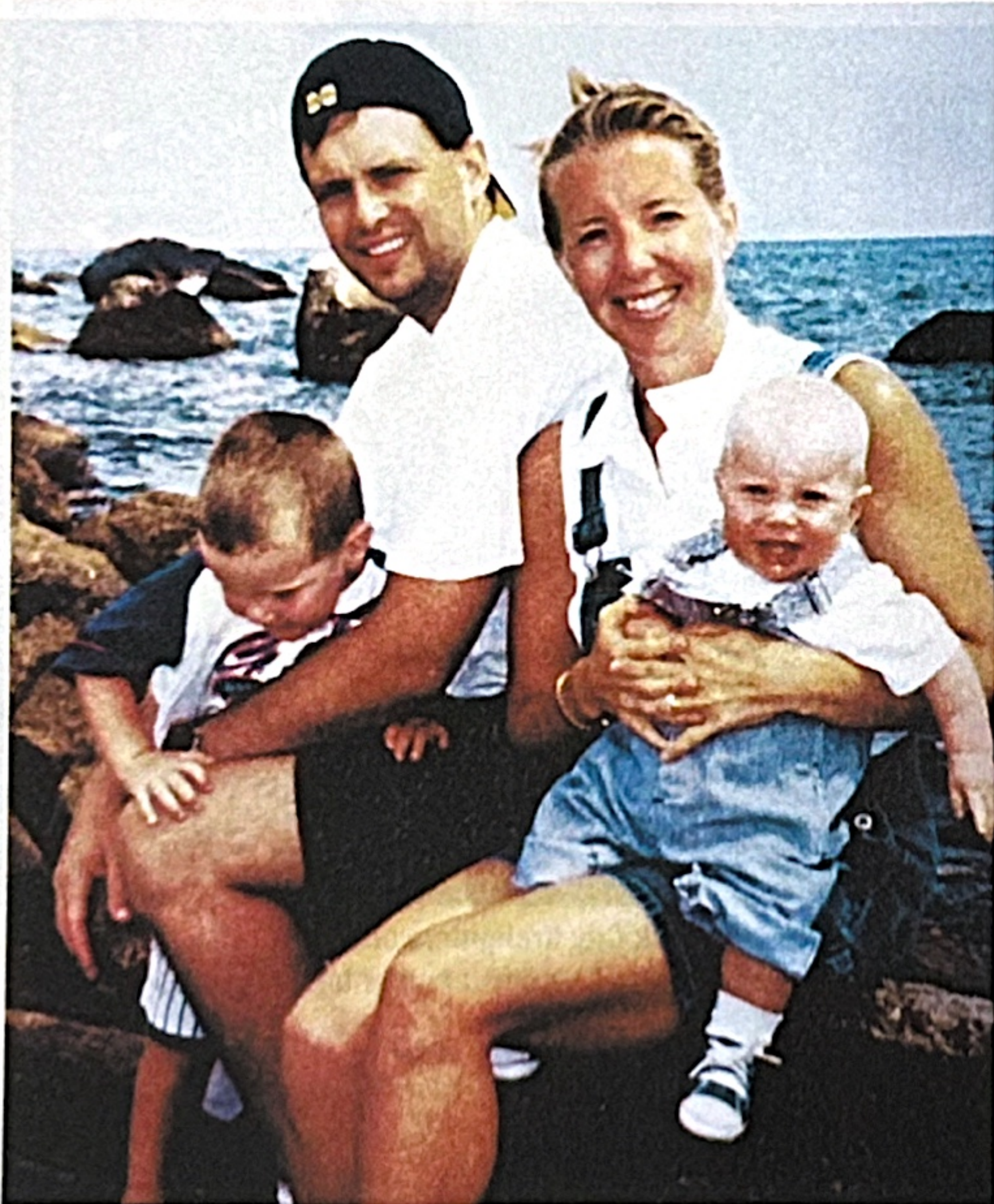


Lisa Beamer, widow of Sept. 11 hero Todd Beamer, sets aside her grief and keeps hope alive with the birth of a baby daughter • *by Patrick Rogers*

Living Legacy



"He was quiet and humble and interested in people," says Lisa of Todd (in Cape Cod, with sons David, left, and Drew in 2000).

With her mid-January due date fast approaching, Lisa Beamer had no idea whether she was carrying a boy or a girl. She and her husband had decided months ago that they wanted it to be a surprise. Sadly, many things would change for Lisa after Todd Beamer died on Sept. 11 at age 32—one of the heroes of United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed into the Pennsylvania countryside after passengers foiled the hijackers' plot. But even so, she chose to keep her pact with her late husband and wait to find out the sex of their third child. "I kind of hope it's a boy," Beamer, already the mother of sons David, 4, and Drew, who turns 2 on Feb. 3, told PEOPLE last fall. "Raising boys is kind of like, 'Just go off and wrestle!' If it's a girl, it's going to be such a new thing."

Something new was in order on Jan. 9. Early that morning Beamer, 32, entered a private birthing room at the Medical Center at Princeton in New Jersey, where doctors were scheduled to induce labor. Five and a half hours later one of her best friends, Chivon MacMillan, 34, placed her hands on Beamer's bulging belly and, in a lighthearted imitation of a famous soothsayer, predicted, "The Amazing Kreskin says the baby will be 21 in., weigh 6 lbs., 11 oz. and—only because I want it to be—it will be a girl." Minutes later, at 1:59 p.m., Beamer gave birth to a 7 lb., 20-in. baby girl whose name, Morgan Kay Beamer, is a combination of Todd and Lisa's middle names. "Lisa kept saying, 'Oh, my gosh, I can't believe I had a girl,'"

says MacMillan, a marketing manager for a packaging company. "If you know Lisa, her emotions are something she keeps in check, but I know her well, and I have never seen her this excited."

Beamer decided to induce labor a week earlier than her announced Jan. 15 due date in hopes of avoiding a crush of reporters at the hospital. As planned, Todd's sister, homemaker Melissa Wilson, 35, flew in from Trenton, Mich., the day before. Beamer's mother, Christian counselor Lorraine Brosious, 56, arrived a couple of hours after Beamer's delivery with Morgan's excited big brothers. David held Morgan in his lap as Drew, held by Lisa's sister Holly, 28, cheered, "Baby, baby!" Meanwhile, sister-in-law Wilson captured it all on videotape. "If I could have painted a picture of the perfect baby, it would be her," says grandmother Brosious. "She's the only one of Lisa's three children born with black hair, and Todd had black hair."

For weeks cards and checks from well-wishers, even car seats and high chairs, had been arriving at the young widow's home, some of them addressed

simply, "Lisa Beamer, New Jersey." "The response worldwide has been amazing," says MacMillan's husband, Doug, 34, who recently quit his job in medical-equipment sales to head the Todd M. Beamer Foundation, a charity established last year for children who lost parents in the Sept. 11 attacks. President George Bush, who saluted Beamer during his address to Congress on Sept. 20 and turned Todd's now-famous "Let's roll" into a rallying cry for the nation, also sent a note—addressed to the baby. Says Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer: "All of America owes [this] family thanks."

Even without the excitement of the birth, Beamer—one of at least 45 Sept. 11 widows who have since given birth—has been plenty busy in recent weeks. For Christmas, as usual, she and the boys split their time between Todd's parents' home outside Washington, D.C., and Lisa's mother's home in suburban Shrub Oak, N.Y. But this year was understandably different. "It's definitely hard when you get out the Christmas tree and the decorations and, you know, you find ornaments that were Todd's," Beamer told CNN's Larry King during an interview for his Dec. 24 broadcast. "And you look at pictures from last year and think how it should be or how it could be."

As she has throughout her ordeal, however, Beamer refused to be debilitated by her grief. "I guess the good thing is that kids keep you focused on what you need to do," she says, "because they are too important for you to go into a shell and curl up and go to bed and not get up again."

She also knows firsthand what it's like to lose a parent. Born in Albany, N.Y., Lisa spent most of her youth in Shrub Oak, north of New York City, with her three younger siblings—Paul, now 31 and a school psychologist in Albany; Holly, who has just completed a master's degree in special education, and Jonathan, 19, a freshman at Gordon College near Boston. When Lisa was 15 and Jonathan only a toddler, her father, Paul Brosious, an IBM research physicist, suffered an aneurysm at



"She is a symbol of endurance," says Oklahoma Rep. J.C. Watts of Beamer (with fellow guests Connie Clark, left, Joyce Rumsfeld and Patricia Shinseki at the Capitol on Sept. 20).



Beamer (presented with a helmet by New York City firefighters on Oct. 5) hopes the foundation set up in Todd's name will one day aid victims of other terror attacks.

work and was taken to the hospital. He died the next morning. Asked how she coped, Lorraine Brosious sounded like her daughter: "I had the attitude of just dedicating myself to my children, knowing that was the most important thing."

Raised a Baptist, Beamer says the loss of her dad rattled her once-unshakable faith. "I think my reaction was, 'I'm trying to be a good person and to do the right things and, you know, how could this happen to me?'" she says. For the rest of her teen years, she grappled with doubts about her religion. Finally, she says, "I hit an understanding that God knew what was going to happen to my father but, for whatever reason, chose not to change it."

At Wheaton College, the Christian institution outside Chicago, Lisa met Todd; the couple married in 1994 and settled in New Jersey. But it was only following her husband's death last fall that Beamer began to see what she believes is a divine blueprint for her life. "My father's death prepared me for what I'm going through right now," she says. Beamer also believes God could have spared her husband, a software-sales account executive with the Oracle Corporation, who left Sept. 11 for a business trip in San Francisco. "He could have changed the day of Todd's meeting or had him leave the night before," she says. But given Todd's apparent role in overpowering the hijackers of Flight 93,



Todd (center) often played golf with pals George Pittas (left) and Doug MacMillan.

Beamer concludes bravely, "it was better for him to be on that plane."

As she awaited the arrival of her new baby, Beamer kept busy with public appearances, media guest spots and work for the Todd M. Beamer Foundation, which, with an estimated \$1 million in donations so far, plans to pay for insurance and health care for the estimated 1,800 children directly affected by the terrorist attacks. On Oct. 19, as a show of confidence in toughened airport security and as a tribute to her husband, she took the same flight on which he had died. Three weeks later Beamer rose to address close to 20,000 people at a conference of Women of Faith, a Christian organization. "Her message was that she could continue to live in fear rather than hope, and she chose to live in hope," says Ruth Jean Hershberger, 71, a retired secretary who attended the Philadelphia rally. "I don't think

there was a dry eye around me."

Back at home, Beamer put the finishing touches on the nursery, decorated in neutral tones; a Stars and Stripes quilt sent by a well-wisher hangs over the crib. She also threw a fourth-birthday party for son David on Jan. 5 with 15 guests, pizza and a Buzz Lightyear cake. Then on the morning of Jan. 9, she drove with sister-in-law Melissa Wilson to the Princeton hospital, where staff members broke her water and began administering a Pitocin drip to induce labor. With that, Beamer, who wore a diamond tennis bracelet Todd had given her on Sept. 8, embarked on a new phase of her life. "It's hard thinking that Todd never saw the baby and didn't know it was a girl," says Wilson. "But this baby is a bright spot in a not-so-bright time."

• With additional reporting by Amy Bonawitz in Cranbury, N.J., Macon Morehouse in Washington, D.C., and Bob Stewart in San Antonio



Told a baby was coming, David (next to Mom) asked, "Why? We already have one," says Beamer (at home with him and Drew in November).