

Barrington Irving sits in the small plane he flew around the world. He named the plane *Inspiration*.

Vocabulary

instinct: behavior that is natural and automatic rather than learned

accent: a way of speaking shared by people from a certain area

scholarships: money given to students to pay for education

aviation: the building and flying of aircraft

inexperienced: having little practice in doing something

Flying Solo

Barrington Irving made a risky trip—right into history.

Barrington Irving was almost out of fuel. He was flying over the Atlantic Ocean. He couldn't see land. And he couldn't swim. Would he make it?

Irving was flying around the world, all by himself. "It was just me up there, alone, flying on gut **instinct**," he says.

Finally, he spotted land. He was safe. He knew he would face more challenges on his trip. But fear didn't stop him. He was living his dream.

Hard Times

As a kid, Irving didn't plan to become a pilot. When he was 6, he and his family left Jamaica. They moved to Miami, Florida. Drugs, violence, and crime were common in their new neighborhood.

In school, bullies made fun of Irving's Jamaican **accent**. They teased him because he didn't wear expensive clothes.

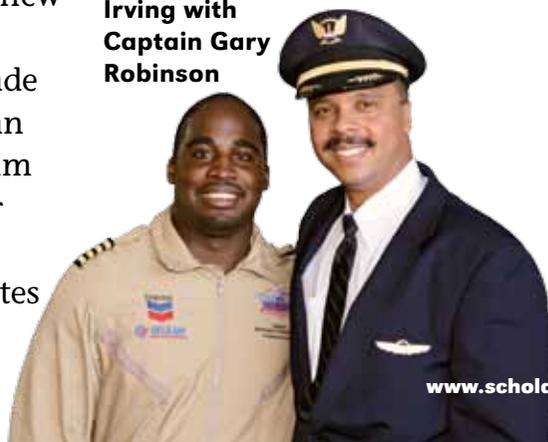
Many of his classmates

dropped out of high school. Some went to jail. Irving didn't have much hope. "I never thought I would make it past my 25th birthday," he says.

A Big Change

One thing gave Irving hope: football. He played on his high school team.

Irving with
Captain Gary
Robinson



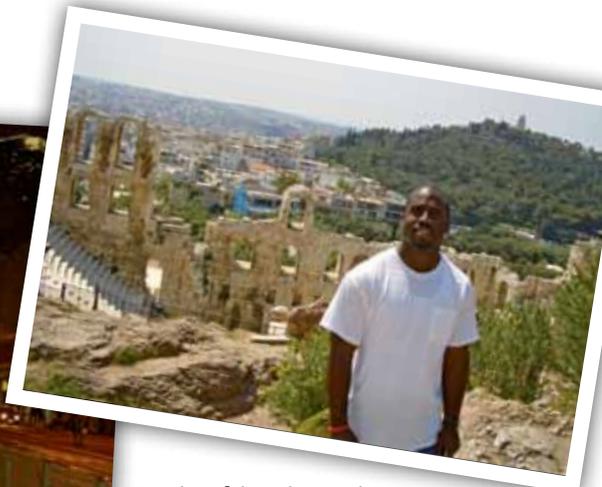
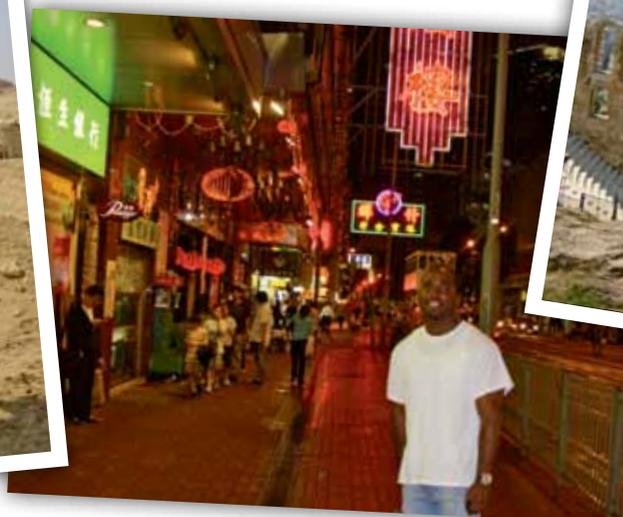
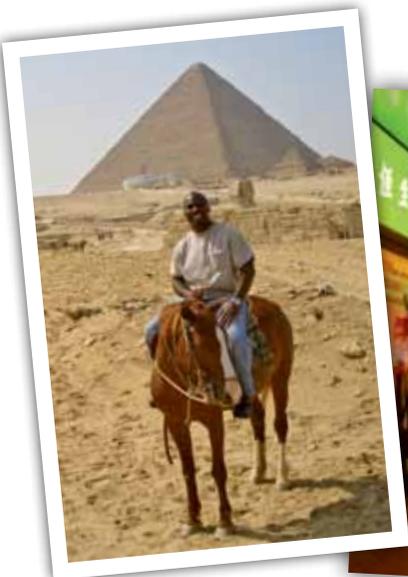
Left: As a child, Irving never thought he'd be a pilot. Above: His plane, *Inspiration*, in flight.

He was good. He thought football was his future.

But when he was 15, he met Captain Gary Robinson, a pilot. "I had never seen a black pilot before," Irving says.

Robinson asked Irving if he ever thought about becoming a pilot. "I told him I didn't think I was smart enough," says Irving. Then he toured Robinson's jet. After that, he wanted to be a pilot.

Irving turned down college football **scholarships**. He had a new dream. His family



During his trip, Irving visited 13 countries, including (from left to right) Egypt, China, and Greece.

and friends thought he was crazy. But he proved them wrong. He won a scholarship to study **aviation**. He learned to fly.

Making History

After he graduated, Irving made a plan. He would fly around the world solo.

He had to raise \$1,000,000 for the trip. That took a year. Companies gave him money or gear.

Irving planned his trip. He would stop in 26 cities around the world. He would travel 30,000 miles.

On March 23, 2007, he took off from Miami. "People thought I was too young and **inexperienced**," he says. "I like to do things people say I can't do."

Irving flew through storms. He got lonely,

homesick, and tired. The trip took 97 days.

On June 27, he landed back in Miami. Fans cheered. He was the first African-American to fly solo around the world. At the time, he was also the youngest person to do so. He was 23.

Building Dreams

Irving decided to start

a group called Experience Aviation. It teaches kids about flying. He wants to help kids the way Captain Robinson helped him.

Irving is now 29. He has a message for students: "Believe in yourself. Believe that you are talented, powerful, and important and can make a difference in the world."

—Nicole Tocco



In 2008, teens working with the group Experience Aviation built a plane. This photo shows Irving just after he flew the plane for the first time.

COURTESY OF JUAN RIVERA (TOP LEFT, MIDDLE, RIGHT); JON ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTOM)