



ACCESSSM

NEWSLETTER

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AirCraft Casualty Emotional Support Services

Chairman's Message

I became involved with ACCESS for the worst possible reason. My wife, Rosie Braman, was killed in the explosion of TWA 800. Rosie was a flight attendant for TWA, and had been for 19 years.

She was not scheduled to fly 800 that night, but was what the industry euphemistically (and ironically) calls "dead heading." That means she was an employee not working the flight, but "commuting" to join another. As always, I asked her that morning what flight number she was flying on. Only half awake, she reminded me that she was on her way to Rome. I made a mental note of it and kissed her good-bye. Actually I never said good-bye to her. I preferred saying, "Come home safely to me." To which she responded, "I always do". I mistakenly thought that little ritual would keep her safe. It didn't. Later in the day she called to tell me the Rome flight was cancelled and that she would be flying to Paris to pick up the returning Rome flight. Again I asked the flight number, she told me "800". "Okay," I said. "Have a safe trip. Come home safely to me." She once again replied, "I always do."

It was the last time we spoke. The anguish and grief that followed in the aftermath of that event have been chronicled many times through the hundreds of stories of others who lost loved ones that night. For me it was too personal, and it took me well over a year to accept that Rosie's story was just one of them.

I attended one support group meeting made up of people who lost loved ones on 800, and there, briefly, met Heidi Snow. Months later I read about her formation of the previously named Air Crash Support Network. I thought it was a wonderful concept and made a small donation. Not long afterward, it occurred to me that the best tribute I could make to Rosie's memory was to help others. That was her legacy. Through ACCESS, I have been able to keep that legacy alive, and in so doing, keep her memory alive as well.

In the simplest of terms, ACCESS represents people with broken hearts helping people with broken hearts. It is a human endeavor that has been played out throughout the history of civilization. This compassion and understanding provides ACCESS with its focus and is the basis for our appeal to volunteers and contributors alike. Thank you for helping me fulfill the legacy that has been entrusted to me. Thank you for your contributions and support.

-Stewart Mosberg, Chairman of ACCESS

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.

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***Cardinal John O'Connor**
We will miss him!
We are all grateful to him for his support of ACCESS as an Honorary Advisory Board Member, and his commitment to the loved ones of air disaster victims.

I want to thank everyone involved with ACCESS for the wonderful and important work you do, and for giving me the opportunity to include some personal thoughts in your spring newsletter.

Two years ago, I completed work on the first and only book I've ever written. In the final chapter, I did some soul searching about my role as Governor and I'd like to share with you a portion of what I wrote.

"[Not long after taking office], it became clear to me that, as Governor, I was going to make a difference -- and in more ways than one. I began to realize that even in the darkest moments on the job, I could somehow bring light to someone, somewhere. Ironically, this realization came during the saddest time of my term in office: the evening of July 17, 1996, when TWA Flight 800 crashed off the coast of Long Island."

When I heard the news, everything that seemed important just minutes before suddenly became irrelevant. And reflecting on it later, it occurred to me that one of the most important functions a Governor can fulfill is to extend a caring hand to people in despair and give them what they need most in times of sorrow: comfort, understanding, and a shoulder to cry on.

So days after the crash, we organized a memorial service on the beach closest to the site of the disaster. The service was broadcast worldwide, enabling people everywhere to join in the mourning and to show love and support for the family members who needed it so desperately. I ended the service by telling family members: "Long after this horrible tragedy, and long after those who have assembled here have dispersed, we will be thinking of you." I have never stopped thinking of them. The moments I spent with them are forever etched in my mind and in my heart. Many of them told me that the service and all the state's efforts on their behalf helped to ease their pain. What this means to me, I cannot possibly express in words.

There's more to being Governor than simply governing. One of the most important things we can do in life is to give a piece of ourselves to lighten the burden of others. I learned this lesson from the family members of those who died on TWA Flight 800. I am eternally grateful to them, and they will forever be in my prayers.

