



**ACCESS<sup>SM</sup>**

**AirCRAFT Casualty Emotional Support Services**

**Winter 1999**

### **Effects of EgyptAir 990**

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The news of EgyptAir flight 990 had an affect on me that was surprising. Initially when I heard it my mind did not want to process it and I distracted myself with daily routines. Within 24 hours as the media's coverage intensified, I found myself identifying more and more with the families.

I felt similar feelings a little over a year ago when Swissair 111 fatally crashed into the sea with my only brother on board. The news of the families traveling to the crash site, expecting to retrieve their loved ones, and then realizing they would not be doing so, created a wrenching feeling. At the same time, I felt helpless in an effort to console them and knew that it was too soon to reach out to them.

In September 1999, I attended the one-year anniversary ceremonies in Canada for Swissair 111. That experience was so emotional and the connection I felt toward other families, was unexplainable. It took me about a month to unwind from that experience. Just as I felt I was moving on, the news of Egyptair 990 set me back to September 1998.

**-Lynn Romano Zimney, lost her Brother Raymond, age 44, on Swissair 111, Nova Scotia, September 2, 1998.**

### **Broken Hearts and Holidays**

"All hearts come home for Christmas," read the verse on the front of a Christmas card that I received a few years ago. When I read it, I immediately thought about all of the people whose loved-ones had died during the preceding year. I wondered if broken hearts would be as welcomed in homes over the holidays as the cheerful ones.

Over the years through interviews with family members of people killed in air disasters, and from my own experience, I have come to understand how difficult the holidays can be for those who are grieving. It seems that there is a tendency on the part of well-meaning family members and friends to invite survivors to parties and celebrations in an effort to improve their mood. I find that for many survivors, several holiday periods must be endured before new traditions replace old ones, and before painful reminders of our deceased loved-ones are replaced with joyful memories.

Repeatedly, I hear survivors describe the pain they feel when friends and other family members let them know that the time has come for their grief to end. "When are you going to get on with your life?" and "Is this what you think your deceased loved-one would want you to do?" are two of the many questions that usually lead into these discussions. Sadly, this may happen after only a few weeks or months post-crash.

I wish that more people understood newer theories on healthy grief that support our need to include deceased loved-ones in our lives forever. (Continued on page 2)

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**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.

### **Broken Hearts and Holidays (Continued from page 1)**

Learning about how others honor and celebrate the life of a loved-one, particularly during the holiday season has been an interesting and encouraging part of my work. It is my hope that as readers you will feel a sense of connection with many survivors who have endured the impatience of others who simply do not understand the pain of bearing a broken heart in the midst of the holiday season. These are suggestions that I have gathered from other survivors for coping with the holidays.

First, be honest. Honesty can greatly reduce stress, freeing needed energy for the grief work that must be done. Having to pretend that things are the same, when they never will be again, takes a great deal of energy. Most survivors don't have any energy to spare. When asked to take part in a holiday party or celebration, be honest about whether you have the energy to go or not. Accept invitations where you know you can be yourself and express your true feelings.

I know that this poses problems for families who have children at home who are focused on their own needs for the normal merriment of the holiday season. Most experts agree that honesty works best here too. Do the best that you can to fulfill the needs of younger children. With older children and other family members explain your need to celebrate the holidays with more reserve. Some survivors find that it helps to encourage those who can enjoy being with others to attend parties and other social gatherings. If you do find yourself alone, remember that this time can be used to more fully concentrate on the spiritual meaning of the holidays. Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a well-known thanatologist, teaches us that the grief experience is largely a spiritual one. What better time to focus on the spiritual connection that we have with our deceased loved-ones than during the holiday season.

Secondly, choose to be around people who understand your need to talk about the deceased. Should you wish to tell a story about your sibling, child, significant other, or anyone no longer physically present, you need to know that others will share your joy over those memories.

Similarly, if you suddenly experience tears over a reminder that he or she will not be with you for the holidays, you need to know that this painful expression is also acceptable. It is important for you to be in the presence of others who know that this fluctuation of feelings is normal and appropriate. Accepting your full range of emotions is a necessary part of the integration of a major loss in your life.

Third, be willing to establish new traditions if some holiday rituals become too painful to continue in the absence of your loved-one. A woman whose husband was killed in an air disaster in early 1999 told me that she and her sons were exploring new holiday traditions. Cutting their own Christmas tree had become an annual family event shortly after the birth of their first son. She and the boys decided that this particular ritual would be too sad to continue without their dad. They were considering various ways that they now might obtain their tree. The family planned to evaluate other traditions. Some they would maintain, while others would be replaced, as they sought to honor special memories of their dad while adjusting to a future without his physical presence.

Fourth, if you have not already done so, consider establishing an annual holiday gift-giving ritual in memory of your loved-one. Finding a way for including a deceased child or anyone whose absence is felt keenly by a family is especially important. Survivors have told me about buying and wrapping gifts for needy children or a charity and giving the gifts in memory of the deceased. One family decided to buy gifts for children in an orphanage and placed them under the tree with all of the other gifts. The day before Christmas, the family enjoyed delivering the gifts. This became an annual event. The following year, extended family members joined them in the gift giving. The parents never again feared pressure from others to leave out their deceased child during Christmas.

Another survivor's husband died a couple of months before the holidays in an air disaster. She knew how much he enjoyed contributing money to a boys' home in a near-by town.

(Continued on page 3)

## Surviving the Holidays

### Broken Hearts and Holidays (Continued from page 2)

Determined to honor him in the best way possible, the first holiday after he was killed, she challenged the employees where he worked to match her contribution to the holiday celebration for the orphaned boys. They eagerly matched her contribution and together they shared in the joy of giving in the memory of a man they all respected. In the name of her beloved husband, and in the midst of great pain, she and his friends brought joy to the lives of children without families.

Finally, be patient with yourself and others. The connection that you have with anyone you truly love never goes away. Steven Levine, therapist and author of many books about death and the grief experience of those left behind, believes that after death, the spiritual connection between the deceased and those who mourn them becomes stronger. Therefore we are inseparable from those we love. Findings in the earliest research on loss, as well as newer studies, consistently indicate that healthy grief involves acknowledging our feelings and experiencing our grief fully. There are no short cuts for healing soul wounds. We know now that the goal of mourning is not to forget, but to remember in ways that honor our deceased and our relationship with them. Although the relationship changes with those no longer present, the love never goes away. Tears of sorrow and tears of joy come from the same place in the heart.

A few months ago, I saw a new greeting card with a verse by Christian Morgenstern. I purchased several copies and have sent it to several survivors after interviews. It reads "Home is not where you live, but where they understand you." My wish for all of us this holiday season is that we are fortunate enough to find homes where all hearts are welcomed even our broken ones.

-Carolyn V. Coarsey-Rader, PhD  
Higher Resources Inc.  
Douglasville, GA.

It was November of 1996, and the holidays were upon us, the first Christmas to be spent without Ashton and Lamar, the two members of our family who had loved and celebrated Christmas the most. I dreaded it, and I knew my remaining two children Amberly, 15 and Cameron, 14 did also. My decision was to leave Atlanta and fly with the children to my brother's in Virginia. My brother and his family had a large antebellum home, which they always decorated lavishly with all the Christmas trimmings.

We all agreed it would be unbearable to wake up Christmas morning to a half empty house. Ashton had typically slept under the tree, waking up on the hour to make sure we got up on time (5 A.M. and no later). Lamar would be up making coffee, playing Christmas music with the video camera in hand.

On Christmas morning, Cameron came to the room where I was sleeping with Amberly. "Mom, get up!" I first wanted to bury my head in the pillow and skip the entire day. "Go back to bed, Cameron," I whispered. "But mom, it's Christmas," and I detected a faint glimmer of hope in his voice. With my newfound resolve, I knew it was up to me to put an act on for these children. They were still alive, and Lamar and Ashton would want them to live their lives to the fullest and celebrate living. They would not want them to mourn.

Reflecting on that day, it was hard, yes, but I went through the motions for Amberly and Cameron. When asked later how she felt about that first Christmas, Amberly said she was scared, and I realized that described it perfectly, "scared". We were all scared, but we got through it. Cameron and Amberly both dreamed about their father and brother that night. I believe they came to them to let them know they were okay and to say, "good job; Amberly and Cameron celebrate your lives and live them to the fullest!"

What I learned: Change your environment over the holidays if possible, and change your traditions, replacing them with new ones.

-Anne Allen, GA, lost her husband Lamar, age 49, and son, Ashton, age 16, on TWA Flight 800, on July 17, 1996.

## Surviving the Holidays

My daughter's death on December 21st overshadows any honest lifting of my spirit in time for December 25th. Yet, the way I survive is to schedule into each December day a time, an action, or a cry for Shannon and her Dad! Sometimes I take coffee and a sweet to the cemetery and think of them totally for while. Then I feel better and can head out to tackle what is next, knowing that I have their courage and blessing.

**-Jane Davis, CT, lost her daughter Shannon, age 19, on Pan Am Flight 103, in Lockerbie, Scotland, December 21, 1988. In January of that year her husband was killed in Saudi Arabia in a car/truck crash.**

My brother, William Best, 36 and his wife Kathryn, 32 and children Billy Jr. 5, Hillary, 3 and Katelyn, 4 months were killed on Northwest Flight 255 on August 16, 1987, at Detroit Metro Airport.

It was as if I lost my son and family because our mother died when Bill was 15 and I was 12 years older and he was like my own son.

After the shock and disbelief you feel like your world has ended, and you just can't go on. The holidays are the hardest. I remember having my family at my home for the first Thanksgiving and everyone was in the dining room and everyone was very quiet and tearful. I personally could not sit with them. I stood up in the kitchen and cried all the time. Everyone was trying to eat. I did not eat! It was just too much! We always called each other on the holidays and we would put the phone on the speaker so everyone could hear. My brother lived in Mesa, Arizona and it was always a big thing in our family to call.

Christmas was a disaster. I only did the shopping because I had to. I thought I could get through the holidays but the Christmas music tore my heart out. When I heard "Home for the Holidays," I would just sob, no matter where I was. Again I had everyone at my home and again I couldn't sit with them. I stood with my back to them and just cried. I can honestly say that it took me four years before I could say their names without crying.

Holidays are a very sad time for my family and it all came back to me again in August 1998 when my husband died due to a sudden illness. We were married for 41 years. I do not like to see the holidays, they are very painful, and the pain never goes away.

**- Joan Pontante, NY, lost five family members on Northwest Flight 255, Detroit, August 16, 1987.**

Last year was my first holiday season alone after losing my boyfriend Joe, with whom I had lived with for eight years. I knew that the holidays were not going to be easy. Thanksgiving was the hardest for me. Maybe, because it was the first holiday I had to go through. My salvation was the tremendous support of my friends. Without them I could not have done it. I made sure I was with people who I cared about (and who cared for me).

I think that it is important not spend the holiday season alone. I believe that it is important to force yourself to be with people. As hurtful as it may seem at the time, I look at it as part of the healing process. I also feel that your loved one would want you to celebrate life and continue to live it. It is important not to feel guilt.

Don't wait to be invited. Make the initiative if you haven't been asked yet. Sometimes friends and family think that you may not want to do anything, or that you have been invited somewhere else. I found that being around my friend's the key ingredient in getting through the holiday season.

**-Lynn Ross, NY, lost her boyfriend Joseph, age 49, on Swissair Flight 111, September 2, 1998.**

On the first Christmas after losing my sister Sandi, we planted a Christmas tree on my parents farm at the spot where she used to sunbathe and wash her car. We decorate this tree each Christmas. This gives us a place other than the cemetery to visit and remember her.

**-Kim Modaff Collins, PA, Former Flight Attendant, lost her sister Sandi, age 27, on American Eagle Flight 4184, October 31, 1994.**



## Surviving the Holidays

I remember our holidays last year. Two months after the Swissair 111 crash, we had Thanksgiving. We found it very difficult to look past the crash and be thankful for anything. One month later we celebrated Christmas. My mom was with us and the only thing we could muster any energy to do was to fix a nice dinner on Christmas Eve. No tree, no decorations. Of all holidays, it was Christmas that was such an important holiday for us to be together.

This year I am hoping to have a tree and I am finding myself interested in some holiday decorating. My focus is different. I am looking at candles and angels and live wreaths and trees. I want to make things, instead of buying decorations and gifts. In my heart, all of these efforts will be done for my father, in his memory.

**-Tanya Hoché Maluf, CA, lost her father Gabriel, age 62, on Swissair Flight 111, September 2, 1998.**

On New Year's Eve, my fiancée and I would have a picnic by the beach and we would cuddle up as we watched the fire works. While waiting for the stroke of midnight, we talked about the things that happened during that year. We even talked about the arguments we had and thought of ways to improve our relationship. We planned the things we would do in the coming year. We didn't go out partying, we just spent the time together.

Now, it's different, I still go to the beach on New Year's Eve but this time I'm alone. I go because the beach is such a peaceful place. I sit there and think about my fiancée the whole night. I say some prayers for her and I cry since nobody is there to stop me from doing that. I think it's better that I let it out once in a while, rather than bottling up everything inside. I still think of the things

that had happened during the year but now, I don't think about the coming year. I don't find the necessity to plan for the future. I don't know why but when I'm at the beach, I feel calm as I watch the ocean. This is the only place I go if I am feeling down.

As Muslims, we celebrate Hari Raya after one month of fasting. During this time, we visit our relatives and friends to seek forgiveness for our wrongdoings. I used to visit my relatives and friends with my fiancée. But now, I don't even feel like visiting them. It just feels so awkward to go visiting alone. I just wait for them to visit my home. I am always at home while my family goes visiting. What I do at this time is look through my fiancée's photos and think about her, and I talk to myself at times.

I wish that all this never happened. It's just so difficult to lead a normal life again. It makes it harder on special occasions that you used to spend with loved ones.

**-Faisal Hassan lost his fiancée Syaibani, age 19, on Silk Air 185, December 19, 1997, Singapore, Indonesia.**

For anyone going through the holidays after the loss of a loved one, I have learned not try to celebrate the holidays as you always have in the past. It is important to try to make your holidays somehow different because they will never be the same. If you try to make the holidays the same (guests, traditions, seating at the table, anything), the absence will be even more evident. This advice really helped me make it through my first Thanksgiving and first Christmas. It is important to realize that life will never be the same, so don't try to make it the same.

**-Judy Schuldt, FL, lost her husband Michael, age 51, on TWA Flight 800, July 17, 1996**

## Surviving the Holidays

My husband, Gordon, died in a major airline crash in 1977. He was only 33 years old. We had two small children and a wonderful life. One day he was there and the next we were planning a funeral. Someone told me it was like going through major surgery. I might have looked okay, but I wasn't. How did I carry on? I read grief books on the stages of grief to learn what I was going through, leaned on my faith as a Christian, cared for my children and let family and friends help.

The first Christmas we had moved to be closer to family. New family traditions developed. Both grandfathers took my children into the woods to select and cut the best Christmas tree ever. We openly talked about Gordon and what he loved about Christmas. On Christmas Eve, we attended church at midnight in a small little church in the country. Later my children played their instruments at the service. Then the three of us, Will, Meredith and I, came back to our house to read the Christmas Story by candlelight. Each chose one gift to unwrap before going to bed. We laughed and enjoyed our tree as we talked about the Christmas Story. The gifts grew during the night and Will and Meredith started again unwrapping. Then it was off to the Grandparents' houses for visits with family.

There were many tears that first year and years to come. But there was also the realization that Gordon was still with us.

- Pam Coley, NC, lost her husband Gordon, age 33, on Southern Airlines in GA., April 4, 1977.

When I was ten years old, my father woke me up, and told me that my sister, Jerilyn had been killed in a plane crash. We just hugged and cried. Inside, I haven't stopped crying since. But I can't really understand why. I can't remember her. I

don't even remember what her voice sounded like. Through it all, our family was close, so that made it easier. But we did not talk about Jerilyn, or the accident--ever. That's sad because her death, at age sixteen was a defining moment in my life. Twenty-nine years later, it still is. King Solomon the Wise said, in Ecclesiastes, "There is time to be born, and time to die." Just not this way and this soon.

Holidays should have been festive, but, somehow, somehow, the feeling of loss was always there. Whether it was Thanksgiving or Rosh Hashanah, my mom would raise her glass, and say, "may we all be together next year." A shiver went through my spine, as I tried not to cry. Even at holiday time, that mean monkey was always on our back.

To this day, twenty-nine years later, I try, really try, to not think about what might have been. But it's hard. Her death, and the trauma it caused, has become a part of who I am. But like the Rabbi said, when he came to our house after the plane crash, "One day, you'll smile again." He is right.

-Steve Feldman, NY, lost his sister Jerilyn, age 16, in a plane crash in Cuzco, Peru, August 9, 1970. Steve has created a memorial page for the people killed in this crash at: [www.august91970](http://www.august91970).

This is something that helped me last year. Ingrid spent many a Thanksgiving at my house with our mothers. This past year of course she wasn't there. Ingrid's favorite flowers were pink roses. As fate would have it, just when we were missing her most, my son's friend showed up with a lovely bunch of pink roses. She made it after all.

-Julie Cruz, NY, lost her friend Ingrid, age 32, on Swissair Flight 111, September 2, 1998.



## Grief and the Holidays

Experts have generally divided the grieving (or mourning) process into three stages, which are (1) shock and denial; (2) acute mourning, when the shock gives way to an all too painful awareness of the loss of a loved one(s); and (3) resolution, when the intense feelings of the middle stage pass and the grieving person feels able to move on with their life. Although writers previously considered "normal" grieving to involve an orderly and timely progression through these phases, current thinking instead suggests that there exists enormous variation in how "normal" people mourn. Thus, it is quite possible that the mourner may move back and forth between the stages of acute mourning and resolution. And, there is no defined time in which mourning must end.

What all of this means is, as the holidays approach for those who have suddenly lost loved ones, that not only is there no "cookbook" way to approach the holidays but also that grieving and the holidays can and do co-exist. Holidays are naturally times when the absence of loved ones is felt more acutely. You may very well feel caught up in thinking about and feeling your loss just when you may have thought you had moved on and restored some normalcy to your life. Or, if you were still in a early phase of mourning before the holidays, this may yet become heightened during the holidays.

Although there is no clear evidence that openly acknowledging your loss during the holidays is "healthier," experience suggests that doing so may in fact make both your grieving process and the holidays more meaningful for you and those around you. Whether or not you adhere to past holiday traditions or engage in your usual holiday activity this year will be up to you. But, you and yours will most certainly be best served if you are able to acknowledge the unusual poignancy and confusion that the holidays present after having suffered the loss of a loved one.

One government pamphlet has thoughtfully likened the situation of the mourner to that of a confused immigrant in a foreign land. This is all the more so as survivors try to find their own personal balance between mourning and celebration during what we otherwise like to think of as a season of unabashed joy.

Finally, we should close with a note of caution about grieving during the holidays. As with any other time in the grieving process, we should be attentive to the possibility that grieving can turn into problems that warrant attention from a mental health professional. Warning signs of such a situation include excessive feelings of guilt, suicidal thoughts, or drug or alcohol abuse. Grieving is normal, but if you are worried that your grieving, or that of a friend or loved one, may be abnormal, professional help is available.

-Craig L. Katz, M.D., Disaster Psychiatry Outreach

## **A Team Remembered**

I watched a Thursday night college football game two weeks ago with my husband. He is an ex-college football player and a Vietnam Veteran and during that game, some stark similarities became apparent. The game was Marshall College, South Carolina, a small, private school, against Toledo, another small college. It was a good, close game and extremely spirited.

I noticed in the stands of the Marshall team, big signs saying "From Ashes to Glory", "From Flames to Victory". I thought it puzzling until half time when they did a story about the 75 people on their team that died in a plane crash in 1970 along with the school's radio commentator and other athletic personnel. The accident occurred close to the stadium at night on their return from a game.

They are changing the name of the road parallel to the stadium to Marshall Memorial Drive and dedicating a beautiful bronze statue next year for the 30 year anniversary of the accident. This statue looks almost like the Marines on Mt. Seribachi on Iwo Jima holding up the American Flag. It has four football players in action standing on a bed of flames. It reminded me of how veterans of war cling together even years after and the incredible bond they endure with each other for a lifetime. The similarity of an act of war to an aviation disaster is quite compelling. The bond of people who sustain this kind of horrific trauma is unique and lifelong. It is through their coming together to form groups involved in support, safety issues, research, etc. that much progress is being made not only to inform the public, but to influence change within the industry. I think it is a very wonderful tribute to these people.

**-Barbara Skudlarick, WA, retired flight attendant, survivor of DC-10 flight from Caracas to New York, December, 1961.**

## **The Phone Rang Devastation**

"Ring, Ring", I answered the phone. I listened to a relative, who doesn't often call, about my dear sister and brother in-law. I was calm as she asked, "are you alone?" "Are you sitting down?" I hung up. I was frantic now, my heart pounded away! The finality of their death set-in; they were gone. Nothing would ever be the same. I screamed and screamed. I could not stop. I asked God to help me, to step-in--I stopped.

Over the year, I have heard loud sobbing often, and from time to time, from someone near. Why, it's me! Tears flow, my heart cries out to say, "I love you Eudy, I love you Marty, I miss you both." I blow kisses into the air. They heard, they hear, they know. They are fine and happy in their new home and life with God. I must learn to be glad for them now as we still remain close, but in a different way, until we can clasp hands, stand side by side once again. Together in heaven.

**-With love from her sister Claire and her nieces, Jan, Heather and Karen**

**-Claire Sopher, MD, lost her sister Eudyce Ball and brother-in-law Martin Ball, on Swissair Flight 111, September 2, 1998.**



## **A Helping Hand**

On January 9, 1997, my life along with others, was changed dramatically. In a small town called Ida in Monroe County Michigan, Comair Flight 3272 crashed in a field. I did not lose a loved one, and I did not know any one on that plane, but I did spend ten long cold days in that field handing out hand warmers and feeding firemen and other rescuers that were there. I also was there when the family members came out to view the crash site. I don't think the full reality of what happened really hit me until that day. To see the shock and disbelief on those poor family members' faces still haunts me and my heart still aches for them.

I think in a way everyone lost a loved one that day; we just didn't have the privilege to know them when they were alive. I saw and learned so much in those days from hearing the firemen (who were mostly volunteers) yell when they found something and seeing the shocked despair in their faces and tears, to seeing a town pull together for the love and caring of twenty-nine people they never got to meet and meeting family members who shared stories with me about their loved ones.

I was just a volunteer and I know that my hurt is not as deep as the families, but I visit the memorial whenever I am back in town and before I moved I was there at least once a week to put mementos or just to pray for those who perished and their families. I still think about a young boy who was killed that would be my daughters age, three, and when she reaches each precious milestone I think of him and how I couldn't bear to think of how it would be for her not to be there.

I want all families and friends who have lost loved ones on any aviation disaster to know that the people on the scene who help and work these tragedies do not just "go home" and relax. We cry and we realize just how precious our families are and our prayers and hearts are with each and every one of you.

-Shari Frederick, volunteer worker for Comair Flight 3272, Michigan, January, 9, 1997.

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**If you would like to share your personal story, a poem or a memorial in our newsletter, your submissions are welcomed and appreciated. Please send them to us via mail or e-mail.**

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**E-mail: [Info@accesshelp.org](mailto:Info@accesshelp.org)**

Stories in this newsletter were compiled and edited by Heidi Snow, Jackie Dotson and Margaret Zamos

## **TWA Flight 800 Memorial**

Families Gathered for several days on Long Island to commemorate the 3rd Anniversary of the crash into the Atlantic on July 17, 1996. Many family members came from all over the U.S., as well as families from Australia, France, Israel and Italy. A reception was held on Friday evening, where acquaintances were renewed and news shared.

On Saturday morning a land dedication ceremony was held at the Smith Point Beach to formally dedicate and bless the beachfront land which has been donated as the site for the international memorial. It was well attended by over 100 families and friends. Later that afternoon an interdenominational memorial service was held, at the site of the Memorial. Later that evening there was a Mass held in Moriches, with a private reception afterwards.

On Sunday, the TWA 800 Family Association met. NTSB representatives Chairman Jim Hall and Director Peter Goelz gave us a briefing. In addition, there were family discussions about plans for the international memorial, personal effects, organization & finances and next year's anniversary. Some families left afterwards while others pursued individual visits to the Coast Guard Station, the Children's Memorial Playground and the Cemetery. It was a healthy and helpful anniversary remembrance.

**-John Seaman, Director of the TWA 800 Family Association, Inc. He lost his Niece Michele on TWA Flight 800.**

## **Swissair Flight 111 Memorial**

This was my first trip to Nova Scotia and it was so necessary for my family and me. I felt connected to the beauty of the land and the compassionate people. It proved to be cathartic for me, my children and my in-laws.

229 candles were lit on the night of September 2nd, at a service on Citadel Hill. Thousands attended. The families expressed their profound gratitude to the rescue workers and all the Nova Scotians, who were forever touched by this tragedy by giving them a standing ovation. A bell tolled at the exact time of the crash, which was too painful to endure.

There were other religious services, which were held during the three days that we were there. Also, the families were able to tour the hangars at Shearwater where the plane was reconstructed, and go out to the crash site by boat. There was an interment ceremony at Bayswater, and a memorial dedication at Whalesback, where a monument was erected. From there, we went on to Peggy's Cove. It was very well organized.

There was an unspoken understanding among the families during the days we were there, and an openness and honesty as well. My children were able to speak to others freely about their feelings and share stories with others.

I do plan to go back again, as I felt it a peaceful place. My husband loved the ocean and lighthouses. He would have appreciated the beauty of Peggy's Cove. I felt close to him while we were there. Emotionally, the trip took its toll on me, and it took weeks to adjust to my "normal" life (which will never be normal) again.

**-Michele Librett, lost her husband on Swissair Flight 111, Nova Scotia, September 2, 1998.**

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 an air disaster, our writers who have contributed their personal stories, our sponsors and our Board of Directors for helping us help others. Thank you!

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**Thank you!**

## **Holiday Ideas**

- ❖ **Light a special candle to honor your loved one**
- ❖ **Donate gifts and toys in your loved ones name to a charity**
- ❖ **Buy or make a Christmas ornament in memory of your loved one each year**
- ❖ **Buy or make yourself a gift that you think your loved one would want you to have**
- ❖ **Plant a tree in honor of your loved one and decorate it over the holidays**
- ❖ **Hang a Christmas stocking for your loved one and have everyone put a special note in it**
- ❖ **Send memorial cards inside your holiday cards**