determined.