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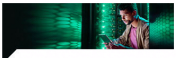
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Community Corner

9/11 Flight 93 Hero's Mother Lobbying Feds To Release Documents

As a crusader for surviving families, Los Gatos High grad Mark Bingham's mother says she will never get over losing her son.

By Sue Wood, Patch Staff

Sep 10, 2019 3:09 pm ET | Updated Sep 12, 2019 2:13 pm ET

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Alice Hoagland told Patch United Flight 93 hero Mark Bingham, a Los Gatos High grad, was always protective of her. (Ellen Manzo)



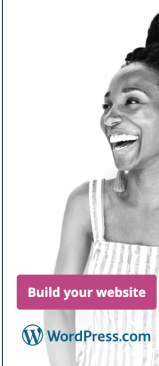
LOS GATOS, CA — When 1988 Los Gatos High School graduate Mark Bingham boarded United Airlines Flight 93 in Newark headed for San Francisco on Sept. 11, 2001, the burly rugby player and public relations pro was bound by a greater good.

This greater good that ultimately killed him inspired his mother to carry on a life of good deeds.

The two had always been close. His mom, Alice Hoagland, said the bond was tightened after she and her husband got a divorce.

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"Mark was always protective of me," she told Patch Friday. "Mark ran like a madman on a rugby field and went running with the bulls (in Pamplona, Spain), yet he boards a commercial jet and gets killed."

Sometimes a sense of irony and sarcastic humor is the only way for a mother who loses a child to cope — especially with such a public death as one associated with the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

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"Not a day goes by that I don't think about him. I'll never get over losing my son," she said, while her voiced cracked.

Hoagland said this five days before Patriot Day, which was established to honor the heroic efforts and tragic deaths of the thousands who died that fateful day of the nation's worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil. The retired United flight attendant who lives in Redwood Estates outside Los Gatos remembers Sept. 11 like it was yesterday.

In a terrorist act that rocked the United States to its core, put the "war on terror" into our vernacular and changed aviation travel, two planes careened into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan that sunny fall morning and was quickly followed by another that crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The last plane, believed to have been aimed for the U.S. Capitol or White House, went down in a field near Shanksville, Pa., and Bingham was on it. No one survived in the fiery crash.

The sequential events prompted airports to declare marshal law and evacuate. The Federal Aviation Administration, which ordered the grounding of all airline travel, fielded questions from press on a media hot line with filled with frantic conversations because a few dozen planes were still unaccounted for that morning. (This reporter was on the call.)

The United States would never be the same — and neither would Hoagland, who is taking the opportunity of the anniversary this week by heading to Washington, D.C., with other surviving loved ones to campaign and lobby the federal government to release all documents related to 9/11. Twenty-eight pages had already been unveiled. While all the circumstances leading up to the horrific attack are unclear, many feel foreign relations is a factor meriting further consideration.

For years, the cloaking of the documents for "national security" reasons has never been good enough for some of the victims' loved ones. The crusade has given the former flight attendant a new line of work as a lobbyist and advocate for surviving families. Her duty to lobby the federal government superseded her earlier personal agenda to fly to New York City to take part in the "Voices of Sept. 11" ceremony and to see the National September 11 Memorial & Museum for the first time since it opened in 2011 at the World Trade Center site.

She had been to the Shanksville field many times.


"They're thorns in my crown — my good deed," said Hoagland, who was propelled there by her son, then 31 years old, and his good deed.

Before Bingham's jet went down, the passengers' sacrifice went down in history as one of the most heroic events of our time. A handful of passengers who had the time and inclination to believe and realize their flight had been hijacked to do massive damage decided to stand up and confront the hijackers armed with box cutters.

According to documented reenactments, the passengers prompted a showdown brawl with the hijackers when they used a beverage cart to try to bash open the cockpit door. That notion has always baffled Hoagland. As a former flight attendant, she told Patch: "The flight

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30					

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attendants should have had keys."

A documentary, movie and countless news reports have chronicled the monumental act of heroism.

The ominous phone call at 6:44 a.m. woke up Hoagland, who was staying with relatives and took the phone from one of them. The call resembled a strange encounter even given the stress of the situation.

"He said: 'Hello mom, this is Mark Bingham,'" she recalled as if it was a recording in her head.

After he quickly gave her the hijacking scenario, she countered with, "Mark, this is your mom," and went on to explain that his plane is being used as a weapon based on news reports. The entire nation was transfixed on the news that morning, overnight and in the subsequent days following the national tragedy.

Hoagland said she could tell by her phone call with her son that "something heavy" was being slammed into the door. Accounting for his 6-foot, 4 inch, 220-pound stature and his "stand up and be counted" quality, Hoagland knew her son would be involved in the revolt even without hearing it from him. The attempt to regain control of the aircraft will forever be remembered as the "Let's roll" moment, spoken by fellow Los Gatos High School graduate Todd Beamer. The two were not traveling together.

"That was quite a coincidence," she said.

Sept. 12 and the following days unfolded in a cross between an upheaval to a fog among most Americans.

Hoagland grieved and came out of the ashes like a Phoenix on a fact-finding mission.

The reaction got her closer to her son, who was before his untimely death becoming quite a jet-setter with his career and visits with friends.

"I learned a lot about my son after his death," she said.

She spent hours listening to his friends and partner talk about how he was doing. None of the conversations carried even half the weight of one poignant chat they had when he was age 21. He came out as a gay man to his mother in a beautiful, intimate setting.

"I remember him telling me how he wished there were more gay heroes," she said, referring to earlier depictions of gay people in the media.

It looks like this lifelong rugby player put one up on the scoreboard, as Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation Board Director Ellen Manzo pointed out.

"When you think about 9/11 and the civilians on Flight 93, it was the first time we had a civilian attack on an adversary. They thought they had a chance at a plan and cemented it. They kept America going," Manzo said.

A dramatic reenactment is shown on [this clip](#).

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