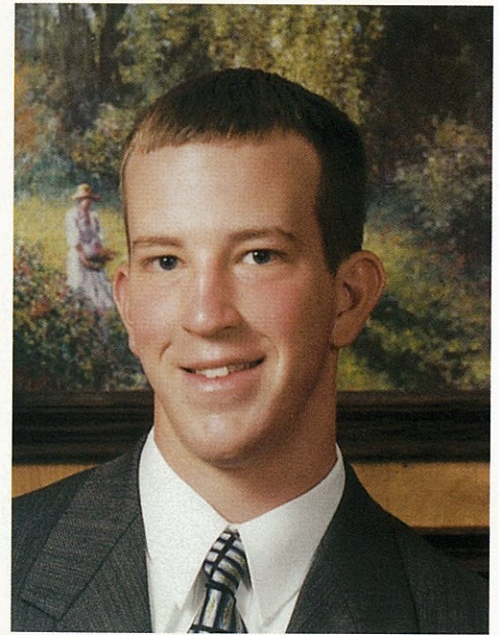


Michael Stephen Ebanks

His Love Was Bonfire



Michael Ebanks, even in elementary school in his hometown of Carrollton, had two primary goals in life. He wanted to go to Texas A&M. And he dreamed of working on Bonfire. Both dreams became a reality.

But then, Michael Ebanks had always set lofty goals for himself. Even as a young boy, Michael Ebanks yearned to become an astronaut. He had never been afraid to pursue his dreams. He established, then met, his goal of earning a private pilot's license at age 17 before he graduated from Newman Smith High School. He received a scholarship to attend Air Academy at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, a program for 16- and 17-year olds sponsored by the Experimental Aircraft Association. With the help of friends and neighbors Michael managed to save and sell enough aluminum cans to pay his way to U.S. Space Camp twice.

Michael never wavered from the course he had set for himself, becoming, as a freshman, an aerospace engineering major at Texas A&M. In his own mind, the sky was not the limit. He looked boldly beyond the skies he believed to be within his reach.

The son of Gerald and Bulinda Ebanks, Michael had always had a wide range of interests and the talents necessary to tackle his goals successfully. As a Boy Scout, Michael loved the outdoors. He and his father often went duck hunting, camping or flying together. He was proud of his accomplishment of being a self-taught pianist and lover of classical music. He loved the music, as well as the history, of the composers themselves: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and others. He was on the golf team his freshman and sophomore years at Newman Smith High School, deciding to turn away from athletics his junior year in order to focus on his advanced placement and honors classes. During his senior year, Michael's retail marketing project for the Distributive Education Club of America received a first place award in state competition. Before the year was out,

he and his project captured sixth place at the national competition in Orlando, Florida.

Dr. Lee Alvoid, school principal, would always remember Michael Ebanks for his quiet sense of humor. "He liked to cross a lot of groups," Dr. Alvoid said. "I always think of him as laughing and smiling with a group of kids? a quiet clown."

Michael also wanted to attend Texas A&M University as his older brother had done. His older brother, Keith Ebanks, graduated from Texas A&M in 1989, but five years later Keith was killed in an automobile accident.

Michael's mother, Bulinda, pointed out, "There are a lot of parents who have had a great loss, and I feel for them. I know what they're going through. I really do.

"The only way to get through this is through your faith, your friends and your family."

She continued, "Instead of sitting there wringing your hands, reach out to them. Just be open to everyone."

Emily White, an Aggie freshman, had known Michael since he was in kindergarten. She remembered, "He was the funniest, nicest guy you'd ever meet in your life. He'd do anything for anyone. There was no one else in the world like him, and we will miss him."

According to Emily, Michael would have wanted the Tradition of Bonfire carried on. She said, "He loved it like his brother did. He spent every spare minute working on Bonfire. He loved it that much."

"His older brother was an Aggie, and that was a real priority of his," Dr. Alvoid said. "That is a very popular choice here in Carrollton; we probably have a third of our senior class go there every year. He had a lot of friends at A&M."

Neighbor Tom Maxwell, who knew Michael his entire life, said "He was a terrific kid. He had a youthful enthusiasm for life, and it was a life ended too soon." 🕯