

Couple's deaths bring a special pain

Like everyone else, Miami Beach attorney Elizabeth Schwartz is deeply pained by last week's terrorist attacks on the United States. "There are a ton of stories that break your heart," Schwartz said.



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OUTLOOKS

But few of the tragedies struck home as personally for Schwartz as the deaths of Daniel Brandhorst

and Ronald Gamboa aboard hijacked United Airlines Flight 175, the second jet to strike the World Trade Center.

Life partners for 10 years, Brandhorst, 42, a Los Angeles lawyer with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and Gamboa, 33, a Gap store manager, perished along with their 3-year-old adopted son David, following a family vacation in Cape Cod, Mass.

"Especially with last month's adoption defeat, you think of what those guys went through to have a child," said Schwartz, who in August represented several Miami-Dade men in a fed-

eral suit that unsuccessfully challenged Florida's ban on gay people adopting.

Schwartz said it's important to acknowledge the terrorist deaths of Brandhorst, Gamboa and other gay men and lesbians.

"We are all things and this is another shining example of that," Schwartz said.

Among the gay victims:

► David Charlebois, co-pilot of American Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon. A member of the National Gay Pilots Association, Charlebois wore his American uniform last year during the gay Millennium March in Washington, D.C. He is survived by a partner of 14 years.

► Mark Bingham, who was one of three men believed to have fought the hijackers aboard United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in a Pennsylvania field.

Bingham, a public relations executive, was an active member of a gay rugby team in San Francisco and planned to organize a team for the Gay Games next year in Sydney, Australia. Bingham's team has posted an online memorial to him at www.sffog.org.

Schwartz said Bingham is a gay hero and should be recognized as such.

"We need to see heroes. Gay men are not allowed to be heroes in the military. We're not allowed to donate blood. For all those things, it's relevant," she said.

Gary Knight, executive director of the Dade Human Rights Foundation, agrees.

"It places a clear focus on a fact that gays and lesbians have always known: that we are no different from any other patriotic American.

"When you prick a gay American, while we still cannot give blood and still have problems serving in the military, what comes out is red, white and blue. With the gay rugby player, that demonstrates that as clearly as possible," Knight said.

Sunday night, Knight and Schwartz co-hosted the Lambda Showcase at the Colony Theater on Lincoln Road. The locally produced talent show was originally to be a benefit for the gay-oriented SAVE Foundation, but instead became a fundraiser for New York Firefighters Charities. At least \$1,000 was raised, said Jorge Mursuli, executive director of SAVE Dade.

Mursuli prefers not to dwell on gay-related issues in the early days after the terrorist attacks.

"At this time, the stories speak for themselves," Mursuli said. "The pain is equally excruciating and . . . at a time like this, I'm less concerned with underscoring the issues. At this moment, it's not an appropriate time. We can talk about correcting some of these injustices at a later date."

Still, Mursuli condemned Jerry Falwell, who last week told a 700 Club television audience that "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians" bear partial responsibility for the terrorist attacks.

"All of them who have tried to secularize America — I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen,'" Falwell said.

After drawing intense criticism — including from the White House — Falwell apologized Monday night for his remarks.

"Even in the toughest of times, there are some people who would choose to do us harm," Mursuli said of Falwell.

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