



ACCESSSM

NEWSLETTER

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WINTER 2000 / 2001

AirCraft Casualty Emotional Support Services

Chairman's Message

Although only a few months since the last newsletter, the world has been rocked yet again, by news of three more major airline disasters and numerous private air disasters. Whether caused by debris on the runway, pilot error, malfunctioning equipment or explosions of unknown origin, it saddens us to hear of these catastrophes - again and again. These incidents serve to bring home the message of just how important the work of ACCESS truly is. As always, our hearts go out to the survivors and the loved ones left behind to grieve.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Surviving the Holidays
By Theresa M. Perfetto, LCSW

A Tribute to Jason

A Survivor's Story

Impressions of a Pilot

My Sister Ymke

Lenora & Michael Ditchkus

**To My Beautiful Wife on
Mother's Day**

Amanda Swissaria Dawn

Volunteer Grief Mentors

Pilot in Heaven

In Memory of Mark Tobin

**In Loving Memory of LCPL
Seth Garrett Jones**

Talking to the Press

Over the past year, our volunteer grief mentor base has tripled, and we have provided assistance to hundreds of people who have been affected by over thirty air disasters - some dating back to 1960. We have created an interactive website (www.accesshelp.org) and continue to provide free twenty-four hour availability to all our services.

As we come close to the end of 2000 (didn't we just celebrate the millennium?) I am reminded it is the time of year when charities of all kinds seek contributions. In recognition of your help, we wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support and hope our work has been as gratifying for you as it has been for us.

**-Stewart Mosberg,
Chairman**

Stewart lost his wife, Rosie Braman, aboard TWA Flight 800 on July 17, 1996

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.

Surviving the Holidays

Theresa M. Perfetto, LCSW

Heidi Snow
Founder / Executive Director
(TWA 800)

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*For in the dew of little things the heart
Finds it's meaning and is refreshed.*
The Prophet

Customarily, holidays are a time of joy, love, and peace. For those who have experienced a significant loss, however, the holidays can be a time of isolation, pain, and loneliness. There is a way to get through it by following some of these basic steps.

- **Emotionally Feed Yourself** ~ Do what gives you comfort. This can be anything from taking a trip to getting a massage. This can be even allowing yourself to cry for a spell if you feel sad. Be true to your feelings. Forcing yourself to behave and feel in a way that you think you should OR in a way others expect, only creates resentment and is exhausting.

- **Take Care** ~ Of yourself. Both emotionally and physically. Over use of alcohol or food will most certainly make you more depressed. Make sure you get enough rest, eat balanced meals, and be sure to set limits with others who may expect too much of you that you are not able to give. Exercise, take a walk or hike, start a project.

- **Change your Holiday Rituals** ~ Sometimes doing the same things you did with those you have lost can be painful. Try doing some things different. Try NOT cooking, or go to a different place to celebrate this year. Even going to a different place of worship or attending at a different time can help. Start your own rituals.

- **Travel** ~ For some, traveling makes the holiday much easier to tolerate. Perhaps if you live in a cold climate go to a warmer one. If you live in a warmer climate go to a cooler one. Mood follows action.

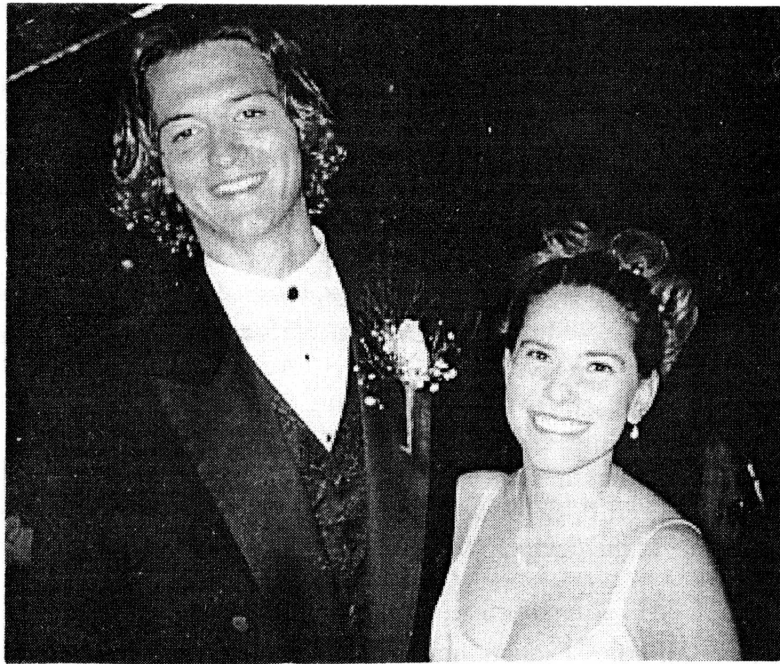
- **Stay out of Malls** ~ Do your shopping through catalogs, or even through the Internet. You may want to even consider doing your shopping earlier than usual.

- **Volunteer** ~ On the holiday at a homeless shelter or some other community organization. Helping others takes the focus off of yourself and helps others who need you at the same time.

- **Ask for Help** ~ If you think you need it. Holidays are tough for many people, despite all the hype. Talk with those you trust or even a professional about how you feel and let it be OK. Your feelings are OK and do not have to make sense.

-Theresa Perfetto is a Licensed Psychotherapist, practicing in Northern Virginia.

A Tribute to Jason



Jason liked to eat bananas and chocolate chip cookies. He drank his eight glasses of water a day. He was a natural athlete, quickly learning any sport he tried. Jason drove a cute little red convertible. He would ride along with the top down, letting the wind blow through his long, curly hair. He often flexed his muscles in the mirror, and claimed that he looked like a Greek God. Jason's stomach was ticklish. He was not a very good speller. He liked animals. Jason was laid-back as well as adventurous. He had a beautiful smile and many friends. Jason was so healthy and alive. He loved to fly.

If it weren't for the last part, Jason would probably still be here today, surfing at the beach and bringing joy to the lives of others. But Jason loved to fly. He dreamt of being an airline pilot after he finished school. Jason worked hard in pursuit of this goal, even taking flying lessons during his summer break from aeronautical school. On what was thought to be just a typical day this summer, Jason was up with his instructor practicing for his commercial pilot exam when Jason's lofty dreams came crashing down to earth.

On that Wednesday morning in August, Jason's plane and another plane collided in the sky. The passengers of both planes died. At age 20, Jason will never get to enjoy the simple pleasures of life again. He will never get to lie in a hammock on a summer's night and gaze at the stars, or take his dog for a walk in the park. Jason won't get to watch his favorite movie "Top Gun" or spend time with the people he loved ever again. There will be no more milestones in Jason's life, such as graduating from college, pursuing a career, getting married and having children, and growing old.

The abrupt ending to Jason's life is devastating. The loss of Jason leaves a gaping wound in the hearts of many, who long to hear the sound of his voice and his laughter, and see his smile once more.

-Submitted by Sharon Fry, Wellesley MA, (shown above) who lost her boyfriend, Jason Wismer, age 20, (shown above) aboard a private plane, which collided with a military aircraft over Burlington, NJ on August 9, 2000.

A Survivor's Story

After 25 adventurous years as a commercial pilot, beginning in the outback of my native Australia and continuing in the wilderness of Alaska, my career was cut short following a dramatic in-flight medical emergency. In 1987 while flying a Piper T-1040 turbo prop on a charter flight over the Bering Sea I experienced a sudden loss of consciousness for about 15 minutes. There was no other pilot on board and the two passengers knew nothing about flying. We survived, I believe, only through divine intervention. The high point of my career was the many years that I spent flying in the Aleutian Islands while working for Pen Air, a regional airline in Alaska. I felt like I had arrived, life could not get any better, then in one day I went from being a senior pilot to being not only unemployed, but seemingly unemployable and unwanted.

After this traumatic experience and a career gone forever that had been so rewarding, my world was devastated. Knowing that I would never fly a commercial aircraft again was something that I could not accept. The emotional pain is still severe even after 12 years. As I struggled to find some direction in life and establish a new career, my world sank to a very low point. Not knowing that I needed treatment from a counselor, I tried to deal with the feelings of loss and confusion myself hoping that they would just go away—they didn't. I am frustrated that no one in the medical profession explained the situation to me. After the near death experience in the aircraft, followed by the total loss of a career, then struggling to rebuild my life, it should have been obvious to the doctors who treated me that without help I would be facing a difficult future.

Recently, on my own initiative, I sought help from a wonderful counselor who diagnosed me with severe depression the result of untreated post-traumatic stress, and now is showing me that while the scars are permanent the wounds can be healed in time. While I still cannot understand why it all happened, I am just now beginning to find healing for that chapter of my life. Some of the reasons my loss became so severe were the long delay in getting help and the fact that I kept my emotional turmoil a secret feeling that no one would understand my condition. I became very proficient at living in denial of what had happened, attempting to block it out of my mind, even trying to pretend that I had never been an airline pilot. I felt guilty and angry for allowing myself to be in this condition and that perhaps I was just a weak person, over reacting to some small thing.

I am thankful to have discovered ACCESS. To be able to speak with other survivors and share experiences is very therapeutic. My heart goes out to each person who has suffered a traumatic loss in their life. My appreciation goes to Heidi Snow and the other dedicated people who operate this organization in such a professional way. I would welcome hearing from anyone who may wish to share his or her experience. Thank you so much.

-Harold Wilson, a pilot who survived a Piper T-1040 turbo prop charter flight, which crashed over the Bering Sea on August 13, 1987. (P.O. Box 1833 Oregon City, OR 97045 or E-mail: haroldaust@msn.com)

Impressions of a Pilot

Flight is freedom in its purest form,
To dance with the clouds which follow a storm;
To roll and glide, to wheel and spin,
To feel the joy that swells within;
To leave the earth with its troubles and fly,
And know the warmth of a clear spring sky;
Then back to earth at the end of a day,
Released from the tensions, which melted away.
Should my end come while I am in flight?

Whether brightest day or darkest night;
Spare me your pity and shrug off the pain,
Secure in the knowledge that I'd do it again;
For each of us is created to die,
And within me I know,
I was born to fly.

Poem written by: Gary Claud Stokor

Submitted by Deana Huneke, who lost her brother-in law, Craig, age 28, a pilot aboard a private plane, which collided with a military aircraft over Burlington, NJ on August 9, 2000.

My Sister Ymke

In July of this year, my younger sister Ymke, 23 years old, visited her life-long friend Silvia in Ecuador, where Silvia had been teaching for six months. They spent an adventurous month together, the highlight of which was a week of sailing around the Galapagos Islands. She emailed me: "I think the week in Galapagos was one of the best weeks of my life!" Before returning home to Switzerland, their plan was to visit us in Tamarindo, on the northwest Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

They arrived in San José, Costa Rica on August 15, but both had contracted a severe bacterial infection in Ecuador, and spent 9 days in a San José clinic. Discharged on August 25, Ymke called me that evening. They were in a hotel, had walked around town, felt healthy and were excited to head our way the next morning. We were so happy to finally get to see and embrace them!

On Saturday, August 26 they boarded Sansa Airlines flight 1644 in San José. After a stop in La Fortuna, they took off again for the 20-minute leg to Tamarindo. But the pilot immediately veered off course towards the Arenal volcano - it had been active, with new mudflows, it seems the pilot wanted to do a little sightseeing...

The plane slammed into the mile-high volcano, near its summit. The 8 passengers and 2 pilots were all killed on impact.

I waited with my 2 children at the airstrip in Tamarindo for an hour and a half. We went home, returned again to the airstrip and were told by the crew of the next flight that the plane had crashed. "Nooooo!" Time stood still.

It is all still so raw: images of recovery efforts on TV, my sister arriving from Canada, my Dad, stepmother and brother from Switzerland together with Silvia's parents, all of us in a daze, meeting the family members of other passengers, crying together, bonding in our grief, traveling to La Fortuna and seeing the wreckage when the volcano clears... Despair. Anger.

And now we are all back in our own homes, where sadness is normal now. Why did this happen? There will never be an answer. Somehow I can't even believe this really happened. It is not supposed to happen! And with "why" comes "if only". So many variables...

My father wrote me: It is as if I heard beautiful, wonderful music [Ymke]. I know I will never hear it again, but now it is an intangible part of me, and nobody can take it away from me. It will continue to be a joy to me. I long to hear this music again, but it is not to be. I will have to live with the memory... Ymke will live in our hearts forever.



-Submitted by Petra Schoep, Santa Cruz, Costa Rica, who lost her sister, Ymke, 23, (shown left) aboard Sansa Airlines Flight 1644 on August 26, 2000.

Lenora & Michael Ditchkus

Getting through the holidays, especially Christmas is not going to be easy. There are so many wonderful memories of being in Teaneck, NJ at Lori and Michael's newly purchased lovely Tudor house. John (my husband) and I made our first trip to the new house Christmas 1996 and they had just moved in that November. Michael had spent many hours before redesigning the kitchen and it was under construction, but we managed to use it in its disarray. The dining room was filled with large boxes containing large appliances. We put a couple of them together, covered them with one of Lori's new tablecloths and we made a fresh arrangement of green garlands with a great red and gold bow for the "table" centerpiece. I brought a white and gold poinsettia garland for the fireplace mantle and sis, Janice and Lori put up their first Christmas tree. Lori wanted it all in white and gold, and together they made the beautiful white and gold bow tree topper. I bought a white and gold tree skirt for it.

There wasn't much furniture in the house but Michael made up for it with his 12 course meals. Together we worked in the kitchen with Michael to put together these feasts. A new baby in the family, William Wallace, only three days old was our special little guest. Of course we went shopping in New York together and forged our way through the crowds even the day after Christmas.

The following Christmas at Lori and Michael's house there was a large gathering of the Ditchkus, the Moran and the Wallace family. We sang Christmas carols together, ate the many course meals, planned well in advance by Michael, while Lori and I helped with the cooking and cleaning up. The kitchen was the main gathering place and that's where all the love was. Always, Lori would pour us a glass of wine, because Italians can't cook without a glass of wine, and we worked side-by-side in the cozy kitchen preparing Michael's planned meals. A loving atmosphere was truly felt in the house.

Lori and Michael loved to have milestone birthday parties with plenty of food. They celebrated Michael's mother Elenore's "65th", Lori's dad's "70th" and Lori had said that she would have a great "65th" for me the next year. Unfortunately, Lori and Michael were taken from us before my "65th" birthday. I shall always remember these very happy times each and every Christmas, and cherish the wonderful memories of our time together. September 2nd has a two-fold memory. One wonderful one on their wedding day on September 2nd 1995, and that horrific day September 2nd 1998. We all try to remember the joyous one instead.

Lori and Michael's wonderful energy is still with us. The folks at the Ice House Skating Rink in Hackensack, NJ where Lori was a Co-Director / Co-Founder / Skating Coach, dedicated their number one rink to Lori with a wonderful plaque on the wall of the rink. The Lori Moran-Ditchkus Memorial Skating Fund was established and a yearly competition bearing her name was born this year. On September 2nd of this year the American Academy Skating Club's competition was held (which she helped found). The fact that September 2nd was the only date available for this first competition, makes us feel that Lori is still working "behind the scenes" for her beloved figure skating students at the Ice House. They tell me they miss her terribly and miss that combustible laugh that filled the air when she entered the building, as well as her smiling face. I am told that they feel her presence all around the rink and sometimes think they see her for a fleeting second moving around the skating rink... We feel her presence around us, too.

-Love forever, Lori and Michael, from Terry & John Moran (Mother and Father to Lenora Ann (Lori) Moran-Ditchkus, John Moran, Jr. (Brother), Janice Wallace (Sister). Written and submitted by: Terry Moran
Lenora and Michael Ditchkus were killed aboard Swissair Flight 111 on September 2, 2000 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.
(Photo below)





(Shown above) Steve and William Putterman on a photographic safari in Africa about 4 years ago. They went on three trips together because they were very adventurous and loved to photograph the animals. They were killed on their last trip.

It's been almost a year since my husband, William and son, Steve were killed in an airplane crash. I just came across this poem that my husband gave to me three years ago on mother's day, with an introduction by my husband, Will:

"To My Beautiful Wife on Mother's Day, May 1997"

Deep in the winter flakes I went,
And all about me shone
A radiance that must have meant
It was not the snow alone,
I wondered what it could have been;
Then, sure enough, I knew
The glow that I was walking in
Was nothing else but you.

A poem by Louis Ginsberg from his book, "Morning in Spring and Other Poems" (1940)

-Submitted by Joan Putterman, who lost her husband William, 64, and her son Steve, 36, aboard Northern Airlines, Tanzania, Africa, September 1, 1999.

Amanda Swissaria Dawn

I watched TV the entire night of the Swiss Air Flight 111 crash. I was deeply grieved. I knew somehow, the crash was tragic, sad, inexplicably keeping me in a solemn prayer the entire night. I sat, nine months pregnant, that night, in a sad and lonely prayer. Hoping, pleading, crying for there to be life. And then my water broke; I went into labor. It dawned a beautiful day here in Canada, as I pushed my newborn daughter into the world. I had prayed and prayed for life, and God gave it to me. I named her *Amanda Swissaria Dawn*. I know she did not replace any one, but it gave me hope, that life does go on, and continues. I have grieved for a lost best friend, and a father. It's hard to think that life goes on without them. It gives little hope. But my beautiful daughter was so precious, I took one look at her, and I felt like she was an angel saying, "They're ok in heaven, Mommy".

-Resident of Canada



ACCESS Volunteer Grief Mentors met at a sidewalk cafe for lunch in Manhattan this past summer and shared experiences face to face with people who all, unfortunately, have intimate knowledge of this very particular type of loss. The lunch proved helpful, heartwarming, and inspiring. (Photo above-from left to right)

-Lily Hunter, NJ, lost her boyfriend, Ronny Wachter, 34, pilot, aboard Primaic Air on 1/11/99

-Lynn Ross, NY, lost her boyfriend, Joseph Lamotta aboard Swissair Flight 111 on 9/2/98

-Written by, Cori Wells Braun, NY, lost her father on a United Flight on 12/16/60 over Brooklyn, NY

Pilot in Heaven

Life Granted you time for a while. But not a day went by that you didn't make someone smile. I remember the times, both good and bad, I remember you and that smile you had. You're never far from my heart and mind. You'll never be forgotten; you were one of a kind.

Life seemed so unkind to take you away, but the memories you left are in my heart and will forever stay. You always went forward when I wouldn't dare. There were so many special things about you, that's why I cared. Sometimes I find myself wondering why fate couldn't let you live. There was so much you could show to so many people. You had so much more to give. There is so much pain left behind now that you've gone, there's so much hurt, I wonder how I can go on. I cared. I'll never forget you and the caring you have shown. Your life has left a mark on everyone you've known. But I must take courage in heart, for I know this is not the end, I will have patience because I know this is only a temporary good-bye to a very special friend.

-Love Always, Corinne Nanette McGowan, Claymont, Delaware.

In memory of Lear Jet Captain, John J. Fare Sr. 3/12/27-1/18/00 in a plane crash in Somerset, Kentucky.

In Memory of Mark Tobin

I had the bench (shown below) erected in memory of my 21-year-old son, Mark who was killed aboard Pan Am 103 while returning from studying abroad at the Syracuse University London Center in England. The bench was placed in Holy Rood Cemetery in Westbury, LI so that I would have a place to sit when I visited my son's stone every other Saturday. I engraved and dedicated the bench to my son and also to all 270 people killed aboard Pan Am 103.

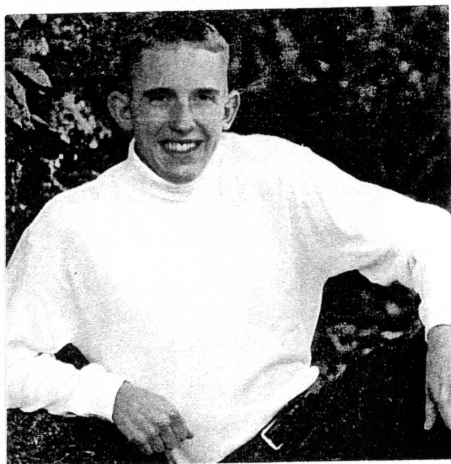
The memorial that we have had the most satisfaction with is the "Mark Tobin Memorial Travel Fellowship Fund" through the Dean's Office at Fordham University where Mark attended college. The memorial is open to juniors for travel during their summer abroad before their senior year. Their applications are sorted by the Dean's committee, and each year we meet the student winner, have dinner with them and get to know their interests. Each student writes back (usually lots of postcards) describing the trip that they are on. The fund was started with Mark's own life insurance policy and we have added to it each year. For our 50th wedding anniversary, we asked friends and family to contribute to Mark's memorial fund, instead of giving us gifts. Every year we look forward to meeting the new recipient. The Dean also invites many of the former recipients who are in the area to come together and it is like a family reunion.

-Submitted by Helen Tobin,
who lost her son, Mark Tobin,
age 21, aboard Pan Am 103 on
December 21, 1988 when it was
bombed over Lockerbie, Scotland.



In Loving Memory of LCPL Seth Garrett Jones

"Torn from our arms, not from our hearts"



(Shown left) We miss this child so much. He was the youngest Marine on the plane. They were all kids except for the pilot. These are the darkest days for our family. I just want him to come home, or call, or send another one of his funny letters. The silence is deafening.

Semper Fi (Always Faithful)

-Michele Tytlar, Proud Marine Mom,
Portland, OR, lost her son LCPL Seth
Garrett Jones, age 18, on April 8, 2000,
aboard a military aircraft.
(June 9, 1981-April 8, 2000)

Talking to the Press

As ACCESS continues to grow, we are increasingly approached by both print and electronic media for comments, feedback and insight from our volunteers following airline disasters and other related topics.

As an ACCESS volunteer grief mentor you have a unique insight to share as you have personally been touched by an airline disaster at some point in the past and also you are part of an ongoing outreach effort to help people who have been impacted more recently.

If you are a volunteer and interested in being contacted to speak to the press when they contact ACCESS for comments please let us know and keep in mind the following suggestions when talking to the media:

- 1) The media is usually working on an extreme deadline so when "going on record" keep your comments and statements focused, short and to the point, leaving as little room as possible to be taken out of context or misrepresented.
- 2) The media always has a specific story angle, which changes often. Do not take it personally if you are interviewed and your comments are not included in the story.
- 3) If possible try to get the questions you are going to be asked in advance so that you have time to prepare and are not be caught of guard.
- 4) Speak slowly, pause and think about what you want to say before you say it.
- 5) Decide beforehand how "personal" you want to get (remember, once you are recorded on tape, everyone will hear about your personal problems, and emotional difficulties). Be careful about expressing anger and negative comments.
- 6) Don't get drawn into criticism, controversy or the reporter's agenda. Frequently, you will be asked closed-ended questions (yes-no), which may result in you expressing something that you don't really believe, but will feed the reporter's needs.
- 7) Don't answer questions you are not comfortable with, no matter how much pressure is applied. Never hesitate to say, "I don't feel comfortable answering that question."

Compiled by Alan Ross & Heidi Snow

ACCESS is dependent on its volunteers in order to operate. If you or someone you know would be able to help in the following areas please contact us! Thank you.

- ☐ If you work at a corporation please find out if it makes charitable contributions to non-profit organizations and ask them help ACCESS by becoming an **ACCESS Corporate Angel**. We will supply you with corporate packets to distribute.
 - ☐ Researching and / or writing foundation and corporate grant proposals
 - ☐ Soliciting in-kind donations (paper, folders, printing...)
 - ☐ Communication with the media and cultivating media contacts
 - ☐ Public Relations
 - ☐ Website development
 - ☐ Identifying useful resources, books and organizations for those affected by air disasters
-

UPCOMING MEMORIALS

For information about upcoming air disaster remembrance days and events check out our website. We have links to other air disaster groups where upcoming memorial events should be posted. If you are planning a memorial event and do not have a website please e-mail us and we will post the information for you on our site.

SUPPORT

If you would like to be matched up with a Volunteer Grief Mentor or receive resource information please call our toll-free phone number (below) or log on to our website

VOLUNTEER GRIEF MENTORING

If you have survived or lost a loved one in an air disaster and would like to become a Volunteer Grief Mentor who provides comfort and guidance to friends and families of air disaster victims and survivors please contact us.

MEDIA

If you are a volunteer and interested in speaking to the press when they contact ACCESS for comments please contact us (below) and we will add your name to our press list.

NEWSLETTER

Share your personal story, a poem, a photo or a memorial in our next newsletter. Your newsletter submissions are appreciated! Please send your submission via mail or E-mail.

SHARE THE ACCESS NEWSLETTER

If you know of other people who would benefit from the information in our ACCESS newsletter please let us know whom you would like us to send it to.

ACCESS 1594 York Ave. PMB 22 New York, NY 10028

Phone: 877/227-6435 ~ On-line at: www.accesshelp.org ~ E-mail: Info@accesshelp.org

**Stories in this newsletter were compiled and edited by Heidi Snow & Karen Rosenfeld*



(Above left) Tom Gallagher, 36, Seaford, NY, swam the route of TWA Flight 800 to help raise funds for the TWA Flight 800 permanent monument at Smith Point Park in Long Island, NY. Tom is shown holding 230 flowers representing the 230 passengers killed aboard the flight. July 2000.

(Above right) (left to right) Eleanor Seaman, Heidi Snow, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and John Seaman at the ground breaking for the TWA 800 permanent monument at Smith Point Park in Long Island, NY. July 2000.

How you can help!

ACCESS Angels

- ☐ I would like to become an **ACCESS Angel** and help ACCESS provide comfort to people who have survived or lost loved ones in an air disaster through my **tax-deductible** gift of:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Platinum Angel	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gold Angel	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/>	Silver Angel	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bronze Angel	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend	\$25

- ☐ I would like to make a contribution in memory of: _____

Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
Telephone: _____
E-Mail Address: _____

Please detach this form and make all checks payable to **ACCESS** and send to:
ACCESS 1594 York Ave. PMB 22 New York, NY 10028

Visa / MC / Amex (circle)

Account#: _____ Expiration: _____

All angels and friends will be acknowledged for their generous contributions in our:
ACCESS newsletter and on our website, www.accesshelp.org

Thank you for your kind support!

I would like to extend a special thanks to our volunteer grief mentors who have offered to be available to help those who have been affected by air disasters, our writers who have contributed their personal stories, our Board of Directors and our sponsors for helping us help others. Thank you!

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