

Honoring a lost friend

Belmont man killed in Sept. 11 attacks

By Len Abram

It was a splendid September day, the kind advocates for New England weather remember as they slip and slide through dreary February. All the instruments agreed: temperature, humidity, wind direction and speed were nearly perfect, the sky, a novelist later noted, ice blue.

"Hey, mister," said the newspaper vendor to commuters leaving Downtown



Paul Friedman

Six Years Later

Crossing station. It was 8:55 a.m., September 11, 2001. "A plane hit the World Trade Center. In New York," the vendor added, not to be confused with the one in Boston, about a mile away.

It didn't make sense, this tragedy that wedged itself into plans for a jog at noon and a slow walk to work. Planes hit buildings in fog or at night, but with radar and the visibility so good, this accident made no sense. When the commuter heard about the second plane to strike the Towers, he uttered two words, to no one in particular: "Bin Laden."

Osama bin Laden, one of 54 children of a Saudi construction multi-millionaire, had sent his delegates before to destroy the Twin Towers, first in 1993. Now in 2001 he succeeded. Bin Laden did not know any of the thousands, Muslims too, he had killed or maimed that day. Most murder is personal and some a consequence of other crimes, but this was on such a scale and for such a purpose that for many, it was war. In Kabul, Bin Laden entertained guests with a video of the Towers struck and falling. He had achieved his dream at age 44.

Paul Friedman, 45, from Belmont, was on American Flight 11, the first plane to hit.

Friedman was adjusting as a new father, changing diapers blended with old ways.

He was not a soldier, or a politician, or a government employee. He was a business consultant on his way to California with a colleague, also from Belmont. Paul had degrees in psychology, engineering and business, with an unusual ability to mix his competence in so many fields with wit and warmth.

Friedman had achieved a dream too, fatherhood. His wife, Audrey, and he traveled

to South Korea the previous May, and returned with a 6-month old son, nicknamed Rocky. They joined Beth El Temple Center in Belmont. Attendees at Friday night services might have noticed

a tall lanky man, struggling to put a feisty baby into a stroller. Friedman was adjusting as a new father, changing diapers blended with old ways. He spent Sept. 10 with Rocky, according to an obituary printed at the time. "Did you take him to a playground?" his sister asked. "No," Friedman replied. "I took him to Starbucks."

In the Belmont Temple playground is a teak bench dedicated to Paul Friedman. The plaque reads, "Remember our friend Paul when we watch our children - free to play and grow."

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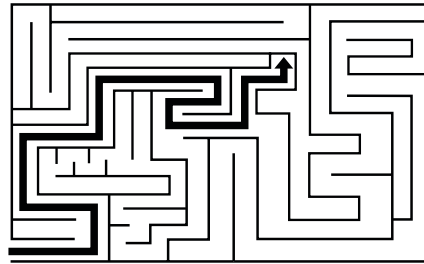
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