



American Eagle flight 4184 from Indy to Chicago crashed near Roselawn 15 years ago, killing 68

Crash still stings

By Melanie Csepiga - Times Correspondent | Posted: Saturday, October 31, 2009 12:20 am

ROSELAWN | For fifteen years, Terri Severin, Pat Sheriden-Hansen and others have made the trip to a rural Newton County farm field to honor and remember those they lost in the crash of American Eagle flight 4184.

They will be there again at 3:30 p.m. today, when a memorial service will be held followed by a fellowship gathering at the nearby Roselawn United Methodist Church.

"I will always observe the anniversary, whether I am physically able to be in Indiana or not," said Severin, a suburban Chicago woman who lost her sister Patty Henry and nephew Patrick Henry. "There's no closure to any of this. It's a lifelong journey of healing."

The 64 passengers and four crew members died at 3:30 p.m. on that rainy, cold Halloween 15 years ago when their commuter flight from Indianapolis to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport crashed into the soybean field south of Roselawn. It had encountered freezing rain that caused ice buildups to form on the plane's wings, which the National Transportation Safety Board blamed for the crash.

"It was a preventable crash, and the airline's callous response to the families led me and others to action," Severin said.

From the pain has come some good.

The crash helped spur the passage of the federal Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996. It mandated new regulations in airline safety and response tactics and required airlines to provide crisis counseling and other assistance to the families of crash victims.

Severin said, the tragedy also brought together strangers whose loved ones perished in the crash.

"They have become an extended family for me," she said. "I never would have given up my sister and nephew for all of this, though."

Sheriden-Hansen, whose older brother, Frank Sheriden, perished in the flight, said that night 15 years ago altered her life forever.

"I personally try very hard to focus on celebrating his life, as the pain of the loss will always be right there without any resolution," she said. Her brother was a private pilot who restored vintage aircraft and highly valued airplane safety.

Family and Friends of Flight 4184 continues to push for change. The group is urging the public and members of Congress to force the Federal Aviation Administration to update icing operation and certification standards for turboprop aircraft in order to avoid another tragedy such as flight 4184.

Severin said she doesn't know how many members of the group will attend today's memorial service.

"It's not only for the families," she said. "The ripple effect includes the responders and volunteers.

"It's changed so many lives in so many directions."