



# ACCESS<sup>SM</sup>

## NEWSLETTER

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SPRING / SUMMER 2001

AirCraft Casualty Emotional Support Services

### Chairman's Message

Since the previous newsletter, only a few months ago, ACCESS has continued to be called upon in response to both past and recent disasters to lend our support and counseling to air tragedy victims. Sad as these occurrences are and as inevitable as they seem to be, we are constantly reminded of just how vital our service is.

The legacy of our loved ones is manifested through the support we offer to others who suffer, who hurt, and who cry out for help. This is the meaning and purpose of our organization.

Earlier this year ACCESS was privileged to meet with the Governor of New York, the Honorable George E. Pataki and bestow upon him, our first annual Humanitarian award. In a ceremony attended by friends of ACCESS, several of our board members, Founder Heidi Snow, and your Chairman, the award was presented in recognition of the Governor's generosity, compassion and assistance in helping families of air tragedy victims.

In the years ahead, we hope to continue recognizing the humanitarianism of other deserving individuals.

We recently received a grant offer from the Jacob and Valeria Langeloth Foundation in support of our *Volunteer Grief Mentor Training Program*. This grant is contingent upon receiving matching funds from corporations or individuals. The Board is actively seeking co-funding so that ACCESS can take advantage of this opportunity.

-Stewart Mosberg  
Chairman, ACCESS

-Stewart Mosberg lost his wife, Rosie Braman, aboard TWA Flight 800, July 17, 1996, Long Island, NY.

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ACCESS Humanitarian Award  
Honorable Governor George E. Pataki

ACCESS provides comfort to friends and families of air disaster victims and survivors. ACCESS helps people cope with their grief and pain by connecting them to grief mentors who have also survived or lost loved ones in an air tragedy.

ACCESS is there for as long as the grieving need support.

**Heidi Snow**  
Founder / Executive Director  
(TWA 800)

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## **The Yellow Rose**

My son David was killed on June 7, 1992. The grief was overwhelming. David attended a boy's high school. His death occurred the day following his high school graduation, which the whole family had attended. I was always grateful that on the last day of his life he was able to spend it with family and friends. Without knowing it he had said his goodbyes. At the end of the graduation ceremonies the graduates presented a yellow rose to their mothers. The yellow rose became a fond memory of David's last day with me. I pressed the rose into the family *Bible*. After David's death, I would go to the *Bible* and touch the dried petals for comfort.

Our family started a scholarship fund in David's name. Although it was stressful, every year I would give out the scholarship award. On David's fifth anniversary I was getting ready to go to the high school awards. My thoughts were with him all morning. I opened the *Bible* and touched the dried out petals from that beautiful yellow rose he had given me the day before he died. I said a little prayer for strength and left for the ceremony.

As I got up to give out David's Scholarship Award to that year's recipient, I thought about the day David graduated. He was so happy to be graduating. The next day he was going on vacation to visit my mom in the Caribbean. We had a big party at the house. All the members of our family were there. The party ended and David went out with his friends. He did not get home until the early morning hours. His flight left at 7:00 that morning. He never went to bed. We took him to the airport, he boarded the plane and I never saw my youngest son alive again. Joy one minute to unimaginable grief the next. As my mind drifted back to the ceremonies, I remember most that yellow rose that David had given me.

After the ceremonies concluded, we all paraded out of the auditorium. The graduates started giving the roses to their mothers. The roses on this year were again yellow. I left quickly before the tears started flowing. My heart was so full I didn't want to start crying in front of everybody. As I waited for my husband to pick me up in front of the school, a car pulled up in front of me. A graduate stepped out with a yellow rose in his hand. "I would like to give you this rose for your son David, if that is OK." I thanked him as my eyes filled up with tears. I knew that David was always looking out for me. Maybe he heard my prayers that morning and wanted to send me a message through this young man. It is a lovely thought that sustains me in the dark days that might hit all of us when we least expect it. I look forward to giving out the scholarship because of the lovely memory of David and that fine young man with the yellow rose.

-Marge Spence, lost her son David Spence, age 17, aboard American Eagle Airlines on June 7, 1992.

## **He's Free**

Don't grieve for him, for now he's free,  
He's following the path God has laid you see.  
He took his hand when he heard him call,  
He turned his back and left it all.

He could not stay another day,  
to laugh, to love, too work, or play.  
Tasks he left undone must stay that way,  
for he found his peace at the close of the day.

If his parting has left a void, then fill it with  
remembered joys.  
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss. Oh yes these things  
to he will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow,  
He wishes you the sunshine of tomorrow.  
His life's been full; he savored much, good  
friends, good times, a loved ones touch.

Perhaps his time seemed all too brief,  
Don't lengthen it with undue grief.  
Lift up your hearts and peace to him,  
GOD wanted him now; he set him free.

We will miss and love you for the rest of our  
lives.  
-Your family

-In memory of Learjet Captain John J. Fare Sr. killed on January 18, 2000 in Somerset Kentucky aboard a private aircraft.

## My Uncle Allen

I am 20 yrs. old and in the past year I have gained what I feel is too much experience. I not only lost my Grandmother to cancer; I lost my uncle on the fatal Alaska Airlines Flight 261. It was too much and I couldn't breathe. At the time of my Uncle's death he was building a new life for himself and family. He had just accepted a new job in San Francisco and life looked great for him. He was so excited!

I remember the month prior, I had visited him in Chicago and just before I left he told me that "I could accomplish anything" and that he was "so proud of me."

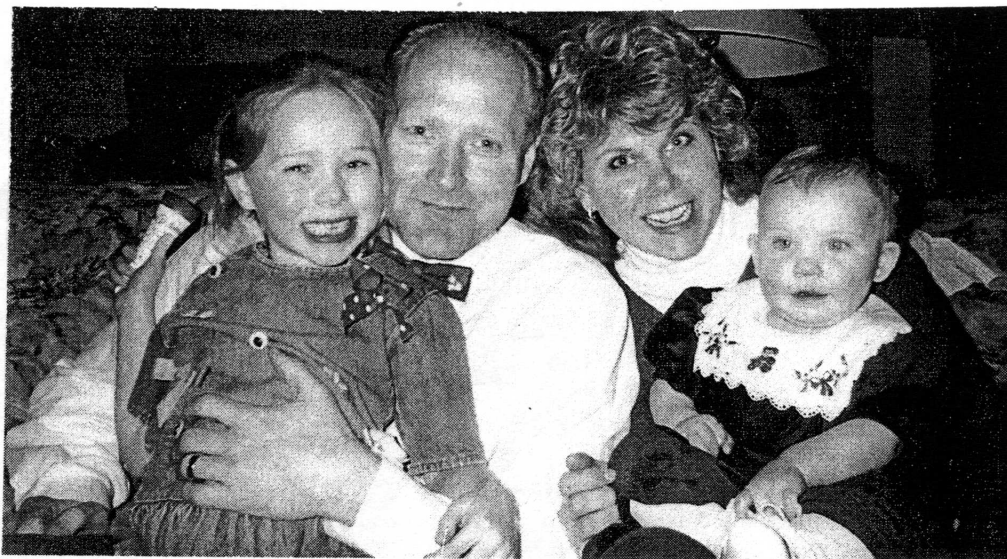
It was the first time in my life that he had treated me like an adult. He was so talented. Not only was he a terrific artist, but a great guitar player as well. Uncle Allen had a huge heart and wanted to help out anyone he could.

When he died on that flight he was catching it back to San Francisco, so he could then fly out to see my grandmother in Chicago. She was very sick and in a coma. He would call the hospital everyday to check on her. I just thank God that she was in that coma when he died. She would not have been able to handle it. Uncle Allen died on January 31st 2000 and my grandmother passed on March 8th 2000. She never knew that her son died. When our family started to mourn for the death of my Uncle, we had to stop and mourn for my grandmother.

I feel that I have lost a very vital part of me and I can never get that back. All I can do is live each day at a time. Uncle Allen if you hear this: I love and miss you so much... take care of grandma.

-Julie Wilhite lost her Uncle, Allen Friedmann, age 47, aboard Alaska Airlines Flight 261 on January 31, 2000, Point Mugu, CA.

## In Memory of Rodney, Sarah, Rachel & Grace



Last January 31, 2000 on Alaska Airlines Flight 261, I lost my son, Rodney Pearson, his wife Sarah and two granddaughters, Rachel age 6 and Grace age 22 months. That evening on January 31<sup>st</sup> I had just taken my dogs to he kennel and was leaving for Seattle the next morning to visit my son and his family and also to go to a dog show as I also show dogs. I rarely listen to the news but at 4:10 p.m. I was listening to Fox News and heard about the crash. Instantly, I knew it was one of Sarah's flights as she was a flight attendant for Alaska Airlines. I immediately started trying to call my son who was involved in the operation of three new restaurants in Seattle. I called and called and finally on his answering line came the words "this line is filled up." And then I got really frantic. I called the restaurants and they began passing me around to one another so I was getting really concerned and finally the other owners wife came on the line and said "go to the airport now" and I said "why?" and she said "cause Rodney was on the plane with Sarah" and my reply, "oh no, not the girls too?" and she said, "yes, they went to Mexico on a well deserved and needed vacation."

In an instant my family that was the love of my life was taken away and I had not even gotten to know my youngest grandchild, since I left Seattle in November of 1998 and to this day I regret the move. My son, Rodney was the best young man to raise not that he did not have his share of trouble but he was a delight. I regretted the day he graduated and moved out of the house, I thought my life was going to be very boring and lonely.

He worked the rest of his life in the restaurant business making a name for him and developing a lot of friends as he always had in high school with his teachers and students. He was a born leader. He was born in Amarillo, Texas on August 6, 1955. He did not get married until 1991, when he married Sarah Manning from Spokane, WA. They made a great team. They lived on Queen Hill in Seattle and had lots of close neighbors and friends. The articles about them never ended after the crash and still go on in Seattle. They were not as well known as some who were on that flight, nor the best, but they left a legacy of love behind and lots of things are being done by people in their memory.

Just this past January 29<sup>th</sup> I went to Ventura County, California with my son Chris, my sister Billie and her husband, Nolan to the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the crash put on by Alaska Airlines. Peter Teahen and his crew from Iowa put it together in just 11 weeks. It was a great 2 days of services. There was the burial of the casket for the 88 people that lost their lives with all service pallbearers. They released 88 doves on that night and had ministers from all faiths.

On Wednesday January 31, we went to Point Mugu, the Naval Station. The guest speaker was Janice Lord, a licensed social worker, professional counselor and death educator. She said the "right" words. 600 families and over 100 caregivers from the Red Cross, the Service and the Ventura Police and Fire Department and State Patrol were there. On that evening, the theme was butterflies and the caregivers made a circle on the beach and the family members released 88 Monarch butterflies.

It was well worth going for my son and me as we were able to let go of some of the grief we had all year.

-Velda L. Pearson, TX, lost her son, Rodney Pearson, 46, his wife Sarah, 34, and two granddaughters, Rachel, 6 and Grace, age 22 months aboard Alaska Airlines Flight 261 on January 31, 2000, Point Mugu, CA. (Shown above).



## I Close My Eyes

I close my eyes  
I see a plane break apart  
All the color leaves the sky  
I hear my mother say I love you  
She is gone  
Forever  
I am not yet even 40  
I close my eyes  
My father's picture now is fading  
I see him faintly waving  
Please don't go I think  
It's harder each time to remember you  
I close my eyes  
And now what is it I am supposed to do?  
How am I supposed to know?  
What is life?  
What to do?  
Where is God?



-Kathy Kurasch lost her mother, Jacqueline Kurasch, (shown right), aboard Egypt Air 990, October 31, 1999, Nantucket, MA.

## A Disaster Psychiatrist's Reflection on Air Disasters

I am a U.S. Navy Psychiatrist in Norfolk, Virginia who has been involved in disaster response work for over a decade. Among the many situations over the years, I have assisted in the psychological backup of those who recovered bodies from small air disasters involving military aircraft. TWA 800 and especially Swissair 111 changed all that.

I spent only 2 days at East Moriches, New York in support of the TWA 800 recovery operations. In contrast, I spent over two weeks in Nova Scotia as the backup for Navy divers and other military personnel who could have experienced significant or impairing distress from recovering or handling remains. I spent considerable time interviewing townspeople along the coast near the crash site, fishermen, Canadian defense force personnel working along the coast as well as at the Shearwater morgue, and even the Medical Examiner, Dr. John Butt. I spent time at sea at the crash site, soberly reflecting on the fact that the calm water surface around me was a recent scene of unspeakable violence, and that 190 feet below me rested remains of 229 persons who were alive, living and loving life until that fateful night. I spent time observing RCMP cataloging personal effects and time at the morgue observing while remains were handled and cataloged; I did this to "pinch myself" back to reality that these 229 persons were real people, not just "victims" as reported in the media. During this time, I did not talk with any family members there. However, while up there, I did call and then later meet with a woman in my Norfolk area who lost her parents in that crash.

I have also learned much from my readings and from speaking at conferences. Peter Richmond published **My Father's War. A Son's Journey** in 1996 (Simon & Schuster), a memoir about his father serving in the Pacific in World War II and the events leading up to and after his father's death in a two-airliner collision over Brooklyn, NY in 1960, when he was 6 years old. The novelist Larkin Warren published "**Surviving a Crash**" as an end piece in the August 18, 1996 *New York Times Magazine*; it was a bittersweet recollection of the death of two of her sisters in a plane crash at Logan Airport, in Boston in 1976 and how that affected her life (I have sent a copy of the article to ACCESS to keep on file). Finally, the Canadian journalist Stephen Kimber published **Flight 111. The Tragedy of the Swissair Crash** (Seal Books, Random House, 1999), which has conveys the tumult of emotions--anger, sadness, confusion, and poignancy--that he gleaned from interviews with surviving family members, Transportation Board, other investigators, Swissair personnel, and the Nova Scotia families.

Last, I recently spoke at a conference on disaster psychiatry in New York City, where I met other speakers who lost family aboard Swissair 111, Pan Am 103, and TWA 800. Their words and the emotions they showed are etched in my memory.

I believe: 1) surviving family members of those who perish in air disasters experience the loss in individualized indescribable ways that are incorporated as world views, which filters the way in which the world is looked upon every day afterwards; 2) there is no "closure" and 3) there is no sense to it all. Outward behaviors and emotions are a covering, a skin, from which those around infer how that person is doing. (Continued)

## A Disaster Psychiatrist's Reflection on Air Disasters

(Continued)

Under that covering, is the spirit and the soul, whose suffering is not open for inference.

I was asked by Heidi Snow, during a long walk we took in New York City last fall, to consider how a family (member) who lost another family member or friend in a commercial airline disaster--especially when it occurs far from home--and eventually seeks professional counseling, does find the right counselor or therapist.

One way, is for that member to contact the American Group Psychotherapy Association headquarters in New York City (25 East 21st St, 6th floor, New York, NY 10010, 212-477-2677 or 877-668-AGPA). Their members--I am one--are located across the US and many, because they are therapists, do group therapy as part of their practices and often deal with trauma survivors in group or individual therapy. The AGPA headquarters staff can give the caller the name of the president of the regional society (the AGPA membership is divided into regions of states--called societies, each with its own officers and telephone directory listing the names and addresses and phone numbers of all the therapists and each one's field of experience and expertise) and his or her telephone number. The caller can contact that regional society president and ask for the names and phone numbers of therapists in the same area that the caller is from and which ones can help the caller adaptively (and eventually) integrate trauma and loss into that person's life as best as possible.

Last, persons from Canada who have suffered a loss from an aviation disaster and want counseling or therapy, could, as one resource, look at the website for the Canadian Group Psychotherapy Association, [www.cdngprpsych.ca](http://www.cdngprpsych.ca). Like AGPA, the CGPA is a national organization comprised of 7-chartered sections across the country, with members also practicing in cities and towns that don't have chartered sections. The website provides information, as well as names/phone numbers/email addresses of section heads and other key members.

—Mark L. Dembert, is a U.S. Navy Captain and Psychiatrist at the Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, Virginia.

## The Grieving Process and Establishment of a Memorial



The September 2, 1998 crash of Swissair 111 off the shores of Nova Scotia, changed my life forever. My only sibling, Raymond Romano, was a passenger on that flight. Ray and I were 13 months apart and as children we always had our birthday parties together since our birthdays were three weeks apart. Ray and the “boy’s” would be at one card table, and the “girls” and I would be at the other. This was the late 1950’s-early 1960’s, when life was simple and the tragedies that would affect us later in life were inconceivable. When we were in high school we double dated and experienced our first proms together. I often reflect on those days and think of how devoid our lives were of any tragedies. During our college years, Ray followed in the footsteps of our dad and became a certified public accountant. I went into another field and had no interest or aptitude for accounting. My father and brother were quite amused by my lack of interest in their field, which created many laughs among us. When I got married, Ray gave me away as our dad had died earlier. Walking down the aisle he held my hands in his arms the way he used to when we were 3 and 4 years old.

In the two and a half years since the crash, I can see the progression in myself in the grief process. It is a never-ending process. A few months ago, I had the occasion to meet with members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, through my job in a federal law enforcement agency. When I met with them, I felt the need to express my gratitude to their organization for the way they handled the aftermath of the crash, and dealt with the families. I realized that day that I needed to do something in Ray’s name, in Canada, where the plane crashed. I established a memorial fund to be awarded annually to a child or adult who is need of pastoral counseling by the RCMP Chaplains. I designated Ray’s birthday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, as the date that I will provide annual donations. This date will always remind me of happier times from my childhood. The date of the crash, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, will be the annual date the recipient receives the donation.

What I learned from this unexpected experience was that there were still steps I had to take to help myself heal even further. Healing is possible, but it is also a choice. Someone will be helped along life’s journey, in Ray’s name.

—Lynn Romano Zimney, lost her brother, Raymond Romano, age 44 (shown above) on September 2, 1998 aboard Swissair Flight 111, Nova Scotia, Canada.

## Where Do I Find Hope?

"There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope and its endurance... there are three things that last forever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love."

This "Love Chapter" of 1 Corinthians was a part of my brother and sister-in-law's wedding one year ago. And then it was part of their memorial service just six months later. Roger Lane and Dana Nelson Lane were laid to rest in the beautiful Florida Everglades on May 11, 1996 in the crash of ValuJet's Flight 592.

We cannot know or understand why two beautiful, vibrant young people can be taken from their loved ones in such a tragic way. How can we feel hopeful again after such a senseless loss?

What gives me hope in the wake of such grief is knowing that love *does* endure forever, that energy *is* eternal, that the love of Roger and Dana is with us now and forever. We who loved them know this; we have experienced their loving energy in many ways.

I find hope in my memories of two happy young people who exuded love for each other, and love for life, for music, and for the beauty of this earth. They knew how to play and have fun; how to appreciate life. They were avid seekers of truth. And they were givers: they planned to leave their home and jobs to volunteer for two years of service work in Venezuela. Their love of life inspires in me a greater appreciation for life. Their dedication to love gives me hope.

Dana's bumper sticker gives me hope: "Life's A Joy And Then You Ascend." It reminds me to fully enjoy my life here. I need to be reminded at times that this life I have been given is precious, a privilege not to be taken for granted. Life is an opportunity to grow and enjoy the bounteous gifts of this earth. If I can maintain this perspective, my life can truly be a joy. And that bumper sticker reminds me to keep my faith that there is an even better life on the other side. It gives me hope for the present as well as the future. It gives me hope to make it through my grief because I know they truly are in a better place.

I find hope in the truth that comes out of the mouths of babes. A little friend of my brother's, three-year-old Sparks, woke up recently very excited by a dream she had. "I saw God," she exclaimed to her mother, and he said, "Roger and Dana are with Him and they are very healthy!"

My faith gives me hope: my faith that there is a plan and that there is a "Master Planner," a "Higher Power," a "Great Spirit" there is God, and that God is love. Being "made in God's image," we are creatures of love. We see proof of that love in our relationships with each other, in the ecstasy of lovers, in a newborn baby, and in the joy we experience in nature, in music, and in prayer and meditation.

Something Roger once wrote gives me pause: "The largest trees in the world must have the heat of a forest fire to start their seeds to germinate. Without fire, no redwoods!" My faith in a "master plan" gives me hope, even in times of despair, that there is a purpose to our lives, that there *are* answers out there, and this fuels my search for truth. It gives me hope, not only for my life, but for all humankind and for our earth.

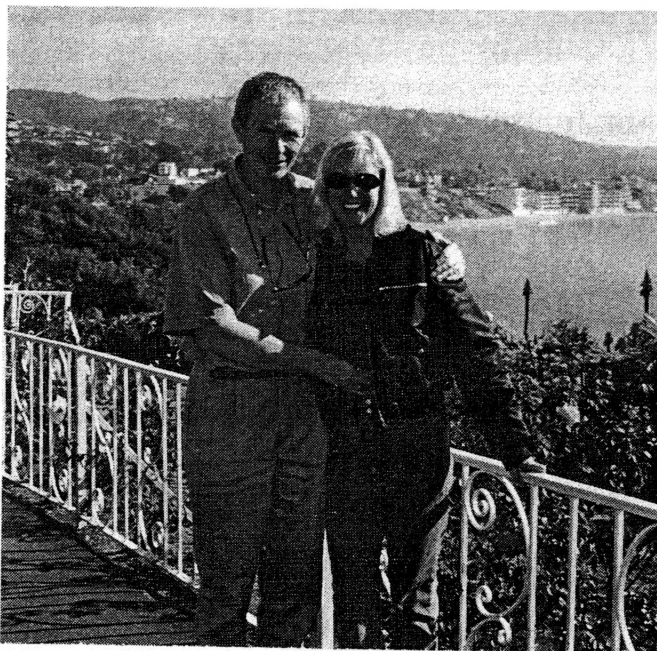
We who grieve must find the hope to live on and ultimately to allow our loss to be our teacher, our inspiration to love more deeply, to live more fully. I find hope in the words of "Dana's Poem," written for her wedding: "We join with strength and joy not knowing what is to come, but willing and wanting to explore and learn, gaining wisdom along the way."

My faith in our divine origin and destination, that we come from God and return to God, gives me a spiritual sense of direction. My belief that death is a new beginning, the fulfillment for which we were created, helps me to transcend the struggles and pain of this life. This faith liberates and empowers me and is the belief upon which my hope ultimately rests.

"Love endures all things." This gives me hope that Roger and Dana and the beautiful love they shared are still with those of us they left behind. Love will help us endure the pain. Faith will keep us steady, knowing that in the end we *will* understand about life and death (and redwoods). And hope will help us find a way to live fully as they did and to love as they did and to remember that life truly *is* a joy and then...we ascend!

-Marilyn Lane-Morgan lost her brother, Roger Lane & sister in-law, Dana Lane, aboard ValuJet 592, May 11, 1996 in the Florida, Everglades.





This poem is dedicated to Capt. Norman Lees, whom on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2000, was killed whilst giving an instruction flight, at Goodwood Airfield, West Sussex, England. Norman served as a search and rescue pilot with the Royal Navy in Northern Ireland and with the Royal Air force in the Falklands Conflict. Remember the gray helicopter easing into the smoke laden Sir Galahad? That was Norman, remember the SAS storming the Iranian embassy in 1980? That helicopter was Norman's. The London Docklands bomb had a helicopter hovering over it to guide a police search, that too was Norman's. And the mobilization of the rescue services in the Zebrugge ferry disaster, that too was led by Norman, but humble as he was, he would never have told you any of this, which is why I am.

At the time of Norman's death, he was a Captain for Virgin Atlantic Airlines. Norman pioneered a course, to help people fly without fear. I met him because I was scared of flying. I overcame my fear, trained as a counselor, and together we helped people. Those who knew Norman were witness to his ever-generous spirit and sincerity and warmth... *Someone that special just can't be replaced.*

## When Tomorrow Never Comes

My war hero, rock and, very best friend  
You promised me that we would never end  
Sudden death, even, you could not control  
But you are not dead, merely residing in my soul  
Your voice echoes in my head, as if I have taped each word

All that you taught me, I have listened and heard  
I have tried to be strong, as you would urge me to do  
But it's so hard, alone without you

At the sight of you're shiny plane, upside down and torn apart  
That day a part of me died – I think it was my heart,  
I put a rose on your seat, hoping you could see  
And I tried to accept my reality  
Through the tears and pain, hopefully one day I will grow  
People keep telling me I must let go...  
I wish that just once more, you could hold me with loving care

But there is no refuge, from this grief that I bear  
Before you, men in my life had been cruel

And I felt at love, I would always be a fool  
You healed the wounds of my past with such patience and care

For your untimely death I could never prepare  
You told me that you would never say goodbye  
“Don't be afraid of flying, planes NEVER drop out of the sky”

Both promises were lost on that fatal night  
When your life ended, and I began this fight  
As time passes, I pray that life may be wonderful again,

For now all I can do is wonder how and when  
Missing you has become a part of my daily life  
Coping without you a constant strife  
The sight of visiting the hangar haunts me with memories of broken planes on the floor  
The Lockerbie jet and so many more...

I walked away holding just a little piece of your plane  
Knowing my life would never, ever, be the same again  
**Not to die is to live on in the heart of others...**

...And this is your legacy... That forever and forever,  
your spirit will live on within me...

-Jill St. James, England, lost her partner Captain Norman Lees, age 49, April 8, 2000 aboard a MK 9 Spitfire aircraft at Goodwood Airfield, West Sussex, England. (Photo Left: Captain Norman Lees & Jill St. James Right: Captain Norman Lees).

