


# Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice

*By Brandon Webb, John David Mann*

Download now

Read Online

**Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice** By Brandon Webb, John David Mann

**Now from Brandon Webb, Navy SEAL sniper and *New York Times* bestselling author, comes his personal account of the eight friends and fellow SEALs who made the ultimate sacrifice.**

*"Knowing these great men—who they were, how they lived, and what they stood for—has changed my life. We can't let them be forgotten. So read about these amazing men, share their stories, and learn from them as I have. We've mourned their deaths. Let's celebrate their lives."*—Brandon Webb

As a Navy SEAL, Brandon Webb rose to the top of the world's most elite sniper corps, experiencing years of punishing training and combat missions from the Persian Gulf to Afghanistan. Among the best of the best, he led the SEALs' clandestine sniper training program as course manager, instructing a new generation of the world's top snipers. Along the way, Webb served beside, trained, and supported men he came to know not just as fellow warriors, but as friends and, eventually, as heroes. *Among Heroes* gives his personal account of these eight extraordinary SEALs, who gave all for their comrades—and their country.

Here are the true stories behind the remarkable valor and abiding humanity of those "sheepdogs" (as they call themselves) who protect us from the wolves of the world. Of Matt "Axe" Axelson, who perished on the Lone Survivor mission in Afghanistan. Of Chris Campbell, Heath Robinson, and JT Tumilson, who were among the thirty-eight casualties of Extortion 17, the Chinook helicopter shot down in August 2011. Of Glen Doherty, Webb's best friend for more than a decade, killed while helping secure the successful rescue and extraction of American CIA and State Department diplomats in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012; and other close friends, classmates, and fellow warriors.

In *Among Heroes*, Webb offers eight intensely personal profiles of uncommon courage—who these men were, what they stood for, and how they came to make the ultimate sacrifice. These are men who left behind powerfully instructive

examples of what it means to be alive—and what it truly means to be a hero.

**INCLUDES PHOTOS**

**Download** Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story o ...pdf

**Read Online** Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story ...pdf

# Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice

*By Brandon Webb, John David Mann*

**Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice**
By Brandon Webb, John David Mann

**Now from Brandon Webb, Navy SEAL sniper and *New York Times* bestselling author, comes his personal account of the eight friends and fellow SEALs who made the ultimate sacrifice.**

*"Knowing these great men—who they were, how they lived, and what they stood for—has changed my life. We can't let them be forgotten. So read about these amazing men, share their stories, and learn from them as I have. We've mourned their deaths. Let's celebrate their lives."*—Brandon Webb

As a Navy SEAL, Brandon Webb rose to the top of the world's most elite sniper corps, experiencing years of punishing training and combat missions from the Persian Gulf to Afghanistan. Among the best of the best, he led the SEALs' clandestine sniper training program as course manager, instructing a new generation of the world's top snipers. Along the way, Webb served beside, trained, and supported men he came to know not just as fellow warriors, but as friends and, eventually, as heroes. *Among Heroes* gives his personal account of these eight extraordinary SEALs, who gave all for their comrades—and their country.

Here are the true stories behind the remarkable valor and abiding humanity of those "sheepdogs" (as they call themselves) who protect us from the wolves of the world. Of Matt "Axe" Axelson, who perished on the Lone Survivor mission in Afghanistan. Of Chris Campbell, Heath Robinson, and JT Tumilson, who were among the thirty-eight casualties of Extortion 17, the Chinook helicopter shot down in August 2011. Of Glen Doherty, Webb's best friend for more than a decade, killed while helping secure the successful rescue and extraction of American CIA and State Department diplomats in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012; and other close friends, classmates, and fellow warriors.

In *Among Heroes,* Webb offers eight intensely personal profiles of uncommon courage—who these men were, what they stood for, and how they came to make the ultimate sacrifice. These are men who left behind powerfully instructive examples of what it means to be alive—and what it truly means to be a hero.

**INCLUDES PHOTOS**

**Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #56348 in eBooks
- Published on: 2015-05-26
- Released on: 2015-05-26
- Format: Kindle eBook

**Download** Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story o ...pdf

**Read Online** Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story ...pdf

**Download and Read Free Online Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann**

## Editorial Review

Review
SEALs' Family Praise for "Among Heroes"
"This is more than a collection of stories about eight SEALs who gave their lives for their country. It also shows us the humanity of each of these men."--Jack Scott, Father of Dave Scott
"Thank you, Brandon and John, for sharing Glen's story. We hope he will continue to inspire others to live large."--Katie Quigley, Sister of Glen Doherty
"I am honored that John's story, and all these great men's stories, have been preserved."--Jackie Zinn, Widow of John Zinn
"You have blessed us by capturing the personality of the amazing man who graced our family for almost thirty-seven years."--Cindy Campbell, Sister of Chris Campbell

About the Author
Brandon Webb is the "New York Times" bestselling author of "The Red Circle" and "Benghazi: The Definitive Report." A former U.S. Navy SEAL whose last assignment was course manager for the elite SEAL sniper course, he was instrumental in developing new curricula that trained some of the most accomplished snipers of the twenty-first century. Webb has received numerous distinguished service awards, including the Presidential Unit Citation. As president of Force12 Media and editor of SpecialOperations.com, he runs the largest military content network on the Internet.
John David Mann, who collaborated with Webb in writing "The Red Circle," is an award-winning author whose titles include the "New York Times" bestseller "Flash Foresight" and the international bestseller "The Go-Giver."

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

All the events in this book are true and are described herein to the best of my recollection. The names of the heroes in this book are real; however, some connected names have been changed to protect the identities of people incidental to these stories and of friends who are still in active duty. I have at all times sought to avoid disclosing particular methods and other sensitive mission-related information, and this book was submitted to the Department of Defense for a full review prior to publication. As much as possible, stories of my friends and their exploits have been compiled in full collaboration and partnership with family members.

INTRODUCTION

When I joined the Navy in 1993 I was a fresh-faced kid, barely out of high school. Like most nineteen-year-olds, I thought I knew something of the world. I had no inkling of the struggles that lay ahead.

Nor did much of the country. The America of 1993 was a world quite different from what it is today. The Cold War was over, the Soviet Union collapsed under the weight of its own obsolescence, and the deadly malaise now known as the Global War on Terror barely a blip on the horizon. Nestled in its valley between those two epochs of global conflict, the 1990s seemed a golden age of peace and prosperity. In many ways it was a time of fantasy and naïveté, and it would not last long. In the first light of the twenty-first century's dawning we would awaken to stark geopolitical realities. The very nature of war would radically change, and my friends and I would be on the front lines of the new warfare.

These were also the years of my passage from swaggering teen years to a more sober, reflective adulthood. On the way I would make a solid handful of the best friends in the world. Many of them I would soon lose.

It's a strange place I find myself in these days. When I talk with people in their eighties or nineties, they describe what it's like seeing so many of their friends vanish, one by one, and finding themselves progressively more alone in the world. That's a normal part of the cycle of life, I know—but I've been having that experience for years, and I'm barely forty.

The U.S. Special Operations community is one of the fiercest and most experienced fighting forces the world has ever seen. But we have been at war now for well over a decade, the longest continuous state of armed conflict in our history as a nation. This has put an enormous stress on all men and women in uniform, along with their families and friends. Given the unique nature of today's asymmetrical warfare, it has placed an especially heavy burden on our Special Operations community. Many of my closest friends in the SEAL teams are no longer here. They sacrificed everything, many leaving behind mothers, fathers, wives, and children.

At the same time, they also left behind powerfully instructive examples of living—models of what it means to be a hero.

This is the story of eight heroes whose lives intersected with mine during those years, men who gave their lives for their country and their team. Men who gave pieces of themselves to me, and without whom I would not be the man I am today. I trained with them and fought with them, looked up to them and learned from them. I miss them all terribly, yet at the same time, they're here with me still.

"Leave no man behind" is the mantra of all Special Operations teams. The purpose of this book is to help ensure that these eight heroes are not left behind. Within these stories of friendship and character you'll find the principles that guided these men in their lives, principles I have adopted in my own life and share with my children. Knowing these great men—who they were, how they lived, and what they stood for—has changed my life. We can't let them be forgotten.

So read about these amazing men, share their stories, and learn from them as I have. We've mourned their deaths. Let's celebrate their lives.

—Brandon Webb

# 1

# SUPERHERO

## MIKE BEARDEN

It was still early, maybe one o'clock in the afternoon, and already creeping into the low nineties. It would get hotter still, we knew that for certain. Late spring in California's Central Valley, dry and brown, a clear day, the barometer high and steady, but to us the atmospheric pressure felt like roughly ten thousand pounds per square inch.

My best friend, Glen Doherty, and I were crouched down side by side at the front of a thousand-yard high-power shooting lane, on the last day of the marksmanship phase of the Naval Special Warfare Sniper School, arguably the toughest military training program on the planet. We were about to start our final test of this phase, the test that would determine whether we went on through the rest of the school or returned home in defeat. We'd been here for six weeks. A third of the class had already washed out, and we were terrified that we were next.

The idea of sniper school probably sounds romantic, exciting, adventurous. It's none of those things. It's fucking miserable. We would come back to our tents at the end of every interminable twelve-hour day dirty as hell, beaten down, exhausted, and already feeling the crushing weight of what loomed ahead of us the next day.

That pressure is mostly mental. Of course you have to be in top physical condition, but we were all SEALs. Physically, we'd already had "normal" redefined for us and the bar set insanely high. But sniper school was not about sheer physical endurance. It was about absorbing complex skill sets and executing them flawlessly, at a machine-gun pace, and under conditions of constantly increasing intensity. Seven days a week, twelve hours a day, we were *always* on—up at six a.m. to run out onto the range with rifle in hand and a single round, which we had to fire with sleep-stiffened fingers through still-cold rifle barrels at whatever moment they told us, at whatever target they told us, and hit it. Miss that early-morning shot and the rest of the day would feel like one long battle to regain any sense of confidence and morale. It was the most exacting, focused state of concentration any of us in the course had ever experienced. We were the proverbial frog in the pot of water being steadily brought to a boil, and the only way out of the pot was to fail.

Which was exactly what many of our classmates had done. In the weeks leading up to this test, some guys had come unglued under the strain and ended up fighting with their shooting partners. By "fighting" I don't mean "exchanging heated words"; I mean punching, mashing, and kicking, the kind of brawl you have to wade into and physically pull apart if you don't want too many broken bones.

What made the pressure worse for Glen and me was that we were both still new guys. In the SEAL teams, "new guys" are SEALs who have made it through BUD/S but have not yet done a full year–plus specialized training workup and gone on an overseas deployment. A new guy's job is pretty simple: Shut up and listen. Do what you're told. Be invisible and act like you don't know anything, because the truth is, you don't. Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Sniper School has a global reputation; even within the teams it is the most respected school of them all. The idea of a couple of new guys having the privilege of attending sniper school was more than some could take.

Especially the instructor hovering over Glen and me right now as we inched through the ordeal of our final test. This guy, a genuinely nasty turd named Slattery, hated our guts. He *wanted* us to fail.

And he happened to be the one grading us today.

As Slattery bitched at us, the day continued creeping forward on its belly toward the hottest part of the afternoon, the rising temperature not only adding to our stress but also physically affecting our test conditions. As metal heats up it expands. That produces an increase in pressure on the bullet as it traverses the interior of the swelling rifle barrel, which in turn increases the round's speed and alters the arc of its trajectory. As the mercury rose out on the California range, the increasing temperature differentials threading

through the bone-dry foothills around us also caused the sporadic gusts of wind to intensify. Which put every critical factor in our environment in flux, increasing the difficulty level of our task to an insane degree.

In the field, your life often depends on making the shot. Out here on the range, it was just our careers on the line.

At this point Glen and I had completed the "snaps and movers" portion of the test. Snaps and movers involves targets that suddenly pop up out of nowhere at unpredictable time intervals (snaps), and others that slide continuously right and left in random and unpredictable patterns and speeds (movers). Now we were in the second portion, called UKD, or unknown distances, which employed targets of variable range and elevation, none of this communicated to us. In snaps and movers we at least knew how far away our targets were. Not in UKD. For this portion of the test the spotter had to employ complex observations and calculations, using the mil dot reticle in his scope (two tiny lines of illuminated dots arranged like crosshairs) to determine exactly how far away that damn thing was. And we weren't using handheld computers, like we do these days in the field. We had to do all that math by hand, with the seconds ticking away.

I was shooting first, Glen reading the conditions, calling wind and elevation, and keeping track of our time. We had to move through a course with multiple lanes and multiple shots within a precise given time frame. Which meant a hell of a lot of calculation, preparation, and execution had to happen every sixty seconds without fail. We'd cleared two lanes and were setting up for the final shot on our third. As I focused on the image in my scope, time slowed to a crawl. Glen was taking it slow and careful, working to read the shifting wind currents.

Something felt wrong. We were taking too long. "How much time?" I muttered.

"We're good," I heard him murmur back. "Plenty of time."

I felt my breath flow out and waited for that moment of complete neutrality that hangs motionless between exhale and inhale, the instant of maximum focus and minimum body interference, gently increasing my finger pressure on the trigger pull—

*"Time!"*

I whipped a look over toward that asswipe Slattery and saw a triumphant leer on his ugly puss. He was holding up his timepiece in one hand, like he'd just picked an especially big booger he was proud of and wanted to show his ma.

"Time, gentlemen," he repeated, savoring the moment.

My heart stopped. What the *fucking hell*?

Not only had I not taken the shot, but we still had two more lanes and eight rounds to go. Something had gone wrong with Glen's timepiece. We had fucked up.

"You guys are screwed," Slattery crowed. "Good luck coming back from that one. You dipshits are going home."

He was right: Coming back from this disaster would be close to impossible. In order to make up for all the shots I'd just failed to take and survive the test, Glen would now have to score no less than a 95 on his five lanes. Out of twenty shots, in other words, he could a miss a maximum of one. Any more than that and I'd be going home, and Glen might be, too, because in those days shooter-spotter teams were graded together.

And shooting a 95 on this range was an extremely rare occurrence.

I could see that Glen was much worse off than me. I was only freaked out. He didn't utter a word, but he was obviously devastated. *Oh, my God*, his expression said, *I just fucked you over*.

"Look, dude." I spoke quickly and quietly so Slattery wouldn't hear. "It's behind us. Forget it. We have to clean this thing's clock. Let's just shoot a hundred and move on."

This was something sniper school taught me: no regrets. You can't focus on the shot you just took. Once it's out of the barrel, you'll never get it back. And it's not true just on the rifle. It's true in any situation—every action, every word, every thought. It's over. Move on. Assess, adjust, improve, and make the next one count.

We got to work, me calculating and calling every shot and Glen nailing it. In the first lane, the one with the closest targets, I heard four *pings* in succession as Glen aced four shots out of four. We moved on to lane two and he did the same thing, and again in lane three, and yet again in lane four. Now we were in lane five, shooting out to unknown distances up to a thousand yards on the big bolt-action .300 Winchester Magnum. The .300 Win Mag bullet doesn't go subsonic until somewhere between 1,350 and 1,400 yards, which meant it would be traveling at well beyond the speed of sound all the way from the instant of ignition to the instant of impact. I called the shot, and Glen took it. The lead slug flew out to meet the steel silhouette—and I heard no *ping*. Nothing. The round had harmlessly passed the target by.

There it was: our one miss. One more and I was out.

Slattery audibly snickered and muttered something we both willed ourselves not to hear. We were busy.

Calculating your round's flight path *before* the shot is only the first part of the spotter's job. The next task is to follow the vapor trail the round leaves in its wake as it pierces the air, called its *trace*. I had followed that bullet's trace the way a hawk tracks the path of a chipmunk dashing across a field for the safety of the forest. I'd seen exactly where it went, and I murmured an instantaneous course correction in Glen's ear.

*Ping . . . ping . . . ping*—he hit the remaining three shots with clean precision. We were finished. I was safe.

We all stood around as they read off everyone's score. Glen's implausible nineteen out of twenty had given him a personal tally of 95, which not only had saved my ass but also was the highest score for the day. Except for one thing: As far-fetched as it sounded, another new guy in the class had shot a 95, too.

Which meant the day's shooting was not over yet.

Someone had donated a beautiful SKS 7.62 semiautomatic rifle to the class. This thing was a work of art, a classic Soviet-made carbine (this was the service rifle that preceded the AK-47), and a piece any gun owner would be proud to have in his collection. Before our test that day the instructors had told us that whoever came out with the highest score would go home with that rifle. But you can't exactly saw an SKS in half, so now Glen and the other guy were going to stage a shoot-off.

This time these guys would each be on their own, no shooter-spotter teams. Each shooter would have just a few minutes to do all his own spotting, calculations, wind call, and the rest, then get one shot—and only one shot—at that lane's target. They would take turns, starting at the closest distance and ending at a thousand yards.

The rest of us huddled around, cheering on our favorite horse, me the loudest voice in the Glen camp.

In the first lane, both shooters nailed their targets. And the second, and the third, and the fourth. It was an

electric experience, quietly watching the execution of perfection. These guys were both phenomenal shots.

On the fifth and final target, Glen sighted the thousand-yard distance and got himself ready, slowly squeezed the trigger . . . and missed. A groan went up in the crowd.

The other guy got down in the dirt, went through his preparations, squeezed—and also missed. Another groan went up, laced with laughter, catcalls, and the usual volley of insults and obscenities. SEALs are not known to be overly tender with one another's feelings.

Glen lay down in the lane again, took his second shot . . . and missed once more.

The other guy hit it square.

Predictably, a roar went up, and we all grabbed the guy and started pounding on him in congratulation. The SKS was his, but victory belonged to all of us, as we stampeded off the range in a raucous mass to go track down adult beverages in large quantities. It was a heady moment. The shooting portion of the class was over, and we'd survived it. Even though my best friend had lost the contest, I really didn't care, and neither did Glen. For one thing, we were both so relieved just to have passed the damn course.

But there was another reason we didn't care. If anyone else had beaten Glen, we probably would have been at least a *little* ticked off. SEALs are over-the-top competitive, and Glen even more so than most. But it happened that the shooter who had edged Glen out and taken possession of that SKS was such a likable guy, so universally loved and respected, it was impossible to feel anything but happy that he'd won.

His name was Mike Bearden. They called him the Bear.

• • •

I first met Bearden two years earlier, in the summer of 1998. We were all fresh from BUD/S, the legendary seven-month training program that all SEAL candidates undergo and only a fraction complete. Except that's a misnomer: BUD/S isn't really *training*; it's more like a seven-month entrance exam. What we were doing now in the summer of '98, *this* was training. SEAL tactical training, or STT, was what happened to those who made it *through* BUD/S and came out the other end still standing. Over the three months of STT (these days it's called SEAL qualification training, or SQT), we had drilled into us weapons skills, close-quarters battle tactics and coordinated room-to-room takedown, advanced land navigation and survival, extended dives and underwater demolition, and desert warfare. For this last, they took us to the Niland desert, one of the strangest places I've ever seen.

Along the edge of the Salton Sea, a huge, strongly alkaline runoff lake that lurks well below sea level at roughly the same elevation as Death Valley, the Niland desert is a vast stretch of lunar landscape in the wishfully named Imperial Valley, where the central Californian desert bleeds out to the Mexican border. Niland makes an excellent surrogate Middle Eastern battleground. Most of *Jarhead* and the sand dune sequences in *Independence Day* and *Star Wars* were filmed there. Great place to prepare for war in Iraq or Afghanistan—although we were still a few years away from knowing that was what we were doing.

Toward the end of our time at Niland, one of our instructors decided that, because the 75th Ranger Regiment (the Army's Spec Ops guys) were doing a twelve-mile forced march as part of their course, we needed to do that, too. "Hell, we're frogmen," went the thinking. "If they can do it, we sure as shit can do it better." Instead of twelve miles, he figured, we'd make it fourteen.

Which was fine, except for two things. First, the Rangers didn't just wake up one day and do a twelve-mile

loaded march. They built up to it throughout their training. Also there was no room in our existing schedule to slip in an exercise like that. No worries: This guy figured he would just tack it onto the end of a full day of training. Like a P.S. on a letter. A really long, really heavy P.S.

So here we were on a fourteen-mile forced run, with full gear (including fifty-pound ruck), on an evening after we'd already done a five-hour land nav course that day from noon till five. In the middle of the desert. In July. And we had to do it in three hours. Out of seventy-two guys, only four made it under the three-hour gun. Barely another dozen of us made it back at all. The rest of the guys were strewn over the fourteen-mile course, and corpsmen (medics) had to haul them in. Some of them plain passed out. We used every IV in the camp that night.

And Bearden? He just crushed it. It hadn't even taken him that much effort.

All seventy-two of us knew what perseverance and focus were all about. We were SEALs, after all, which meant we were all maniacs to some degree. But the Bear was in a class by himself. As I watched him sauntering into quarters that evening, while dozens of our teammates were still getting IVs or draped near-comatose over their beds, I had this thought:

*This guy is indestructible*.

Mike Bearden had been through BUD/S just a few months before me, in Class 213. I had gone on to SEAL Team Three, while Mike went to Team Five. At Team Five the other guys called him the Commander, in part because he loved James Bond flicks. But it was that other nickname that stuck.

The Bear.

It wasn't just that those were the first four letters of his last name. The guy *looked* like a bear. The joke about Mike Bearden was that "everyone else looked up to him." The guy was enormous. But his height wasn't the only reason we all looked up to him. There was something distinctive about Mike, a commanding presence that made everyone around him feel safer because he was there. While he never grabbed the spotlight, he was the kind of guy all eyes turned to when he walked into the room. And it wasn't simply because he was huge. Mike carried himself with a sort of quiet dignity. He seemed somehow exempt from all the pushing and shoving. In a community where bragging is like breathing, he never talked about himself, and he never trash-talked anyone else, either. I never heard him bitch or complain, not about anything, not once. He just went about his business and got the job done.

Mike apparently had some sort of alchemy going on there, because he could make friends with anyone. It wasn't as if he went out of his way to do that. It just seemed effortless. Once when he was in high school (as I later learned), Mike tackled an all-star fullback for the opposing team and hit him so hard he tore up the guy's ankle. So what happened? The two became best friends. Before long Mike was going out with a girl who also happened to be very close friends with this same fullback whose ankle Mike had messed up. All three of them became close friends, and they stayed that way. The girl's name was Derenda Henderson. A few years later it changed to Derenda Bearden. Classic Mike: wreck a guy's ankle, become his best bud and marry his close friend, and everyone's happy.

Mike was the guy who would take time out to help someone who was having trouble figuring out how to use some weapons system, or fill out some confusing piece of paperwork. He was everyone's big brother. And that quality intrigued me.

Growing up I'd been close to my little sister (my only sibling), but I'd never had a big brother, and my relationship with my dad was troubled. We moved fairly often as our family fortunes rose and fell, and each

time I'd feel uprooted once again, forced to carve out new territory and new alliances, usually with a mix of wits and fists. I'd spent much of my teenage years on the docks of southern California, leaving home altogether by the age of sixteen. Throughout my childhood I'd been mostly concerned with looking out for myself. Mike Bearden seemed like he'd lived his whole life watching out for everyone else. To me this was both fascinating and inspiring. I wanted to be more like Mike.

I needed to understand what made him tick.

• • •

When Mike was just one year old his family moved to the Houston area so that Mike's dad, Michael Senior, could pursue a doctorate in education there. To support the family, Mike's parents, Michael and Peggy, needed to scare up some income as well as a place to stay. Michael Senior had worked as a teacher, and Peggy had child-care experience, so they took a position running a home for 144 abused and abandoned children, a career they continued for the next two decades. Which meant that Mike and his three siblings grew up in a home together with dozens of kids who had been rescued out of situations ranging from bad to unthinkably bad, an experience that bred into the Bearden children a bone-deep sense of compassion for the downtrodden.

Sometimes on Sunday afternoons, during court-appointed visitation periods, some of the home residents would receive visits from parents or other relatives. Then there were those kids who, after looking forward to the visit all week, would simply sit and wait for a parent who never showed. Mike and his older sister, Wendy, would sit with them, wordlessly feeling their pain. It made an impression Mike never forgot.

No wonder the guy felt like everyone's big brother when we were in the teams together. That was pretty much who he *was*.

And then there was that business of his indomitable spirit. As a kid, according to his parents, Mike was always determined to get into the game. Michael Senior had coached high school football while working his way through his undergrad degree, and now, to help give these disadvantaged kids as normal a life as possible, he started an athletic team for the boys, and Peggy started a team for the girls. Mike loved sports and would tag along with his dad to all their ball games.

When Mike was eight, the Bearden team was playing a visiting team from Austin. Bearden Senior had turned away from the field to take care of something on the sidelines that needed his attention, when suddenly a shout went up and a wave of laughter rippled through the crowd. He looked up and realized that everyone was yelling and pointing at something going on out on the field.

*Oh, boy,* he thought, *what now?* He strode out onto the field and sure enough, there was little Mike smack in the middle of the action. He had sneaked off into the locker room, wriggled into a full uniform, and run out onto the field to get into the game. The fact that the team jersey hung down around his knees like a dress didn't seem to bother him a bit. He had his game face on. He was out there to play some ball.

When Mike was twelve he announced that he wanted to run a marathon. "You can't run a marathon," his dad told him. "You're just starting seventh grade."

"No, I'm gonna run," he insisted. "Look right here." He pointed to an announcement in the newspaper for the Houston marathon. His dad offered a compromise: They would take him to *watch* the race that year. "No," repeated Mike, "I'm gonna *run* in it."

Somehow he talked his dad into it, and when the day came, there was Mike out on the starting line, wearing

his running shoes and his number on the back of his shirt. His parents figured he'd run a block or two and then quit when he realized just how outclassed he was. But "outclassed" was a foreign concept to Mike, then and always. When the gun went off he took off, too, and he didn't stop. About half an hour later the Beardens heard an ambulance siren starting up. They looked at each other and shook their heads. Ten minutes later the ambulance returned with its twelve-year-old passenger. Mike had run that marathon until he collapsed in the street.

No matter what the sport, Mike wanted to get in there and carry the team on his shoulders. The problem was, he just wasn't all that big—and by this time he was impatient to get growing. At his annual physical when he was eleven, the year before his marathon, he asked the family pediatrician, "Doc, you think I'll ever grow? Am I always going to be this little?"

"Well, Mike," the doctor said, "would you rather be tall, or would you rather be smart?"

That didn't stop Mike for a second. "I want to be both!" he shot back.

Meanwhile, if he couldn't be tall, he could make up for it by climbing up onto tall places. Which he did, constantly. Every chance he got to climb something and jump off, he took it—climbing trees, scaling walls, scurrying up statues, anything. One day when his parents were out, he invited all his friends to come over and swim in the pool they had on their property, which was situated right next to a good-size gymnasium they used for the children's exercise and athletics. The Beardens later found out that while the other kids swam, Mike spent the afternoon climbing up on the roof of the gym and diving off into the pool.

As a boy Mike was a huge fan of comic-book superheroes. He had a Superman T-shirt with a big red S on it that he loved to wear around the property. Of course, that wasn't unusual. A lot of kids his age had fantasies about being a superhero when they grew up. But Mike was serious about it. Firefighters captured his imagination. He could think of nothing more exciting than climbing up into a burning building, rescuing someone, and jumping out with them to safety. He was never one to pick a fight or go looking for trouble, and when arguments came up he would play the diplomat and try to persuade everyone to get along. But he didn't like bullies, and he refused to stand by and let anyone pick on anyone else. Through his school years his teachers routinely pointed out that little Mike was someone who always stood up for the underdog.

One year, when he was in Scotland on tour with his church choir, Mike's parents got a transatlantic call from the choir director. *Uh-oh*, they thought when they learned who was calling. *What now?* There was no problem, the choir director hastened to assure them; he just wanted to let them know what had happened. They'd all been walking around town that day as a group, and they happened to witness someone stealing something. Everyone else stood riveted to the spot and stared. As any true superhero would, Mike sprang into action, chased the guy down, and put a hammerlock on him.

In the middle of Mike's fourteenth year, it finally happened: He starting growing . . . and kept on growing. His parents struggled to keep him in jeans that year, and the next, and the year after that. Before long he was six-foot-four, a lean, powerful 220 pounds, and the school's star athlete.

From Little League on through high school, Mike had gotten into every sport he could, and he excelled in all of them. He was an all-star catcher, a valued linebacker, and a star swimmer. One year his high school football team was running an undefeated season, leading their district with one of the highest scores in the state. In a run-up to the state championship they lost a coin flip and had to play a preliminary game to qualify. Mike was the starting fullback in that game and scored all his team's touchdowns. Two games earlier he had injured his knee and it had not fully recovered. Still, he played on. The two teams were neck-and-neck right down to the closing seconds, when the other team kicked a field goal and took the game by a point.

By the time he finished high school, Mike’s knee was pretty bad. For his last four games he had to stop in at the doctor’s office before each game to have the knee drained. The doc told him he shouldn’t be playing ball at all, but he was determined, and when Mike was determined, that was that. His knee might be suffering, but so what? He was Captain Indestructible.

After graduating from high school, Mike spent a few years working out what exactly he wanted to do with his life. After a year of college he took a job as an assistant coach at Derenda’s old high school, where he had the chance to accomplish as a coach the goal he had come so close to achieving as a quarterback: His undefeated team went right to the top and took the state championship that year. But as much as Mike loved coaching and loved football, he knew that wasn’t what he was here to do with his life. He was here to save people. He didn’t want to be a coach.

He wanted to be a superhero.

At the high school where he coached there was a picture in the school trophy case of a graduate who had gone on to become a SEAL. Mike was taken with it and started asking around, talking to anyone and everyone who had known that kid to find out whatever he could about him. One night not long after that his dad got a call.

“Dad,” said Mike as soon as his father picked up. “I know what I want to do.”

• • •

After STT I went on to my eighteen-month training workup with Team Three, and the Bear went on to train with Team Five, so we didn’t see each other much for the next two years, until we both showed up in Coronado for our initial sniper school briefing in April of 2000. It was in the crucible of sniper school that we became closer friends, right up to the day he beat Glen in their shoot-off for that SKS rifle.

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Barbara Mobley:**

The book Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable much more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make studying a book Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice for being your habit, you can get much more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. It is possible to know everything if you like wide open and read a book Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science e-book or encyclopedia or others. So , how do you think about this e-book?

**Gregory McCormick:**

Reading a book to get new life style in this yr; every people loves to examine a book. When you examine a book you can get a great deal of benefit. When you read guides, you can improve your knowledge, simply because book has a lot of information in it. The information that you will get depend on what kinds of book

that you have read. If you want to get information about your research, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you are able to a fiction books, such us novel, comics, along with soon. The Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice will give you a new experience in reading through a book.

**Terrance Bartholomew:**

This Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice is new way for you who has intense curiosity to look for some information given it relief your hunger of information. Getting deeper you into it getting knowledge more you know otherwise you who still having tiny amount of digest in reading this Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice can be the light food for you personally because the information inside this specific book is easy to get by means of anyone. These books acquire itself in the form that is certainly reachable by anyone, yes I mean in the e-book type. People who think that in e-book form make them feel drowsy even dizzy this publication is the answer. So there is not any in reading a reserve especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for a person. So , don't miss that! Just read this e-book variety for your better life and knowledge.

**Paulette Preston:**

Many people said that they feel weary when they reading a reserve. They are directly felt it when they get a half parts of the book. You can choose typically the book Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice to make your reading is interesting. Your skill of reading ability is developing when you just like reading. Try to choose very simple book to make you enjoy to see it and mingle the idea about book and reading especially. It is to be first opinion for you to like to start a book and read it. Beside that the reserve Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice can to be your new friend when you're really feel alone and confuse using what must you're doing of the time.


# Download and Read Online Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann #KUR58HV3AI0

# Read Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann for online ebook

Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann books to read online.

## Online Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann ebook PDF download

### Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann Doc

**Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann Mobipocket**

**Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann EPub**

**KUR58HV3AI0: Among Heroes: A U.S. Navy SEAL's True Story of Friendship, Heroism, and the Ultimate Sacrifice By Brandon Webb, John David Mann**