

*As I reach back to go forward, the soul will be  
what I will carry with me.*

—Khari Baten, Class of 1994



BOYCE ADAMS  
(1973–2015)



KHARI BATEN  
(1972–2011)



BRIAN RHO  
(1972–2000)



MATTHEW WHEATON  
(1971–1998)



in memory

# Boyce Adams (1973-2015)

**By Dan Almaguer '94**

A few months ago my seventh grader asked me what Williams had been like. We talked about the campus and what I had majored in and how lovely the Berkshires are in the fall and how cold it is in the winter. I told him that the best part about college are the enduring friendships. I don't see my college friends all that often. But when I do, it's as if we're picking up where we left off months, sometimes years, before.

And I told my son about Boyce. Boyce was one of those enduring friends. We were dormmates freshman, sophomore and senior years. Boyce was a quiet guy. Quiet, but thoughtful. When he had something to say, it was generally worth listening. (Unless it was about his NY Jets; he was a hopeless fan of that terrible team.) He was also very funny. He had a sly, quick wit, and an easy laugh. And he was smart and an avid reader. I've never met anyone who could read as fast as Boyce. We drove to the beach for spring break our senior year and he sat in the back seat reading thousands of pages of history texts. He probably read more on that road trip than I read the entire semester.

Boyce stuttered. It was quite a stutter. His words would catch in the back of his throat and those pauses could be painfully long. But Boyce could sing. Boy could he sing. He blew me away the first



time I heard him sing. He blew everyone away. That deep, measured voice transformed into a crystal falsetto, someone else's voice. It was beautiful.

We remained close after Williams. Both of us went to law school. We started our careers in New York. We got together from time to time, personal and professional commitments permitting. But we always picked up where we had left off. He was intensely private. Even with his close friends. But he always made time for me. He was a good friend.

I miss Boyce. I miss his friendship, his company, his sense of humor. I'm sorry that my kids will never meet him or hear him sing. I know they would have liked him very much. Go Jets.

**By an anonymous '94 classmate**

Although Boyce had always struck me as a pleasant fellow, we were more acquaintances than friends. He owned a video game console and generously let me play against him a couple of times. But it wasn't much fun for a novice like me to compete against an expert like him. Plus, he mainly owned sports games, like golf and soccer, and I always preferred games with explosions. And we had a few disagreements on political matters. He seemed to think that women were superior to men, and I thought freedom of



speech was a big mistake. So, we were not very close, but I regarded him as a likeable person.

Maybe it was a Wednesday night, since only the real go-getters were drinking. Boyce was in his room. Maybe he was playing a video game, and I was watching, but probably he was already asleep, and I was back in my room. I can't remember. All of the sudden, someone started angrily hollering out Boyce's name from the grounds in front of the building. There was quite a clamour. It seems that one of the extra-large members of the Williams student body was drunk, feeling very belligerent, and furious at Boyce for some reason I never found out. Someone tried to point out to this guy that it wasn't fair to pick on Boyce considering that he weighed twice what Boyce did. But the guy wasn't backing down. Boyce got up and started to put on his loafers to go out and confront him. I thought this was a bad idea and advised Boyce to stay inside. Boyce finished putting on his loafers and went right out. I was kind of floored. Boyce was such an understated, friendly guy—a guy who liked a cappella singing! How is it that he was also as brave as hell? When Boyce made it outside, the other guy vented a few confrontational yells. But then he left without throwing any punches. Maybe he was also surprised that Boyce came out?

Rest in peace, brave Boyce.

### By Peter Izanec '94

Boyce and I were suitemates during junior year, one of the best years of my life.

Boyce had all the qualities that you would expect from a Gladden resident. He was a formidable Nintendo RBI Baseball player. He was an excellent foosball partner (a little better on defense than offense, but still very solid at both ends of the field) and his pong skills were well above average. We lived on the 5th floor, and Boyce was instrumental in optimizing the splicing that allowed us to get pirated cable on our suite TV, despite having only 1/6th of the original signal.

As I think everyone knows, he was an outstanding singer. At some point during one evening I made an offhand (and dumb) comment about Elvis Presley being a unique singer; Boyce laughed and immediately belted out a version of "Love Me Tender" that sounded better than The King. Boyce would end up attending law school a couple years

ahead of me and his performances in the law school revue shows had become whispered legends by the time I was going through as a 1L.

More than all of that, though, he was a genuinely good guy. I remember one night in early November 1992. It was at the height of Clinton/Bush, and the suite was having a late night debate about the importance of voting. I contended that voting was a foolish act, as one vote would never make a difference and that futile symbolic gestures were a waste of energy. I took a beating in the argument that night, but I was a stubborn 20-year-old and continued to hold my position long after it was clear that the battle had been lost. It was Boyce who delivered the coup de grâce. He said, "Dude, you waive any right you ever have to complain about the way society is if you can't be bothered to take even the smallest of steps to fix it." I threw up some flaccid rejoinder and retreated shortly afterwards.

He was right, and that statement reflected what he was—someone who was genuinely concerned about others around him and making the world a better place. Twenty-five years have passed since then and I still carry the sting of that comment with me. I try to remember it whenever I see something that is wrong and am tempted to just walk by and do nothing. Boyce was an exceptional person and touched a lot of lives. In that sense he lives on, and we are the better for it.



**By Tammy Korade Gehosky '94**

I remember Boyce's smile vividly, more than 25 years later. He had a great personality that shone through. His eyes sparkled and danced with his sense of humor. But truly his smile was the most engaging, the thing you saw first and remember last. I enjoyed matching wits with him. Boyce was a great combination of all good things—intelligence, caring, humor. I'm thankful I had the chance to know him.

**By Brad Mook '94**

One face sure to be missed at our 25th reunion is that of Boyce Adams. Boyce and I never shared classes or living quarters, but I got to know him well through our four years singing together in the Octet.

Small in stature and quiet by nature, Boyce was not an imposing figure. Whether we were on stage or in the rehearsal room, bigger personalities tended to dominate the group and command much of the attention. Yet Boyce's impressive consistency and extraordinary talent left an indelible imprint on the Octet's identity. His voice was sweet and soulful, and—with all due respect to our fellow Octeters—the best in our group. Anyone who heard him perform "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" would have to agree. I can still hear his voice echoing in the many acoustically favorable stairwells we'd duck into at any opportunity.

More than just a pretty voice, though, Boyce was a friend. He was the one I'd turn to in a moment of frustration or when things started getting a little



bizarre, always keeping things light with his smile and laugh. He could always break tension and restore connections with his trademark pucker-and-finger point pose. He was my voice of reason in our later years as my attention started to

wander from the group, and he'll always be one of my favorite memories of my Williams experience.

Boyce will be missed at reunion, but he'll be there in spirit. I know he'll be among us given how many of us carry him in our hearts. We miss you, buddy.

**By Tim Nikula '94**

I lifted the phone, and all I heard was silence.

It was August of 1990, no one had email, and I was supposed to receive a call from my soon-to-be freshman year roommate, Oakland B. Adams III. My family was rather awkwardly all gathered around me, making me all the more nervous, and after I picked up, Boyce literally said nothing for the first 20 seconds or so. We finally warmed up to each other a bit, had about a three-minute conversation, ending with the critical realization that I was bringing a fridge and he was bringing a Sega Genesis.

A month later, we walked into Sage F, had about another three-minute conversation, and then both went off to register, get books, and whatever else is supposed to happen that first day. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure that we had any interaction that lasted more than three minutes, outside of bonding over Golden Axe, our love of (opposing) sports teams, or figuring out where to get late night food.

Freshman year seemed to roll on, we dug into our studies (me poli sci, him history, me laughing at him because history was really just poli sci with 5x the reading load), and we became close with several others in our entry, particularly so with another pair of roommates, Dan and Anthony. One of the great things about being at a place like Williams is that our entire circle of friends was made of kids from all over, who never would have gotten to know each other, all intense in our own ways, but we could always come back to the dorm at the end of the class, party, concert, and put our feet up, play some Sega and just be ourselves. And, oh the concerts. You can probably remember the first time you heard Boyce sing. I do—it was the Octet's fall concert and Boyce debuted his iconic solo for "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." He never sang around the entry up to that point, so we really didn't know what he could do...and WOW. On concert nights I always felt like a groupie for my own roommate!

When freshman year ended, of course we decided that we should put in for a suite together down in Mission. Sophomore year was more of the same; Sega '92 Hockey became the game of choice, reading loads picked up even more, our conversations finally cracked through that three-minute mark and went long into the night. Junior year, like with most groups at Williams, we each seemed to go our own way, but when senior year

came around, there we were right back together, in Gladden this time.

After graduation, and as the years put distance between us and Williams, and literal distance between our far-flung lives, we knew that we could always pick up where left off. I could go two weeks or two years without being in touch with Boyce, one of us would email the other about a new job, a move, a Jets-Pats game, a new kid, or anything else that was on our mind. In fact, much like the school year, our friendship always seemed to renew each fall with

the onset of football season, and we'd get back in touch and swap stories. I didn't see Boyce for over a decade at this point, but we always kept tabs on each others' lives and families.

And then one fall, after sending out my annual email reminder about our fantasy football league, I realized that Boyce hadn't responded. This wasn't



Boyce, dressed up for one of our silly freshman year festivities ("Crossdressing Party"), January 1991

highly unusual, as either one of us could drop out of the picture for weeks or months at a time, and he certainly wasn't the first to prioritize other things in life besides fantasy sports. And then came the moment that no friend, no parent, no roommate, is ever prepared for. After weeks of wondering if everything was OK...

I lifted the phone, and all I heard was silence.

We miss you and we love you, Boyce.

### By Amy Radil '94

Boyce was my Sage F entry mate. He was so gracious

and soft-spoken that it took a little time to realize he had a wicked sense of humor. He also had a beautiful voice, as anyone who heard him perform in Octet concerts can confirm. He's someone I very much would have liked to catch up with at this reunion. It's so heartbreaking that he is gone.

## Khari Baten (1972-2011)

**By his mother, Graciela Baten  
and sister, Soyini Baten  
REMEMBERING KHARI**

Khari was diagnosed with germ cell cancer in March 2009. He fought the good fight with great courage, dignity, and humility. On May 5, 2011, Khari died peacefully at Penn Hospice at Rittenhouse in Philadelphia, PA.

Khari attended Landon School in Bethesda, MD and was a dedicated member of the football and lacrosse teams. He continued his education at Williams where he majored in history and was a member of the football team. The dedication, enthusiasm, and professionalism of his teachers and coaches sparked Khari's interest in becoming a teacher and coach.



Through the span of his seventeen-year teaching and coaching career, Khari worked with kids of all ages from elementary to high school. He found his wheelhouse teaching and coaching high school students. At The Episcopal Academy (Philadelphia, PA), Khari developed and taught a variety of high school history courses and was a dedicated assistant coach to the football and lacrosse teams. A former Episcopal colleague describes Khari as “not only a remarkably passionate and dedicated teacher, but also a colleague whose sincerity and intensity in pursuing principles of education and pedagogy are virtually unparalleled.”

Khari aspired to be a head coach. That dream was realized when he joined the faculty of Chestnut Hill Academy (Philadelphia, PA) in September 2007. Khari happily took the post of head lacrosse coach and football defensive line coach in addition to his teaching responsibilities. Although a young lacrosse program, Khari tackled this challenge with the same determination, dedication, and intensity as every other challenge in his life. “Nothing is greater than the feeling of rising to the challenge of teaching and seeing others succeed as a result of your hard work.”

Most important to Khari were the lifelong friendships he developed and nurtured throughout his life. “Each stage of my life has been populated with some quality individuals; people worthy of the title *foxhole friends*.” Whether you met Khari when you were five years old or eighteen, you could count on a friendship based on honesty, loyalty, and integrity. Many of these friendships have survived his death and continue with his family today. Khari’s tough and gruff exterior may have been deceptive for some, but those who took the time to get to know him discovered a gentle teddy bear with a heart of gold.



Spring Break in Fort Myers, FL, March 1993: Greg Catanzano, Paul Minnefor '93, John Patti, Lenny Miller, Steve Edmonds, Tom Day, Mike Osnato, Dean Pignatere '93, Khari Baten

*[Transcript of a speech Khari Baten made in 2007 at the Episcopal Academy where he taught.]*

Khari Baten  
Upper School History teacher  
Chapel Speech, May 16, 2007

### Reach Back to Go Forward

Schools provide many opportunities for transitions. Unlike most jobs there is an opening and closing of the year. A new class enters in the fall and an old one leaves in the spring. The close of this school year starts a transition in both my life and that of the school. Therefore, the idea of Reach Back to Go Forward resonates with me. I am curious to see how it will play out in the chapel speeches next year. However, as most of you know, I will not be here to hear them. The theme raises some interesting questions. For instance, what are you doing when you reach back? Are you reaching back to push off in order to propel yourself forward? Are you reaching back to carry some part of your past forward with you?

First, are you pushing off to propel yourself forward? If that is the case, you need a strong foundation. I hope that by the time you leave EA you will have that foundation in place. At the very least, you will have a piece of paper that will read The Episcopal Academy. That name alone will be enough to push your way into some schools, jobs and social circles. I carry that name on my resume now. However, what does that name represent? I guess that is what you will have to figure out over the next year or two: a daunting task to be sure. I have some thoughts on what that name represents at least for me. Moreover, I feel that it relates strongly to the second question; are you reaching

back to carry something forward? As I enter for myself a period of transition, I have thought about what I should bring forward. I have looked over the course of my life to see what I have carried with me from one phase to another. Allow me to present a few examples.

Rob Bordley was my high school lacrosse coach. If you

think I am nuts on the field, I am afraid to think what would happen if you had to get through one of his practices. One day, I was in the school library pretending to study and he walked up behind me. All I heard was a loud slam as the unabridged edition of the dictionary crashed onto the table next to me. The sound echoed throughout the room. Stunned, I looked up into his cold blue eyes as he said, "Intensity. Look it up," and then he walked away. That freaked me out a bit. My heart was pounding. What had I done wrong? I looked up intensity. He wanted more focus and effort from me. He was tough on me as he was on all of us in high school. However, it never entered my mind to question whether or not he liked me; it was irrelevant. If he thought that I needed to be more intense, he must have seen in me something I had not seen myself. Rob would walk through fire for someone he respected and it was my goal to achieve his respect. To this day, I still call him for advice and to talk about coaching. I am sure that I will be calling upon him a lot in the coming years as I try to build a lacrosse program of my own.

Renzie Lamb coached me in college. An old drill instructor from Long Island, he had a way with words and stories. He also had a way of being very blunt with you. I have been on the receiving end of some choice words from him. During football season, some friends and I broke training rules on the way back from a scrimmage. Being cocky college kids, we thought we had gotten away with it. By the following week, the nervousness had gone away. Then at the end of practice on that Wednesday, Renzie asked to see all of us who were on the van. He lit into us and reduced us to feeling as if we were lower than whale dung. Why was he so mad? I realized later that he was disappointed in us for taking such a stupid risk for a couple hours of fun. He was disappointed in us because he cared. To this day, I value his guidance because although he is very direct, he is honest and sincere. I have talked to him about my future and my frustrations and he would tell me that my problem was that I



Class of 1993 graduation: Steve Edmonds, Khari Baten, Paul Minnefor '93, Greg Catanzano, Todd Machnik

was soft and afraid to make a change. Although that was hard to hear, he was right. This spring I told him about my new job and we talked about what my next steps should be. Those of us who played for Renzie know that his words carry love, respect and elements of truth. I look forward to seeing Renzie, now retired and about to turn seventy, once or twice a year and sharing a cigar.

About six years ago, some friends and I came up with a term to describe close relationships. We came up with the concept of *foxhole friends*. Would you want this person in your foxhole when the chips are down? These are the relationships that last a lifetime. At every stop in my life, I have encountered people who are worthy of being called a *foxhole friend*. The sister of one of my high school friends commented once how she loved to hang out with her brother's friends more than other people she knew because we always had fun. What we were doing did not matter. It was that we were doing it together. We enjoyed each other's company. We have been to and in each other's weddings. We have been there for each other at all the important times in our lives, from Redskins games to the birth of children.

My college relationships followed along the same trend. In class, on the field and on Saturday night I knew I could count on those relationships. We always looked out for each other. Obviously, I do not see my college friends as much anymore. In a way, that makes the time we spent together that much more powerful. My annual trip back to Williams serves as a highlight of the year. It does

not matter that the physical place has changed over the years or that the Purple Pub burned down. Those relationships transcend any physical space.

Fortunately, I found similar relationships here at EA with colleagues and students who I value and respect. These relationships have been formed over cigars, mentoring, championships, long conversations, driving, watching game film, and fighting over food that the girls did not finish. I will carry with me into the next phase of my life these relationships. It is my hope that you students will be able to carry with you the relationships you create here at EA with your peers, and your faculty and staff.

It is interesting to reflect on what made those experiences unique and valuable. The common

thread is the relationship bond. Each stage of my life has been populated with some quality individuals; people worthy of the title *foxhole friend*. The faculty and students are what make schools like the Episcopal Academy special places. The facilities and technology are just window dressing. The people and their relationships are the soul of the institution. As I reach back to go forward, the soul will be what I will carry with me. Thank you.

## #68

### By Steve Edmonds '94

Paul Minnefor did an amazing job describing Khari's undying love and loyalty towards his friends and teammates in his heartfelt eulogy from 2011 (see page 26). Rather than duplicate those sentiments, I thought I would share some of my favorite memories of Khari while we were at Williams together.

We met a day or two before our first football pre-season camp and immediately struck up a friendship which continued to grow as the season progressed. We weren't the fastest, nor the strongest players, as we both had our sternums crushed by the 300-pound bench press test on our first day. Like most freshmen, we started on the scout team, or "Team X" as we called it, because our job at practice was to simulate the offense of our next opponent for our starting defense. Khari and I would look across the line at the senior defensive linemen and look for a confirmation as to whether we were to go full speed or half speed. Then we would turn to each other, smile and nod which meant we were using "union" rules, or going half speed with the appearance of full speed. It did not take us long to become proud, card-carrying union members that first fall, and it gave us a brief respite before usually finishing the night with dreaded conditioning drills.

Other than the running backs under Coach Shep, the O-Line did more conditioning than any other group on the team. As we ran hills after practice, Coach Caron would yell "nobody works harder than the offensive line" as our other, more fortunate, teammates took a leisurely stroll back to the locker room while they watched us hunched over gasping for air. Although we hated every minute



### Award given in Khari Baten's name at Landon School where he was an alum and teacher:

As you may know Khari Baten, Landon 1990, died recently after a difficult battle with cancer. He was a young man who exemplified many of the attributes that Landon tries to instill in its young men—enthusiasm, teamwork, spirit, integrity and courage. His family will be holding a service in remembrance and all of the Landon community are invited to attend and reflect on this outstanding person.

### EXPLANATION OF THE KHARI BATEN "THAT'S A BEAR" AWARD

The selection of an individual for the KB award is meant to identify someone whose team play (not necessarily individual statistics) reflect the level of effort which Khari exhibited in his careers at Landon, at Williams and as a coach at several schools in Philadelphia, PA.

Khari was a member of the Landon Class of 1990; during his Bear career, he was a major contributor to the football and lacrosse teams. He went to Williams College, studied history and was a four-year member of the Ephmen Football team. Upon graduation, Khari joined the Landon faculty, where he was a respected member of the football and lacrosse coach staffs from 1994 to 1996.

of conditioning, Khari and I completely bought into Coach Caron's motto and even sometimes carried it too far off the field as well. In addition to closely coming to blows at times with Cat and Syammy, amongst other defensive players that first year, we also felt it was our duty to use it to help motivate random members of the freshmen quad as well. On a few occasions after a long night at the "top of the hop" in the fall, we would head back to Williams and Sage in the early morning and pick a random floor of doors to bang on, yelling "you don't work like the O-Line". At the time Khari and I thought it was hilarious, but it wouldn't surprise me if more than one person had to seek counseling after one of our late-night visits. Fortunately for the members of the quad, though, those antics did not last too long, and we instead found less stressful ways of winding down the night by enjoying food at some local fine dining establishments that were open near the campus.

Khari lived for those moments and we were fortunate to experience multiple post-midnight visits to Tony's Eats (No Profanity Allowed!) as well as Saturday afternoon trips to Jack's Hot Dog Stand in North Adams and, of course, Bub's BBQ

The Berkshire Eagle, Monday, May 13, 1991



Agonizing finish to the 10th annual intercollegiate hot dog contest was reached by Williams College's first team, all of whom became ill before the end of the event but still finished second. From left are freshmen Steven Edmonds, Khari Baten, and Rives Nolan and sophomore Matt Aselton.

## Chow hounds wolf down hot dogs by the hundreds in charity binge

By Glenn Drabun

Berkshire Eagle Staff

**NORTH ADAMS** — Two teams from Williams College proved best able to stomach intercollegiate hot dog eating Sunday, beating five teams from North Adams State College.

About 150 spectators watched the dog-eat-dog affair on Eagle Street, which featured more teams than ever but a less than expected coming up as had gone down.

The four-man squads from Williams finished with 40 and 41 hot dogs consumed, respectively, in 30 minutes. In all, the seven four-man teams ate 200 hot dogs before the allotted time elapsed.

The Williams I team appeared to be on a roll at the halfway point, leading by eight hot dogs over their closest competitors, with 40 consumed. But

before the finish, all four men on the team lost their relish for the event

and their lunches as well, in quick succession. The Williams II team edged them by a tenth in the final moments.

At least five other men were visibly ill during and after the event, but none appeared the worse for wear.

and some were joking about going out for a bite to eat.

Matt Aselton, a sophomore from Williams, steamed toward breaking the contest record of 22 hot dogs in 15 minutes, but he slipped at 20, in obvious gastronomic trouble. Two others finished with 20 hot dogs consumed.

Searcher they managed to keep them down.

Other team finals were as follows:

Alpha Chi Rho, 36; Psi Upsilon, 30; 55,

North Adams State College, 23; Kappa

Delta Phi, 22; and NASC Student

Hot Dogs, continued on B6

outside of Amherst the first week after each football season ended and any time our hockey or basketball teams played the Lord Jeffs/Mammoths. There were so many random eateries discovered over our four years, we could have started our own version of Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives. I remember all those trips vividly, but I'll share one that we were both extremely proud to be a part of.

Khari and I had the "honor" of representing the

football team in the annual Jack's hot dog eating contest in the spring of '91, along with Rives Nolen and Matt Aselton '93. Ultimately, we lost to another group of Ephs whose combined weight was less than half of ours, but they certainly had a better strategy than we did. Who knew that drinking until 4:00 a.m. and then trying to eat as many hot dogs as we could in a ten-minute span a few hours later would not be a great idea? Sure enough, that short-lived plan would lead to four large men vomiting profusely one by one, each one an involuntary reaction to the next. I apologize for painting a gruesome scene, but it was so bad that random spectators were getting physically sick just watching us. As badly as it ended for us, it created a lasting



The Williams Team at the Hot Dog Eating Contest at Jack's Hot Dogs in North Adams, May 1991: Steve Edmonds, Khari Baten, Rives Nolan, Matt Aselton '93

memory that we would retell countless times over the years. I cannot help but smile as I recall that day and so many others and I am so very fortunate and thankful for Khari's friendship that first year.

We were two peas in a pod for sure. We were not the most socially adept individuals to say the least as we could be sullen at times (ok, many times) and we were both introverts deep down. Not many people understood us, but we understood each other. We knew exactly what each other was thinking without saying a word and I will forever remember the smile and reassuring nod we would give each other to acknowledge we were on the same page. He was one of the few people that I shared my personal life with back then and he with me as well. We spent countless hours in the weight room and racquetball court together, were members of possibly the worst intramural basketball team ever assembled at Williams, sang "God Bless America" to the quad at sunrise on more than one occasion, and of course, drank obscene amounts of beer together. We were even brought into Club B together which was probably one of Khari's proudest moments because that is what he lived for; just being with the fellas and drinking cold beer. As Paul wrote in his eulogy, Khari was as loyal a friend and teammate as anyone could have asked for, and I was very fortunate to have him in my life at that time. Everyone needs someone that just "gets" you and makes your life a little bit easier by understanding what makes you tick. #68 was one of those few people for me.

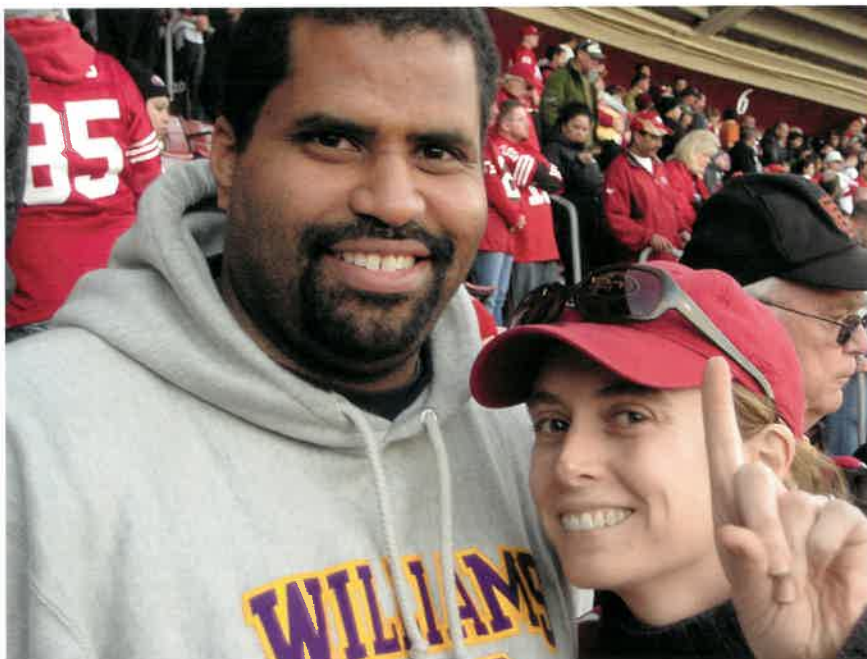
#### **By Susan Harper Greene '94**

I miss Khari Baten to this day. He was one of the most loyal friends—always there when you needed him, always knew what it meant to be a good friend. And always a good sport when the 49ers beat the Redskins. In fact, the last time I saw him was in 2008 when he came out for the 49ers/Redskins game in San Francisco. He handled cancer with as much grace as anyone could. Love you!

#### **Eulogy for Khari Baten by Paul Minnefor '93 (read at Khari's Memorial Service in Philadelphia in 2011)**

Good morning. My name is Paul Minnefor. It has been my privilege to be Khari Baten's friend for more than 20 years. We met as fellow offensive linemen on the Williams College football team in the fall of 1990. The offensive line, to those who are not familiar with the talents of the various positions on a football team, is not a place for the best athletes or the fleetest of foot. In fact, it was widely understood that the offensive line was the place for "husky kids" who couldn't run fast, tackle very well, or catch or throw a football. In other words, it was the last stop before the bus stop.

The principal reaction to this common understanding was that the guys on the offensive line strove to be the hardest-working, most dedicated players on the team. What we lacked in athleticism, we endeavored to overcome through sheer effort. It was a culture of first on the field and last off, early morning film sessions (with doughnuts, of course) before classes started, marathon weight room sessions and Friday night carb loading at Pizza Hut before big games. It was an extremely tight knit group that took perverse pride in surviving the punishment doled out by our gung ho, occasionally sadistic offensive line coach, and the friendships ran deep.



Khari Baten and Susan Harper Greene

We were fortunate to be part of a team that was highly successful and appreciative of the offensive lines' efforts. Although the word is sometimes cheapened today by overuse, it is no exaggeration to say that Williams College football—as we knew it in the early 1990s—was a genuine brotherhood. That brotherhood adhered to a strict code of hard work, unselfish play and—above all else—team. There was no one among all the men I played with during my four years that embraced that code harder, or loved the team more, than Khari Baten. He maximized his talents, loyally supported his teammates on and off the field, stepped aside graciously after getting beaten out for a starting guard position his junior year and played ferociously and effectively when called upon to do so later that season and the next.

As important as his contributions were as a player, it was in our everyday interactions and experiences that Khari's character shone through. Khari was not a big talker nor was he a braggart. Rather, he had a quiet appreciation for the special moments in life, often acknowledging them only with that simple, gentle smile of his. One of my fondest memories of Khari is sitting with him on the practice field on a beautiful October day, long after the rest of the team had gone to the locker room, watching the shadows cast by clouds crawl across the Berkshire mountains at sunset. He didn't say anything, but I know we were both thinking how beautiful it was and how lucky we were to be there to witness it.

Another bond we shared was food. Simply stated, Khari loved to eat and his friends loved to eat with him. In that pre-internet, pre-cellphone, pre-Facebook era, in the wilds of Western Massachusetts, we worked at eating and finding places to eat like it was our job. Chili cheese dogs at Jack's, whoopie pies at Molly's Bakery, Gus Burgers (with and without runny yolks) at Tony's Eats, ribs and chicken at Bub's BBQ, burgers at Willies, wings at Canterbury's, the Baxter Hall Doghouse, Colonial Pizza, Friendly's, Hepburn's Doughnuts and a legendary bar & grill in New York State that stayed open until 4:00 a.m. called Third Base, the "Last Stop Before Home." On one memorable night, Khari and I heard a rumor that the Subway in North Adams, unlike the Subway in Williamstown, was offering a BBQ rib sandwich that was allegedly a taste sensation. Paying no

attention to a raging snowstorm, we piled into my car to put the theory to the test on as cold, snowy and raw a night as you could ask for.

Despite his somewhat quiet nature, Khari also stood out for his adherence to tradition. He was, in effect, the Sergeant-at-Arms of our unnamed fraternity. You could be at a raging party, finally talking to that cute girl from your history class you'd had your eye on all semester, perhaps even on the cusp of leaning in for a first, dramatic kiss, but if you had agreed to go to the Pub to greet a visiting alum or to celebrate a teammates birthday, or to commemorate St. Patrick's Day, or Groundhog Day, by God and the United States of America and the Glory of Williams College Football, you were going to the Pub, party or no party, cute girl or no cute girl.

The best thing about Khari, however, when it is all said and done, is that he never changed. Our time at Williams, special as it was, was not the end of the story. He was as good a friend to me when I went to visit him at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center on April 16—sharing chicken Parmesan and Little Debbie oatmeal cream pies—as he was the day I graduated from Williams in June of 1993. Although the good times we shared didn't happen quite as frequently in the intervening years as they did when we were living and playing football together, they happened often and we appreciated them more. He was still the same great teammate and friend he was 20 years ago, the guy I knew would be there, without question, when my father passed away several years ago. Whatever his health struggles were, and we know they were severe, he was stoic to a fault, and was never one to complain or allow his troubles to impact the time we were sharing.

I've heard from dozens of our former teammates in the past few weeks and the one word that invariably gets used over and over again is loyalty. Khari was loyal to the core. He kept faith with the friendships of his youth—refusing to let time or distance erode them—and he never forgot. Those of us that remain, who also carry the torch for the friendships formed on those practice fields 20 years ago, will be forever grateful for the example Khari set of what it means to be a loyal friend. We will never forget him, we will always remember his example, and we will see him down the road. God bless you, Brother.

# Brian Rho (1972-2000)

## By his sister Christine Rho

Brian passed away almost 19 years ago on January 1, 2000, on what would have been his 28th birthday and the new millennium. I remember the weeks of crazy fervor leading up to the Y2K—worries that our computer and financial systems would crash and news stories of people withdrawing their money from the banks and other hysteria of that sort. I had not anticipated that my world would come crashing down for an entirely other reason on Y2K. I write this a week before the end of 2018 and what will be a new year and the 19th anniversary of Brian's passing. On New Year's Day, we will gather at my parent's house to remember Brian, as we have done each year. We will eat Tduk Guk, which is a rice cake and dumpling soup, traditionally eaten on New Year's Day. In Korea, everyone turns one year older on New Year's Day, as opposed to on one's birthday. There's an expression that you have to eat the rice cake soup to grow a year older. In Brian's case, it was his actual birthday too, so for him, his true age and his rice cake age were the same. Afterwards, we will drive to Forest Lawn and gather at Brian's grave to remember him and tell stories about the times we shared with Brian. Over the years, I got married and had a daughter, Samantha, who never had the chance to meet her uncle Brian. I tell her that he would've been a pretty cool uncle—funny, kind, and smart. Samantha's only connection to her uncle are through the stories we tell. She's asked us to tell her a new story about her uncle Brian each year. I will tell one here.

Brian was my older brother and we were just 1 ½ years apart in age. And as we got older, people used to remark how much we resembled each other. If you asked either of us at the time, we'd both deny it and refuse to see any similarities in each other. Nonetheless, as a kid, I looked up to my older brother, often trying to emulate him and follow in his footsteps. Brian was the one who taught me how to ride a bike.



I must have been 4 or 5 years old and he just a little bit older than me, but already wise to the world, at least in the world of 2-wheeled vehicles. We took his bicycle up the hill from my grandparents' house to a flat part of the hill. I have no idea where my parents were, but this was back in the 1970s when children were free to roam unsupervised. The deal was that he would hold the bike and run along the side while I pedaled. Under

no circumstances was he to let go of the bike. But of course, he did, as soon as he thought I had the hang of it, and inevitably, I'd fall once I realized that I was on my own. I would keep checking to see if he was still holding on to the back of the bike. Eventually after probably many falls, I became steadier on the bike and began to pedal with some speed. I looked back to check if Brian was holding onto the bike, but instead, I saw that he had hopped onto the back of the bike and was riding along. All the while, he was smiling and laughing. It is this smile and laugh that I remember most about him. He was always quick to laugh and had a smile that was both kind and good-humored. He was there for you when you needed him, but was also able to inject levity and fun into whatever was happening. I wish that he had been here to teach Samantha to ride a bike.



Graduation: Dan Casey, Brian Rho, Andrew Brennan, Steve Mook

Brian loved his years at Williams and made great friends there. He played rugby and regaled us with stories of the rivalry with Amherst College. I went to school nearby at Smith College, but he made sure to let me know the low opinions he held of Amherst guys. Some of you may have stories of your own to tell of Brian. And I would love to hear one someday.

Brian left this world much too soon and I often lament that he has missed out on so much. He died in his last year of medical school, and I wonder what sort of doctor he would have been. The uncle he would have been to my daughter...or maybe the husband he would have been to someone, or the father he would've one day become...I would have liked to have known him as an adult.



Heather Robertson Roberts, Patricia Park, Allison Varzally, Michelle Moon, Alissa Kolek, Ivan Yen '93, Jennifer Kim, Randy Osaka, Brian Rho; (in front) Grace Kim Caddell, Dae-Son Yoo, Yi-Shiau Leu

Recently, while I was talking to my daughter, I had posed a hypothetical question. If you were guaranteed 10 extra years of life, but you had to eat kale every day, would you do it? We were having dinner at the time and I was probably trying to encourage her to eat more vegetables. Anyway, she thought about it for a second and said very casually, "I'm here for a good time, not a long time." Those are lyrics from a rap song by Big Sean, or so I've been told (and nothing has made me feel more like an out of touch, middle-aged, suburban mom than trying to quote a rap song). Brian's life was cut short, but he lived a full life. He made the most of his life and lived it well. The other day, our cousin Eunice remembered that when she would take us out to dinner (when Brian and I were poor starving students and Eunice was out of school and earning a paycheck), Brian always ordered the best thing on the menu, making the most of our night out. Eunice recalled that

fondly and loved that he always seized the day. Brian was here for a good time, not a long time.

#### *By Hanna Bruno '94*

Brian was a great friend. I miss him to this day. I cannot imagine getting through some of my classes without him, especially some of our bio classes like genetics. Junior year, we lived in West together, and he always came by, hung out, and ate Now and Later candy and Twizzlers with me. After college we lived in LA our first year out, and he was one of my closest friends there. We watched many football games, went out to many restaurants, and even went to karaoke a few times. He was smart, generous and thoughtful. He always knew when I needed a smile or a crazy outing. I really appreciated our friendship. I know he would have been an amazing, successful person and doctor because he was such a caring and selfless person and friend. You are truly missed, Brian.

#### *By John Hering '94*

I still miss Brian and think of him often. I remember spending a lot of time together freshman year in Fayerweather 3! We studied hard (we were both pre-med) but had lots of fun! He helped motivate me to work out, and we spent a lot of time in the weight room and getting in better shape. He introduced me to Tae-Kwon-Do, and we continued that throughout all four years at Williams. (He was always better than me and let me know it when we sparred!) I got to spend one Spring Break with him and his family in Los Angeles, which was amazing for this kid who grew up in Minnesota! He showed me all kinds of things, and I'll never forget how kind and generous his family was. We lived together three out of our four years at Williams, our senior year living off campus in the most rundown apartment on Spring Street. We didn't care, because we were having a blast! He was quite the rugby player, and while I didn't join him in the sport, he did bring me to a few Friday night rugby "practices!" I still remember his laugh and will never forget his fun-loving spirit!

#### *By Alissa Kolek '94*

I was not lucky enough to get to know Brian as well as some of our classmates did—we weren't in the same entry freshman year (one of the surest ways to make lifelong Williams friendships, in my

experience), and we didn't have a lot of classes together (he was on his way to training for a career in medicine and I was proudly never setting foot in a lab as a devoted English major)—but I am so thankful that we had wonderful friends in common, because that is how I was lucky enough to meet Brian sophomore year and get to know him a little bit better during our time in the Purple Valley.

We quickly learned that we did have one other big thing in common, besides our wonderful friends—having come all the way East for school from faraway (and much sunnier) California, and I will never forget (and often still tell the story of) the time that he and our friend Michelle and I were walking from one campus building to another on a dark winter night, thinking nothing of it, right up until the moment we all went flying off our feet and onto the ground because of how icy the sidewalks were. Clearly, we Californians had a lot to learn (although Michelle is from St. Louis, I like to think of her as an honorary Californian!). But despite our slightly bruised limbs (and bruised egos), what I remember most about our little ice capade is how much we were all laughing. That was something that we did a lot when we were with Brian, because he had a way of finding the humor in things (sometimes sarcastic and sharp, but also quite often thoughtful and caring, although he'd probably roll his eyes at me for saying that!), while putting everyone at ease at the same time.

And that's one of the other things I remember most fondly about Brian: he was such an open, kind, and genuinely good guy (cue the eye-rolling again, probably) who knew how to talk to anyone and make them feel like they were just as much one of the gang as he was. That may sound strange (or inarticulate!) but what I mean by that is perhaps best put this way: I was a mess the year I met Brian (my mom had died of cancer over the summer before our sophomore year and I didn't have the greatest social skills even

before that happened!), and I thought for sure, because I was a terribly insecure and misguided person back then, that he would be like some of the "cool kids" I knew back in California—i.e., someone who might nod in the hallway but with whom a geekgirl like me would never be friends because of my awful, awkward shyness and hopeless un-coolness—and Brian proceeded to turn everything I thought I knew on its head. He was friendly, he was funny, he was wicked smart (I had to come all the way to Massachusetts to learn that bit of slang by the way), and, most of all, he truly seemed to know how to treat everyone the way they hoped and wanted to be treated—with respect, with kindness,

and with a shared sense of we're-all-in-this-together kind of irreverence and reverence at the same time, if that makes sense. It was the sort of kindness that I really needed that year, and I will always be thankful to have gotten to know Brian and had him there to make me laugh and help me feel better in ways that he may not have even realized he was helping me. He was a real blessing in that way—I wish I'd been articulate enough when we were young to tell him this—and in so many other ways, to so many other people besides me of course.

I want to say "cue the eye-rolling" again, because I suspect Brian might have laughed and/or would have wanted to give me a hard time for going on

about him like this, but I can't and don't want to understate how lucky I feel to have gotten to know him (eye-rolling be damned). I can still remember where I was when Michelle called to tell me we'd lost him—he was one of the first people of our own age group that I knew who was taken from us way too soon and his loss forever changed (for the better, albeit sadly) how I looked at all my other friends and cohorts—and I considered it a profound blessing that by then, I, like Brian, had returned to California and was able to attend the services that were held for him in our home state. Perhaps



a bit self-importantly, I felt proud that I could be there to represent, if only in some small way, those of our Williams family who could not be there in person to show our respect and love for Brian and his family. It was an honor to be there that day, and to hear the words of those who are far more eloquent than I and who loved Brian so dearly. Unlike those who spoke that day, I cannot do him justice in this remembrance, but I hope he knows I tried my best (and that he's perhaps laughing at me...in that friendly way of his of course!) and that he knows how dearly he is missed. We were all lucky to know him.



Brian Rho, Ron Moskovitz, John Tam, Jeff Sicat



Brian Rho, Ron Moskovitz, Kari Larsen Bilik, John Tam



John Hering, Brian Rho, Rich Whitcomb



Brian Rho, Ron Moskovitz, John Tam, Kari Larsen Bilik and Jeff Sicat at the wedding of John Hering to his wife Shannon

### By Michelle Moon '94

Brian and I were in freshman English class together but we did not become friends until sophomore year. We used to laugh that he had traded in his black turtleneck and gold chain (an LA '90s thing?) for L.L. Bean flannel. Brian didn't take himself too seriously, and it was one of the things I liked best about him. Brian had a generous spirit and an open mind. When he spoke, he was kind. These are rare qualities, and it meant that he could be friends with just about anyone—even if you seem to have very little in common. We were all better for having known him. To the Rho family—Brian is remembered, and he is missed. Always.

### By Jeff Sicat '94

True story: guys vs. girls bowling match (but between you and me it was twice as many guys

than girls, and we kept cumulative score)...it came down to the last ball and I think Brian threw a gutter ball...the losers had to cook a gourmet dinner for the winners and we all got dressed up and had a nice dinner...the "bonus" penalty was that the guys all had to wear spandex with our shirts tucked in and had to do an aerobics class in front of the girls! Brian, you were always having a great time and you were full of life! Thanks for great years and great memories at Williams together!

### By Dae-Son Yoo '94

I went to the same high school with Brian, and we were the only two that went to Williams from our high school graduating class that year. I wasn't a close friend to him in high school, but he always seemed friendly and wore a bright smile. His peers, including myself, saw him as confident, laid-back, humorous, smart, athletic, and likable, which I think stayed true about him through college years. I remember as an entering freshman, riding on the same airplane coincidentally with Brian and his parents from LAX to Albany, NY to get to Williams. Looking back, it was a bit of a comfort for me to be on the same plane with him and his parents since I had never visited the school (or

the East Coast) before and didn't know a soul. (And I think Brian always had a knack for making people feel comfortable around him.) Brian and his parents were generous to offer to share with me their taxi cab ride to Williams once our plane landed in Albany.

One summer at Williams—I think it was at the end of our junior year at Williams—I ended up subleasing a room from Brian, and it gave me a chance to know him a little better. I remember once having a deep conversation with him about faith and after-life. I wish we had had more opportunities to have

conversations like that... It's still hard for me to believe that he's gone. As with many of his classmates and friends, I miss him...



# Matthew Wheaton (1971-1998)

*By his father, Jerry Wheaton, Class of 1965  
To the Friends of Matthew John Wheaton,  
Williams Class of 1994*

Matthew John Wheaton, Class of 1994, died at the young age of 26 on March 31, 1998, as a result of complications from an automobile accident.

That day was the saddest day of my life. I do not grieve well. In 1999, a few months after Matt's death, I literally had a "broken heart." With the help of two Cleveland Clinic cardiologists, I have mostly repaired my heart. But I still suffer from the loss of Matt 20 years later. I think of him each and every day. I have a difficult time going to the Lakeview Cemetery in Cleveland where he is buried. I do not easily accept Matt's death and want him to live on—at least in my mind.

My wife, Carolyn, and I are blessed with a wonderful daughter and two beautiful grandchildren. My heart aches when I think about how much these grandchildren would have loved their Uncle Matt. Tears come when I think about what a good father and husband Matt would have been and how much he would have loved and enjoyed his own children and extended family. Matt loved life, his friends and family, and his different life experiences. Matthew cherished his time at Williams for many reasons—but mostly for the companionship of friends and roommates, and, yes, even some courses and teachers.

I have taken the liberty to include some of the remembrances of Matt that were provided by his friends. It has been a cathartic process for me to re-read these memories and select those that best show what a special person he was and his depth of character. I still grieve and always will.

I would like to ask you to take a moment and remember the Matt you knew. I hope you will smile,

grin, or even chuckle. That would please both Matt and me.

Thank you very much for being an important part of Matt's life.

## Anonymous remembrances

"I cannot believe 20 years have passed since Matt passed away. I miss his humor and his honesty. But most of all, he was a good and loyal friend. As the years pass, I realize more and more that Matt's loyal friendship was truly unique and could not be replicated. There are still moments when something happens in my life, and I wish I could

pick up the phone and chat with him. We used to talk about how when we grow old and fat, we'll go up to Williamstown to watch our kids play with each other."

"As I remember Matt's life, I remember his laughter. His smile. His sense of mischievous adventure. His friendliness. Matt had no enemies. I met Matt during the first few weeks of our freshman year at Williams College. He quickly became one

of my closest friends. The memories I have of our time together have truly enriched my life. Whether he was grinning ear to ear as a result of behaving mischievously, or he was simply sharing a laugh while we sat around telling stories, you could count on Matt for his wide smile. I loved Matt like a brother and will remember him forever. Keep smiling Matt!"

"Matt was one of the warmest, most enthusiastic, and loyal people I have ever met. It is rare to be able to befriend someone as honest, silly, and fun as Matt. Matt was different from most people because he did not know how to be fake, and he did not try to impress—other than just by being his amazing self."



"Matt was one of the kindest and sweetest people I have ever known. I first met Matt outside my dorm, Morgan Hall, throwing a lacrosse ball with my roommate. Matt came outside and asked if he could play too. What struck me initially about Matt was not his ability, but his lacrosse stick, which had a black shaft and neon, multi-colored strings. I said to myself, 'What a ridiculous looking stick. I wonder if this guy realizes how silly his stick looks!' I think he liked his stick so much because it made people laugh!"

"All through our time at Williams, Matt was such a friendly, fun person, always with a smile on his face. Matt was one of the gentlest and kindest people I've ever known. In my senior year, Matt and I dated, and he was always ready to go for a walk in the woods and talk for hours about where we both were headed and where we had been. For my birthday, he shocked me by giving me flowers with a poem!"

"One of my great memories of Matt is picturing him walking into the dining hall with a big grin on his face in March (piles of snow outside) wearing yellow shorts, hiking boots, a plaid shirt, and sunglasses. He surveyed the place as he chewed on a pen or straw, do a head nod, and meander to his destination."

"One of the best things I ever did in college was go to hear Matt speak at AA for his anniversary. He told some hilarious stories from when he was drinking, but was so proud and happy to be where he was then. He was one of the most giving people I had ever met. He made friends everywhere he went."

"What a smile Wheaton had. Although I did not get to know Matt until his senior year, I knew exactly who he was since his freshman year. He certainly was one of the most handsome guys on campus, and I was one of the many girls who noticed. His smile was worth a million bucks. Matt was beloved at Williams. His good looks were only a small part of his appeal. Matt was one of the most open-minded and generous people I have ever known. He had friends everywhere—athletes, academics, Republicans, lesbian and gay campus leaders, flunkies, professors, Jews, Mexicans—you name them, they knew and liked Matt. He was smart

enough to know that we all have a lot to learn from each other, and he never missed an opportunity to share a good word with someone, no matter what they looked like or where they came from. Matt was a born leader. His charisma abounded and, on many occasions, I witnessed his friends defer to him and his opinions. But he was generous with the spotlight, and he was willing to share it. I am sure that's one of the reasons why he had such a magnetic presence. When Matt focused on achieving something, he was unstoppable. He was loyal, kind-hearted, knew what his life was worth, and he lived it to the fullest. He understood the value of life more than the rest of us. I will remember Matt with fondness and a smile for the rest of my life, and I thank God for bringing him into my life."



Graduation Day, June 1994: Brad Kroh, Matt Wheaton, Tommy Castiello

"Matt deeply touched my life and was a true friend to me at Williams and after graduation. When I was in my junior year abroad, his letters brought me much joy. Upon my return to Williams, I had a very difficult time re-adjusting to campus life. Matt recognized my difficulty and paid me periodic mid-week visits to help me through. His kindness and support made my difficult time easier. When I left Williams that fall to sort out my life, Matt was there as a true friend. Matt's calls helped me turn my outlook around. When it came time for graduation, Matt insisted that I escort him to the dinner dance to give me the opportunity to bid farewell to my classmates. Matt's support did not cease when he graduated. He continued to call me at school to help me through my senior year at Williams. Matt's friendship means the world to me. Matt lives on in my heart always."

"Matt was one of the most gentle and kindest people I've ever known. When he stopped drinking and joined AA, Matt came to see me at Harvard to apologize for events long passed. Talking with Matt on that day, and on many more occasions to come, about his decision to stop drinking and his ideas about life, I grew to respect him more and more. Matt seemed to have an understanding of himself and his ideals that far surpassed mine or that of our mutual friends. It was this depth of character that made Matt such a loyal and valued friend to me.

Matt was always willing to listen and to provide support and advice to the people he cared about. Matt had an ease with people that made him so easy to talk to."

"I miss you and your silly smile. You always made me laugh. You always made yourself laugh for that matter. Just part of your charm. Knowing you has in some ways truly changed my life. I

searched for items that reminded me of you and the times we spent together. A few old photos, the stray pearl earring to a pair you gave me for Christmas one year—I wear it every day. I've prayed that you know that I love you and always have. I've prayed that you know that you will always live in my heart and in the hearts of all the people whose lives you touched. Please remember how special you are and how much you are loved. Nothing can ever diminish that."

"Matt was an individual and everything he did was 'Matt Wheaton style.' When I picture Matt, the first thing I see is his smile, a really big, mischievous smile as if he knew a secret. He always seemed to be about to burst out laughing; and, of course, this always made me laugh (even if I had no idea what he was smiling about). When I hear Matt, I hear, 'What are you doing?' I always knew it was Matt calling. Never hello. That wasn't Matt's style. The last time I spent quality time with Matt was in Atlanta. He just sort of showed up. Again, Matt Wheaton style. Unlike most people, there was never

that pressure to stay in touch or call ahead. That seemed frivolous. There was just an understanding. We spent a couple days together and had a great time. No expectations and that's why we always had fun. That was Matt, just carefree."

"Matt will be alive in so many of our hearts forever. I vividly remember Matt's brilliant smile and tremendous kindness during our National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) trip to Patagonia. His ear-to-ear grins would brighten even the cloudiest

of days, and his sincerity and generosity touched me deeply. I remember well a distinct moment with Matt. Due to hand injuries, I was unable to paddle during our kayaking section. The strongest of the expedition members would have to take turns paddling me in a two-person boat. On one of our tough days, nobody wanted to help me out. I was near



Shaw Henderson and Matt Wheaton, Late Night Mission

tears and Matt put his arm around me, pulled me aside, and told me he would paddle me whenever I needed it. Matt will forever be in my heart."

"I was Matt's instructor for all 75 days of his NOLS semester in Patagonia. Matt and I shared a lot of joys and hardships together during those months. I came to have great respect for him. As a teacher, I am not supposed to have favorites among my students, but I did, and it was Matt. My wife, also one of Matt's instructors, would say the same thing. Matt was a very caring young man and distinguished himself in my ten-year career as a NOLS instructor as the most astute counselor of peers that I have had the opportunity to watch. Please know that the world has lost a very special person."

"One of the things that impressed me most when I first knew Matt Wheaton was his genuine interest in other people. I remember going to Matt's house after high school tennis matches to hang out with a group of friends. Matt would always ask how the

match went and how I felt about the game. He genuinely cared about people—no wonder that Matt was usually accompanied by an entourage of friends. No wonder that he touched so many people's hearts. I have so many memories. The way Matt used to slyly ask 'Who's that girl in the pink?' as I walked around in that bright pink jacket. Talking on the phone for endless hours instead of doing homework (I think our record was seven hours straight). Going to the Rolling Stones concert and missing half of the show. Or driving around town in the 'Silver Bullet,' listening to music and picking up friends along the way, not always having a specific destination in mind. Matt had a free spirit and that has been part of what was so attractive about him. When I was informed that Matt was in a coma, I started to pray. Every night I would go home and light a white candle held by a little statue of an angel, positioned next to a photo of Matt and me."

"Many nights during high school were spent at Matt's house—an extension of his all-welcoming self. Matt could oversee it all because his character knew no exclusion, never met one from whom he couldn't learn something, always attempting to hold the whole together through sheer generosity. Not only did Matt have good friends from other high schools, he was one of very few who could be friends with everyone in his own class, the unacknowledged link between individuals and groups who only saw eye to eye when Matt was with them. To me the most remarkable aspect of Matt's existence is that he remained the same throughout his different settings, forever laid back with a lively roaming mind. Even after Matt's drive for making life meaningful led him to forsake our intoxicated antics, his personality persisted in tones even brighter for being dry, even more amusing and intriguing since born of no artificial stimulant. I wish he had survived to help bridge that gap—between sober, measured responsibility and the restless denial of stability many of us crave."

"I remember the clear night when Matt drove me home in his convertible with the top down, the crescent moon and the twinkling stars.

That was what life is all about—true beauty and freedom. You showed me that, Matt."

"The very first night I met Matt at an AA meeting, I was feeling rather out of it. When his car pulled into the lot, Matt bounded out with that swagger and big smile. He made directly towards me. I put my hand out to shake his as he walked up. He flatly ignored it, and instead embraced me in a warm hug. That's the way it was with Matt. He had an ease and sureness. He was almost incapable of emotional dishonesty. I just could not put up a front with him. His charm was that he drew me out of myself. He was so 'himself' that it reassured me in being myself. Matt was able to bond with men who were not good at male bonding. I don't know anyone else that I can say this about—everyone loved him. You could not help it. He was so good natured, so easy to like. He pursued spirituality and life with vigor."

"Matt was an incredible blessing in my life. He was living life in a way that I always fantasized, but I did not have Matt's courage and self-confidence. He was one of the few people who made a difference."

"Matt was a hero to many of us. He remains a hero to all of us—as a symbol of integrity, honesty, and goodness. I want my son, all my children, to be just like Matt. Thank you for the opportunity to meet, know, and love such a wonderful person."

"Thank you for your friendship over the years. We shared many friends and a passion for 'tom foolery.' I loved your quick wit, your ever-present smile, and your infectious laugh. Good-bye for now my friend."



### By Dave Ruder '94

There really are so many experiences with Matt that I could share that it would be impossible to describe them in just a few words. So, when I describe Matt to others who may not know him, I use the story of how he met my brother.

In the beginning of 1992, I was driving from Chicago with my then-freshman brother to Williams for the beginning of Winter Study in January. Of course, on I-90 we hit a big snow storm around

Buffalo and as we neared Albany, it switched to a white-knuckler ice storm—at night. We were going very slow in our 4x4, and my brother and I were bickering about where we were and how fast we should go to avoid a wipeout. Then in the left lane next to me a small black car started honking wildly at me. I looked over and it was Matt. He was also driving to Williams from Cleveland. In pure Wheaton style, though, all of his windows were down, he had music blasting, and he was wearing ski goggles on his drive.

He was honking at me just so we could have some laughs about the crazy ice storm we were driving through. My brother of course had no idea what was happening, and I just said “Oh, that’s my friend Matt.” We ended up caravanning together on our way to campus, making sure we all made it there. To know Matt was to know someone who could take a totally stressful drive and turn it into a really fun time.

I’m sure my memories of Matt Wheaton are similar to many. I met him early on in my freshman year, and we became fast friends. Why did we become friends? It really isn’t obvious when I think about other people I met at Williams. We didn’t live in the same dorm, we had no classes together, and played none of the same sports. We just became buddies and could talk about anything. And this was true the entire time I knew him. Whether we were at Williams, with his family in Ohio or Florida, or in some other city after college, I knew that when hanging with Matt, life was good.

Some people who didn’t know Matt that well may have thought he was mostly about having fun, but I don’t think that’s true. Of the people I have known in my life he may have been among the most reflective. I don’t think he took anything for granted, especially his friends. I know I’m not alone in missing Matt.

#### **By Adam Scheer '94**

I would bet that Matt was the first member of our class to talk about our 25th reunion. During the spring of our senior year, Matt and I were driving from Florida to Williamstown after our spring break with his family. Somewhere in Upstate New York, Matt turned to me and asked what I planned to wear at our reunion. He assumed we would both have kids by then and he wanted to make sure we embarrassed them. He had his reunion wardrobe



Matt Wheaton and Tommy Castiello at Weston Field, fall 1993

picked out already and it included very loud plaid pants. He thought it would be a good idea for us to match, so a day or two after we got settled back in Williamstown I went to the House of Walsh and bought a pair of plaid pants to match Matt’s. I wish I knew where those pants were now.

Matt loved Williams, and he knew he would always maintain a connection with the college he loved and the friends he adored. After we graduated, Matt was one of the classmates I talked to most (I bet a dozen others would say they had the same regular contact with Matt). And even though we lived in different states after Williams, we saw each other often. I will never forget the day when Matt showed up at my office near Wall Street in the middle of the workday (with no notice) wearing shorts and Birkenstocks while sporting a giant beard after returning from a NOLS trip looking for a lunch partner.

Matt was taken from us too early, and it is difficult to imagine our reunion without his smile and his energy. No one looked forward to our reunion more than Matt, and I believe that no one will be missed more.

#### **By Amanda Eyre Ward '94**

I wanted to add to Dave Ruder’s beautiful words about Matt (see pages 35/36). I had many long hikes with Matt, and many late nights when we talked about everything from summer jobs to classes to love. As our reunion looms closer, I’ve been thinking so much about Matt and what a treasured friend he was to me and so many others. He was kind, hilarious, deep, and smart as hell. He understood many things about life that I still don’t understand. I miss him, too—very much.