

TWA FLIGHT 800: ONE YEAR LATER

A love lost

For Heidi Snow and Michel Breistroff, those were whirlwind weeks, the ones preceding July 17 of last year. In their mid-20s and in love, the two would talk of a future together.

Breistroff then boarded Flight 800.

Crushed and alone, Snow left New York soon after Breistroff's body was recovered, returning to her native Massachusetts, where she sought the comfort of friends and family.

"A lot of my friends, I found they couldn't, like, really relate to me," said Snow while seated in an East Side cafe. "When I'd go out with my friends, I was kind of like different to everyone. No one could understand me, and I felt so, like, strange in that environment."

So she sought out those who could understand, other families who lost loved ones on Flight 800. She also made friends with people who had relatives aboard Pan Am 103, the jetliner downed in 1988 by a terrorist's bomb over Scotland. In September of last year, she attended a meeting of Pan Am 103 families in Albany, N.Y. So did a few others who lost relatives aboard Flight 800.

"I realized from that point on that was exactly what I needed: to get involved helping other people because they've helped me so much. I mean, I just felt like I could cry and people didn't think I was weird."

She got to know many of the people whose faces she had seen at the Ramada near Kennedy Airport where TWA families gathered to hear news in the weeks after the plane's destruction. Among those she has met are Ziemkiewicz, Steward, Harris and Kobrick. All have gathered for frank discussions and for comfort.

"I latched onto them and I found that I could talk to people on the phone endlessly, for hours," she said. "It's the only place I've felt safe."

Snow also said that the plans she had — such as making lots of money as a broker — have become less important. Like others who lost relatives, the focus on such endeavors has faded. "All my dreams, all my ambitions . . . have diminished," she said. Instead, much of her focus has turned toward working with other active TWA families, who have been busy as of late planning for a string of anniversary memorials for those on Flight 800.



Breistroff placed a call from the airport to Heidi Snow on his way to Paris.