

Championships – Character – Heroism

On September 11, 2001, four American civilians led the charge to take back United Flight 93 from the terrorists that sought to destroy an historic U.S. landmark and kill hundreds of Americans. These four heroes were strangers, but only in the sense that they hadn't previously met. These men shared a common thread of tremendous success in high school athletics, having already performed greatly in the face of pressure.

Tom Burnett was a star high school quarterback in Bloomington, Minnesota and led his team to the state championship game. Jeremy Glick was an all-state wrestler in high school and a national collegiate judo champion at Rochester. Mark Bingham was a two-time college rugby champion at Cal-Berkeley.

Todd Beamer was a star high school baseball player and went on to lead Wheaton College in the following statistics of an interesting parallel to his actions on that day: sacrifice bunts, hit-by-pitch, runs batted in, and assists.

Amidst the chaos and terror on that day over a decade ago, as final preparations for the fight against the terrorists were being made, Todd Beamer calmly said the Lord's Prayer, had the phone operator promise to say goodbye for him to his wife and kids, and then commanded "Let's Roll" to start the charge that led to America's first victory in the War on Terror, thereby saving hundreds of lives and one of our nation's most esteemed symbols of freedom.

As much pride as **Eaton** takes in its championships, it is the character built in the young men battling through challenges on the playing field that are the most significant over time; assuredly this sentiment is no stronger than at Thomas Jefferson High School, MN (Burnett), Saddle River Day School, NJ (Glick), Los Gatos High School, CA (Bingham), and Wheaton Academy, IL (Beamer).

The following pages contain more detail about these Heroes.

Heroism Large and Small

TAKING BACK THE PLANE

"I know I'm not going to get out of this."

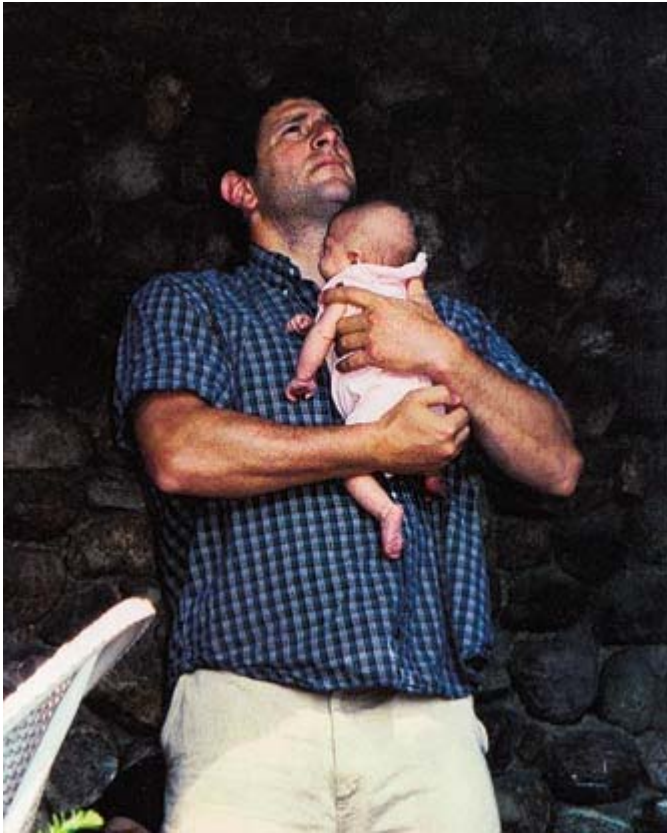
"I want to tell you I love you."

"I know we're going to die. Some of us are going to do something about it." "We're going to rush the hijackers."

The phone calls made by Todd Beamer to a GTE Airfone operator, Mark Bingham to his mother, and Tom Burnett Jr. and Jeremy Glick to their wives constitute a remarkable chronicle of death foretold and a gripping record of heroism rising. United Airlines Flight 93 out of Newark, N.J., originally destined for San Francisco, was in the air longer than any of the other three hijacked jets—an hour and 18 minutes in all—and that time allowed several strong young men to form a unit of resistance that would, finally, foil the hijackers' evil intent.

There may have been more than just the four. Lorne Lyles, a police officer in Fort Myers, Fla., believes that his wife, flight attendant CeeCee Lyles, herself a former cop, would have been part of any plot to jump the hijackers. But we have evidence regarding the four men, evidence supplied by phone conversations. If the hijacking of Flight 93 was a low-tech affair done with knives, boxcutters and the threat of a bomb, then the counterattack on the hijackers, as well as the subsequent uncovering of what might have happened, was postmodern, with information being shuttled to and from the plane via cell phones and Airfones.

Tom Burnett, CEO of a medical research company and a father of three, called his wife, Deena, in San Ramon, Calif., not long after the plane had been hijacked. "How are you?" she asked. "Bad," he said, and told her the news. "This is my flight number. Call the authorities." Deena did so, then received another call from Tom. This time, she told him what she knew about the horror in New York City—planes being flown into both of the Twin Towers. Tom, for his part, reported: "They've knifed a guy. They say there's a bomb." He again told her to pass along the information to law enforcement.



Jeremy Glick was fiercely devoted to his infant daughter, Emerson. His wife, Lyzbeth, felt that Jeremy's presence on the plane was destiny, "to stop some of the evil."

COURTESY OF LYZBETH GLICK

Lyzbeth Glick had been watching the Trade Center drama on her parents' TV at their home in upstate New York. She had grown apprehensive even before her husband, a sales manager for a California Internet firm and the father of a three-month-old daughter, called and confirmed her worst fears: "There are bad people on the plane." **Jeremy Glick had heard the incoming reports and rumors, and now said, "I need to know, are they crashing planes into the World Trade Center?"** Lyz considered for a moment, surmising what her husband might do with the information, then told him that, yes, it was true. "Do you think we should attack the hijackers?" Glick asked his wife, indicating that there had already been some talk. She didn't know what to say, and then she did: "You do what you have to do, Jeremy. Be brave."

Jeremy Glick was on an Airfone, and so was Todd Beamer. "I know I'm not going to get out of this," the sales account manager for Oracle, who lived in Cranbury, N.J., told Lisa Jefferson, a GTE Airfone operator. He asked her to pray with him and told her that some passengers might make a run at the hijackers. At one point the father of two, whose wife—now widow—is due in January, said, absently, "Lisa."

"Yes," said Jefferson.

"Oh, that's my wife's name. I would like you to call her if I don't make it through this."

"That's my name, too, Todd."

"Oh, God."

Mark Bingham, head of his own bicoastal PR firm, called his mother, Alice Hogle, in Saratoga, Calif. This was not to seek or disseminate critical information; Bingham knew what was happening, and what might happen next. "I want to tell you I love you," he said.

The four men were all in their thirties and were all athletic. Bingham, a six-foot-five surfer and rugby player, had ridden the horns of a bull this summer in Pamplona, Spain, and lived to tell about it. The San Franciscan had once wrestled a gun from a mugger's hand, then beat up the mugger and his accomplice. He was tough as nails, and so was Glick, six foot two, burly and skilled. At the University of Rochester (N.Y.) in

1993, he was the national collegiate judo champ in the 220-pound division. Beamer had been an infielder for the Wheaton (Ill.) College baseball team, and Burnett had been a star quarterback for Jefferson High's football team in Bloomington, Minn. This gang of four was the hijackers' worst nightmare.

Jefferson, the GTE operator, said the Lord's Prayer with Beamer, then promised him that she would call his wife and tell her of their conversation, should things not turn out right. **She heard Beamer ask someone, "Are you ready?" then heard him say, "Okay, let's roll."** "Let's roll" was a favorite catchphrase in the Beamer household; three-year-old David used it all the time, as did his parents.

We know that the fight to take back the plane did not last long, and again we know it from the phone calls: Jefferson hung on the line for 15 minutes waiting for word from Beamer, but heard nothing more. The final words Jeremy Glick spoke to Lyz were, "I love you. Hold on to the phone and I'll be back." Lyz couldn't bring herself to listen. Her father, Richard Makely, took the receiver, then held his daughter close. He heard a minute of quiet, then screams, another moment of calm, more screams, then silence. He kept the phone to his ear for a painfully long time—more than an hour—hoping against hope.

The Boeing 757, which much earlier had made a hard turn over Ohio, signaling the more alert passengers that something—besides the hijacking itself—was not right, roared low over the Pennsylvania countryside, startling a caddie master who was on the grounds of the Laurel Valley Golf Club in Ligonier, Pa. He watched as the jet disappeared over the horizon. He saw it start to wobble just before it was out of sight. About three minutes later, at 10 a.m., it crashed in Shanksville, killing all 45 aboard. The hijackers' mission—the Capitol? the White House?—had been foiled.

Tom Burnett had a personal motto: Everybody else first, me second. It speaks for the four of them, and any others aboard Flight 93 who determined to take back the plane, take back their own fate, take away the murderous intent of the terrorists. They saved many lives, on a day of wanton killing.

LOS ANGELES -- Four passengers who died on Flight 93 during the Sept. 11 attacks were honored with the ESPY's Arthur Ashe Courage Award on Wednesday night.

Todd Beamer, Mark Bingham, Tom Burnett and Jeremy Glick all had sports backgrounds and were recognized Wednesday night at the ESPY Awards.

Actor Dennis Franz presented the award to each of the families, while actor Tom Hanks did the voiceover for a moving video tribute that was shown during the ceremony at Hollywood's Kodak Theatre.

"When I got this call from ESPN, I thought, 'Todd, you are so happy right now,'" said Beamer's widow, Lisa. "To be on ESPN is something that he never would have dreamed of. He so much admired pre-eminent athletes. Sports was a really important thing to him."



Family of the Flight 93 heroes accept an award.

Beamer played baseball and basketball at Wheaton College in Illinois. Bingham was a two-time college rugby champion at California. Burnett was a star high school quarterback in Bloomington, Minn. Glick was a national collegiate judo champion in 1993 at Rochester.

"I know that Jeremy would have been so enthusiastic to be here in person, but I know that he will be there in spirit, which does make it an emotional event for me," said Glick's widow, Lyz.