



Lessons of Lockerbie

This December marks the 25th anniversary of a terrorist act that cost two Rochester students their lives and sent an alumnus on an international legal mission.

By Scott Hauser

MARK ZAID '89 HAD ALREADY TURNED HIS attention to his upcoming spring graduation when he heard about the explosion of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. The news caught him up short as the details emerged: the transatlantic flight from London's Heathrow Airport to New York was carrying 243 passengers, including 35 American students returning from a London study abroad program sponsored by Syracuse University.

Two of the passengers—**Eric Coker** and **Katharine Hollister**—were Rochester students, both from the Class of 1990.

Zaid, who had been in London during the spring 1988 semester as part of a British Parliament program, remembered making a similar flight just months earlier. He had met Hollister on a few occasions when the paths of Rochester schoolmates crossed. Long interested in history, politics, and the law, he found he couldn't let go of the notion that someone should be held accountable for what was soon demonstrated to be an act of terrorism.

"When I started law school in August 1989, I went in specifically to study how we could go after the terrorists," says Zaid. "I've been working on this since day one of law school."

This December 21 marks the 25th anni-

versary of the Lockerbie bombing, an act of terrorism that until Sept. 11, 2001, was the deadliest single attack involving American civilians. A total of 270 people died, including 189 Americans as well as 11 people in Lockerbie. Suspicion for the attack ultimately turned to Libya, setting off an international legal battle that in 2001 resulted in the conviction of one of two suspected Libyan intelligence officers. The Libyan died in 2012 after being released by Scotland on the grounds that he was terminally ill.

During the past 25 years, Zaid has been at the forefront of efforts to represent the interests of families whose loved ones died in the attack. In 1993, he helped set up a two-person law office whose clients included a widower of a Pan Am victim, at the time the sole Pan Am family member interested in pursuing a lawsuit against Libya. Zaid helped draft federal legislation that made it easier for United States nationals to sue countries that had been designated terrorist states. Zaid, who now heads his own law firm in Washington, D.C., eventually represented about 30 families of Pan Am victims.

Frequently asked to talk about the bombing, the lawsuits, and the changes to national and international law that have come about since Lockerbie, he makes a point of speaking to alumni audiences whenever he can, including University presentations to



mark both the 10th and 20th anniversaries. He was on campus for a Meliora Weekend ceremony and again in November to mark the 25th anniversary.

"I want Eric and Kate to be remembered," says Zaid, who started a scholarship to recognize Coker and Hollister and to support a current student who is interested in the

▲ **CEREMONY:** Eric Coker '90 (above, left) and Katharine Hollister '90 (above, right) are memorialized on a plaque near Morey Hall, where Jaclyn Reinhart '14 placed a wreath during a Meliora Weekend ceremony attended by Eric's father, Tom, and stepmother, Dorothy (couple on the path at left), and led by Mark Zaid '89 (podium).



study of history and international affairs. “I wanted to make sure I gave back to the University because that’s where it all started with me, with Eric and Kate.”

Jaclyn Reinhart ’14, a political science major from Williamsville, N.Y., who is the current recipient of the scholarship, says that although the Lockerbie bombing took place well before she was born, she understands the emotional, cultural, and political impact that such incidents can have.

She appreciates that Zaid wants to help students with an interest in global history. Her own experience studying in Australia has convinced her that most Americans should pay more attention to international news and events. “Other parts of the world

are very much concerned with what’s going on elsewhere and how their actions affect other countries,” she says.

Having a global perspective was important to Coker, says **John Iovieno** ’90 who met Coker during orientation activities in 1986. Outgoing and energetic, known for his love of practical jokes, Coker quickly became the center of a small group of friends.

“He was very much the glue of the group,” says Iovieno. “He was always the leader in keeping us close together and making sure we got together.”

Well versed in history and politics, Coker had traveled to the then Soviet Union on a high school program and paid close attention to international news. Iovieno imagines

that Coker might have channeled his interests into a career as a scholar focused on political or global affairs.

But he knows that Coker would have wanted his tight group of friends to stay close, something Iovieno has taken the initiative to do, and that he would have liked to know that other Rochester students continue to have opportunities similar to the ones he had.

“Perhaps they had an impact in ways that they never knew,” Iovieno says of those who died 25 years ago, particularly those who were just starting out in their lives. “Maybe things happened as a result of our knowing them that eventually turned out to be good.” 