

## Dave Brown Memorial Endowment

Here are Coach Gauthier's comments from Dave's memorial: Dave Brown was just a regular person like you and me. He could easily be your friend sitting at the desk in your dormitory at midnight discussing the day's events or aspects of morality and virtue. He could be the guy who on the spur of the moment would take you up on an offer to go fishing in a dinky Jon boat on the York River at Croaker Landing. Even if the fish seemed to swim around his hook to jump on yours, he would still enjoy the moment and the relentless kidding. He is the neighbor who'd call you at night and say you've got to come over and see my brand new telescope that I've just set up in the driveway. When you got there and looked into the eyepiece you'd see Saturn perfectly centered with rings in view. As you looked up, Dave would be jumping up and down with his classic ear to ear grin, yelling, "Its Saturn, its Saturn, I've discovered Saturn!" Dave never met a good opportunity of which he didn't take full advantage. During his four years at William and Mary he was a member of our gymnastics team. Our mission is to use the fantastic medium of gymnastics to help people grow and to learn more about themselves. A major objective includes learning how to be a good teammate. As a result, you are always expected to help everybody else in the gym get better, even if it means that they could possibly beat you out for the coveted number one position on an event or for the last position on the traveling squad. Beyond this you are expected to help and support your teammates in academics as well as in all areas of personal growth outside of the gym. In return, you receive the same. Although Dave was a four-year letterman and scored one of the first 9.0's on vaulting in the history of William and Mary gymnastics, he wasn't an All-American level competitor. However, he was the gymnast you wanted to be on your team. He was a great teammate—one with whom you'd travel to Mars. Dave was also the good friend who always kept in touch. At age seven his appetite for flying began to develop when a family friend took him for a ride in a small airplane. During college he earned his pilot's license at the Williamsburg Jamestown Airport where he met some recent William and Mary graduates who'd done the same. After graduating from William and Mary, Dave took a year off before going to medical school. One of his first adventures involved flying to Alaska with one of those William and Mary alums he met at the local airport. They took off in a single engine, putt-putt of a plane. That trip to Alaska took a week and included sleeping

under the wings of their plane in remote airstrips. They even did a lot of navigating by road atlas. At any rate, his dream of flying was just beginning to take off. He then graduated from medical school and became a flight surgeon for the Navy. I remember him calling about how exciting it was to get his first ride in a fighter jet. I'm sure he was just as excited as he was during that first flight at age seven. In that same call, Dave also happened to mention that he had been selected as the Navy's flight surgeon of the year. Next thing you know, Dave is the first Naval physician in ten years to be accepted to flight school where he proceeds to graduate first in his class; top flight surgeon, top gun amazing. Later he sends emails about how exciting it is to land on an aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean, at night no less. Soon he became a test pilot and I found myself filling out a recommendation for him to become an astronaut. Initially Dave wasn't accepted to NASA's astronaut training program but he kept at it, and two years later he called to tell me that he was actually going to be an astronaut. Before long my wife and I are watching his launch from the Kennedy Space Center. We followed him in space through the NASA websites. On his third day in space, we opened our email and discovered "you've got mail" from Dave in space. Mail from space—Wow! Each of us should have our dreams and know that they are important and special. Some of you may be living your dream of being the first in your family to go to college. Some of you may dream to be a great Mom or Dad. Others of you may dream of buying your first set of tools on your way to becoming a carpenter or a mechanic. Mine is to be a teacher and coach who invests in people. After all, you never know when you'll end up investing in a Dave Brown. Dave had dreams of flying and learning. These dreams took him to research in space; and ultimately ended in fame through tragedy. But had Dave not gone into space and been famous, he still would have been the same Dave—one of those everyday souls who was a great teammate. He was a man who always pushed the envelop—the envelop of positive human evolution. Life to Dave was growing as a person and learning more about himself. Along the way he inspired everybody around him to grow and learn in the same manner. What made Dave extra special was the way he pursued his dreams and goals with complete honesty, dignity, and integrity. It seemed like Dave took advantage of every opportunity that came his way—and always in a most noble and forthright manner. I know if Dave had the opportunity to speak today, he would tell you something like this:

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Never hesitate to take a risk to follow your dreams, and when following those dreams, pursue them with complete honor, dignity, and integrity. Thanks, Dave, you've made a difference. Here is the excerpt from Dave's Convocation remarks to the class of 2006 that was read at his memorial: "It is not for me to tell you what vision you should have or might have or shouldn't have. I can tell you as a guy who stands here, that I do have a vision. I want to do scientific research off of the planet. I want to do that with international partners, among them the Russians, who were my enemies when I joined the Navy. And the last thing I want to do is that I would like to go to Mars. I can tell you, though, that the vision of going to Mars—I hate to say this—will probably be beyond my career, so that vision is available to someone who would like to pick it up. If it is not someone in this group, it will be someone in your peer group."

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As a result of the loss of the Columbia, the Astronaut David Brown Memorial Endowment has been established to ensure that there will always be an opportunity for true scholar-athletes to utilize the medium of gymnastics for personal growth with emphasis on excellence and learning how to be a good teammate for a lifetime. This endowment will be used to defer expenses required to conduct a competitive intercollegiate men's gymnastics program at Dave Brown's alma mater, W&M. Ultimately the endowment will seek to provide scholarship money to carry on the astronaut's legacy and to provide an endowed men's gymnastics coaching position at William and Mary in Dave's memory. This coaching position will encourage student-athletes to follow their dreams, and when following those dreams to pursue them with complete honesty, dignity, and integrity. The coach will serve to invest in people for a lifetime. Contributions should be made to the address listed in the shaded box below.

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