



Simon Hart with the Bent monument at the University of Connecticut.

## IN TRIBUTE: A TAU BATE LOST TOO SOON

### SIMON HART'S LEGACY AND THE SILENT THREAT OF DIABETIC KETOACIDOSIS

*By: Ted Hart - Simon's father and  
President of Friends of Simon Hart*

I'd like to pause and honor one of Tau Beta Pi's vibrant and dedicated fellow engineers, **Simon Hart, NC G '24**. Simon, a mechanical engineering student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, embodied the Society's ideals of scholarly excellence, integrity, and selfless service. Invited to join his sophomore year, he wore his bent key with profound pride, often sharing stories of its symbolism with classmates and professors alike.

Tragically, Simon passed away on September 22, 2022, at just 21 years of age, from diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), a preventable complication of undiagnosed Type 1 diabetes. **His story is not one of loss alone, but a clarion call for awareness, especially among engineers who, like Simon, push through fatigue and discomfort in pursuit of innovation.**

In his memory, his family founded Friends of Simon Hart, a nonprofit dedicated to educating young adults about DKA's insidious signs.

Simon was a force of curiosity and creativity, raised on a farm in Mebane, North Carolina. From an early age, he chased adventure with the tenacity of an engineer. A treasure hunter at heart, he scoured streams for crystals, wielded metal detectors on beaches, and piloted drones to capture the world from new angles.

His passion spanned the spectrum: forging knives from railroad spikes while watching *Forged in Fire* with his father, hiking peaks like Virginia's Dragon's Tooth, and surfing coastal waves. Music was another outlet; as woodwind captain of his high school jazz, concert, and marching bands, Simon's tenor saxophone filled fundraisers and stadiums with soul. He even dreamt of competing on *The Amazing Race* with his sister, Allegra.

In high school, Simon graduated summa cum laude and founded/captained the school's ultimate frisbee team, played varsity tennis, and volunteered with Habitat for Humanity. His intellectual drive shone through dual-enrollment courses, propelling him into UNC Charlotte as a second-semester freshman. While pursuing a mechanical engineering degree with a math minor, Simon maintained a 4.0 GPA. His professors often marveled at his problem-solving prowess; as one teacher noted, "Simon communicates his thoughts and ideas exceedingly well. He demonstrates diligence and perseverance and always wants to be certain he understands the concepts." Self-taught in welding and 3D printing, he crafted functional art from scrap and even repaired farming equipment.

An active member of UNC Charlotte's Archery Club, Simon not only competed but mentored peers, passing on techniques with the same generosity he showed in band.

Tau Beta Pi was more than an accolade for Simon; it was a badge of the engineering ethos he lived daily. Despite a packed schedule, he was frequently tapped to serve as a teaching assistant, embodying the Society's call to "light a candle" for others. UNC Charlotte awarded him his degree posthumously, a fitting tribute to a scholar whose life was cut short.

Simon's final days underscore a harsh engineering lesson: **even the most resilient systems can fail without early diagnostics.** On Sept. 22, two months after turning 21, he texted his father from his Charlotte apartment, citing extreme fatigue. The next day, he had gone silent. His father, with police assistance, found him unresponsive; the coroner's report later revealed DKA, triggered by undiagnosed Type 1 diabetes and a bout of pneumonia. With no family history of the disease, the signs — intense thirst, frequent urination, and exhaustion — were dismissed as the toll of his active lifestyle.

**“A brilliant young man one day with no symptoms,  
he was taken from his loved ones the next.”**

Diabetes, a chronic condition where the body struggles to regulate blood sugar (glucose), affects over 38 million Americans, with Type 1 — an autoimmune attack on insulin-producing cells — striking unpredictably, often in youth. Type 2, more common, develops from insulin resistance. Early signs overlap and can mimic stress or over-exertion, a trap for driven professionals such as engineers.

If unchecked, hyperglycemia can spiral into DKA, a life-threatening emergency where the body, lacking insulin, burns fat for fuel, producing toxic acids called ketones. Common triggers include illness (like Simon’s pneumonia), missed insulin doses, or stress. Symptoms escalate rapidly: abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing (to expel ketones, imparting a fruity breath odor), confusion, and coma. DKA strikes hardest in undiagnosed cases, claiming lives before symptoms register as urgent. Treatment — intravenous fluids, electrolyte replacement, and insulin — can reverse it if caught early, but delays prove fatal.

Simon’s family channels their grief into action through Friends of Simon Hart (found online at: [friendsofsimonhart.org](http://friendsofsimonhart.org)), which amplifies DKA education for students and families. “Knowledge of DKA and its symptoms could have saved Simon’s life.” The organization urges ketone testing during illness and routine blood sugar checks, simple

diagnostics akin to debugging code before a crash. In addition, they host archery tournaments in his honor and are pushing for a UNC Charlotte Scholarship.

As Tau Bates, we innovate to solve problems others overlook. Simon’s legacy challenges us to apply that ingenuity inward: monitor your metrics, heed the warnings, and support one another. Visit the website to learn more or share his story. Light a candle for Simon — wear your Bent key and let’s bend the curve on diabetes together. In the words of someone who forged beauty from scrap, “Make do, persevere, and never stop exploring.”

Symptom	Description
Increased thirst	Excessive dry mouth and fluid intake, as the body tries to flush excess sugar.
Frequent urination	Kidneys work overtime, leading to trips to the bathroom every hour or more.
Unexplained weight loss	Despite eating, the body breaks down fat and muscle for energy.
Fatigue and weakness	Cells starved of glucose leave you drained, even after rest.
Blurry vision	High blood sugar swells eye lenses, distorting sight.
Increased hunger	Paradoxically ravenous, as glucose can’t reach cells.
Slow-healing sores	Poor circulation delays recovery from cuts or infections.