

Passengers of Flight 261 remembered

By Jack Broom, Lisa Pemberton-Butler, Ian Ith, Chris Solomon, Mark Rahner, Stuart Eskenazi, Steve Miletich, Eric Sorensen....*Seattle Times* staff reportersFebruary 1, 2000

FRIENDS AND FAMILIES of the 88 people who perished on Alaska Airlines Flight 261 have many stories to tell about them. Among those who lost their lives in yesterday's disaster were a young artistic couple from Seattle, a Monroe couple who were returning from missionary work in Mexico, and three young graduates of Enumclaw High School. Here are some of the stories:

Three recent graduates of Enumclaw High School, traveling together, were among the passengers aboard Flight 261. "They were all terrific kids," said Principal Terry Parker, "This is a very sad day here."

Listed among the passengers were **Rachel Janosik**, 20, **Ryan Sparks**, 20, and **Meghann Hall**, 19.

Miss Janosik had worked for Alaska's sister airline, Horizon Air, since last summer and was excited about the travel opportunities the job carries.

"She was really getting into traveling," said her brother, Matt, 18. "We just got her a set of luggage for Christmas."

Miss Janosik, who graduated from Enumclaw in 1997, and Miss Hall, who graduated in 1998, had been teammates on the girl's fast-pitch softball team, Parker said.

Mr. Sparks, a 1997 graduate, had been a starting guard on the school's varsity basketball team.

"Just yesterday afternoon I had just been talking about him to my team," said Bill Hawk, the school's basketball coach. Hawk said he was telling players about the ability to start a move toward the basket, and then quickly pull up and hit a jump shot.

"What I told them was I had never seen anyone who could do it better than Ryan Sparks. He won two games for us with that shot," Hawk said. Hours later, Hawk learned about the plane crash, which had occurred about the time he had been talking to his players.

"I remember he was a champion of the underdog," Hawk said. "He ran with some people who might not have been the most popular, but he really stood up for them."

School counselor Kim Kravagna knew the two young women well. "They would come in and spend lunches with me. They had a maturity beyond their years and were a great deal of fun in that they would actually have conversations with adults."

Kravagna said both Miss Janosik and Miss Hall, who were both serious about athletics, had at one point considered careers in sports medicine or coaching.

"They were incredibly funny, enjoyable kids to be around. Neither one of them had a bad bone in her body."

Counselors were at the school today to assist teachers, students and even former students who came to school when they heard the news, said Enumclaw Superintendent Art Jarvis.

"They were all very involved kids in the community and high school so it's being felt keenly," said Jarvis.

Mr. Sparks and Miss Janosik have siblings attending Enumclaw High, Jarvis said. Miss Hall's only brother died in a motorcycle accident about four years ago.

Miss Janosik, a food and beverage agent for the airlines, was able to travel free on the flight, bringing along her close friend, Miss Hall, and Hall's boyfriend, Mr. Sparks.

Matt Janosik said his sister had been in Puerto Vallarta a few months ago and enjoyed it so much she returned this month with the two friends.

Because airline employees travel on standby, the families weren't initially sure on which flight they would be returning, but the airline confirmed the news last night.

"I'm still in shock," Matt Janosik said. "This is tough to believe."

Matt Janosik said his sister also played soccer in high school and had attended Bellevue Community College, playing soccer there. She lived with friends in a Bellevue-area apartment.

"She was a very social person," her brother said. "She had a lot of friends and people who cared for her."

Morris Thompson

Millionaire businessman and Alaskan Native leader Morris Thompson's roots were woven so deep they may have touched every aspect of life in the Land of the Midnight Sun, colleagues and friends said today.

He was more than just a corporate leader, they said, more than just a Native leader or guiding benefactor, more than just a beloved friend, husband and father.

"Morrie was an Alaskan leader through and through," said close friend Byron Mallott of Juneau, himself an Alaskan state leader and a member of the board of directors of Alaska Airlines.

"He's just going to leave a very big crater here. Yesterday, when that plane crashed, a very big Alaskan tree fell." Mr. Thompson, 62, his wife, Thelma, 56, and their eldest daughter, Cheryl, 33, were taking Flight 261 home from a celebratory retirement vacation in Mexico when it went down.

Mr. Thompson retired in December after 12 years as president of Doyon, Ltd., a multimillion-dollar Alaska Native regional corporation based in Fairbanks. Affiliates of the company, which owns more land - about 10 million acres - than any other private company in North America, control oil, timber and tourism interests throughout central Alaska.

The company wasn't without tarnish, however. Last year one wing, Doyon Drilling, pleaded guilty to federal misdemeanors for illegally dumping hazardous wastes.

Mr. Thompson, an Athabascan Indian, grew up in the village of Tanana in Alaska's interior and went to schools run by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs.

As a young man, he learned satellite technology and became involved with the space program. From there, he kept rising, Mallott said.

He was a special assistant to Gov. Walter Hickel in 1966. When Hickel was appointed secretary of the Interior by President Nixon in 1969, he took Mr. Thompson with him to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Thompson served in the late 1960s and early 1970s as commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the first Alaskan Native to hold such a high-ranking federal post.

He then returned to Alaska, where he was an executive for a major pipeline company, working to develop the oil pipeline from Alaska through Canada. He also served for a year as president of the Alaska Federation of Natives. "As a Native American, you walk around with a little rage in your belly," said Mallott, who preceded Mr. Thompson as AFN president. "He had it. But when you met him, you knew he was someone you could trust. He was unflappable. He never lost his cool."

As a leader of Native Alaskans, Mr. Thompson was tireless, advocating for hunting and fishing rights and to improve living conditions in native villages, said Julie Kitka, current president of the AFN.

"He's been one of our outstanding leaders," Kitka said. "He's probably one of the most compassionate people you could ever know. There's not a mean bone in his body."

Mallott's wife and Mr. Thompson's wife, Thelma, are cousins. Thelma Thompson is also a first cousin of a state senator and of Mary Jane Fate, another Alaska Airlines board member, Mallott said.

"Thelma was the culture bearer," Mallott said. "She was adept at just about anything she put her mind to."

Daughter Cheryl lived in Valdez, where she was a pioneer in the "extreme skiing" sports movement.

Craig and Paul Pulanco

Neighbors remembered Craig and Paul Pulanco as a witty, fun-loving couple who loved their two dogs almost as much as the garden that adorned their South Seattle home.

"And they had the most creative Christmas house on the block," neighbor Edward Ovalles said.

Craig Pulanco, 30, who changed his name from Craig Gruhl, was working as an attendant aboard Flight 261. His partner of many years, Paul Pulanco, 40, apparently was along as a guest.

They moved into the neighborhood about three years ago.

Craig Pulanco joined Alaska Airlines on July 1, 1996.

Paul Pulanco was a case worker at the Northwest AIDS Foundation office in Seattle.

"We're all in a huge state of shock right now," said Foundation spokeswoman Tammy Kincaid. "He was one of the most loved people here."

The couple had two dogs, Luna and Scott.

Paul Pulanco's brother lives in Bellingham and was en route to the Pulancos' home today, then planned to fly to Los Angeles to join other mourners near the crash site.

Monte Donaldson and Colleen Whorley

Monte Donaldson, 31, a freelance landscaper and disc jockey, and Colleen Whorley, 34, an art director at Microsoft, were to be married in September.

The couple, who met through friends, had traveled to Mexico to meet family. The family returned to the states, but the couple decided to stay longer.

"They were real complementary," said Adam Suhl, 32, a friend. "I remember one time (Colleen) told me that as different as they were, that (Monte) was as close to being her as she had found."

Suhl said Mr. Donaldson's passion was music. He was a disc jockey in Seattle for more than 10 years, playing at clubs such as the Alibi Room and The Show Box. Ms. Whorley, he said, received several promotions at Microsoft and focused much of her energy on her job. The couple had just purchased a home. After the wedding, they planned to honeymoon in Ireland and Bali in Indonesia.

"They were working hard, trying to make it," Suhl said. "They had a lot of hopes."

`Jay' Luque

Jovanna Luque of Olympia said this morning that her son "Jay" Luque, 41, of San Francisco, was on the flight with friends.

Jovanna Luque said she was about to see her son, who worked for a catering company, for his 42nd birthday this month. Instead, she was on her way to California today to find out more about his death.

Jay Luque was one of six children, his mother said, and the second child she had lost in the last 14 years.

Don Shaw

Everyone who knew Don Shaw at the state Capitol in Olympia remembered him today as an affable tour guide, a fixture in the halls of the state Legislature.

"A lot of people in the Legislature knew him and around the Capitol people knew him," said state Department of General Administration spokesman Steve Valandera. "He was just a great guy, a well-liked guy."

But even before the 63-year-old Mr. Shaw started leading tours in Olympia, people in Snohomish knew him as a longtime principal at two elementary schools, Cathcart and later Riverview, both in the Snohomish School District. And even before that, people in Edmonds knew him as an elementary-school teacher and librarian.

"He was just the salt of the earth, loved the kids, a great humanitarian," said Lynne Kline, a district spokeswoman. "This just rocked us because everyone knew him and loved him."

Mr. Shaw was coming home to Shelton from a vacation alone aboard Flight 261. He leaves behind his wife, Earlene, who works at the state Senate cafeteria.

Mr. Shaw served in the Navy from 1954 to 1957 before becoming a teacher, Valandera said. He retired as a principal in 1991 and moved south. He was a volunteer tour guide at the Capitol before taking a paid job leading tours in 1995. He became tour supervisor in June 1998.

Robert and Lorna Thorgrimson

Robert and Lorna Thorgrimson lived in Poulsbo. He is the grandson of O.B. Thorgrimson, a founding partner of the prominent Seattle-based law firm, Preston, Thorgrimson, Shidler, Gates & Lucas, which became Preston, Gates & Ellis in 1994.

"We express our sympathies to the Thorgrimson family and all of the families who lost loved ones on this flight," said B. Gerald Johnson, managing partner of the firm.

Robert Thorgrimson's father, Richard Thorgrimson, was a longtime partner in the firm.

Harry Stasinis and Charlene Sipe

Harry Stasinis and Charlene L. Sipe were longtime Seattle insurance agents who lived together in Brier.

Some who knew Mr. Stasinis, 54, were momentarily relieved when they saw a listing for a "Perry" Stasinis on a list of passengers released by Alaska Airlines. At Prime Insurance Inc., where Mr. Stasinis served as vice president for a short time starting in 1996, workers had checked the airline's Web site and then relaxed when they saw a name that apparently wasn't that of their friend and former colleague.

Employee Connie Davis sighed heavily when she realized what had happened.

"It is him," Davis said.

"He was just really sweet," Davis said. "He was an easy-going guy. I really liked him. He was kind of laid back, he liked to party, and he liked to travel."

The couple had worked for several years together at the Roy Potter Insurance Agency. "They were both very happy people," said the owner's son, Scott Potter. "One of my employees talked to them right before they went down to Puerto Vallarta. I know they had a great time there."

At the time of their deaths, the couple was believed to be starting their own insurance agency.

Mr. Stasinis also served for a time with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and was an active member of the Seattle-area Greek community.

Stanford Poll

Stanford Poll was a Mercer Island resident who had numerous business and property interests, and once figured in a corruption scandal in Seattle.

Mr. Poll's wife, Gabriel, was not traveling with him and was absorbing the shock of the news at home, said Shari Gross, who took calls for the family.

Mr. Poll, 59, also has two college-age daughters, Gross said. "He was a wonderful person, who was the best friend anyone could ask for." Mr. Poll lived most of his life in the Seattle area, but also spent time in Alaska, Gross said. Other friends said he operated a pawn shop in the SeaTac area.

In the 1970s, Mr. Poll, then described as the operator of two taverns, was subpoenaed as a material witness in a criminal investigation into payoffs to Seattle police officers.

He was found guilty of filing false reports of federal withholding taxes and Social Security contributions.

The conviction was overturned in 1975, but Mr. Poll was convicted on a new tax charge later that year of willfully filing false tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service.

Ryan and Abigail Busche

Ryan and Abigail Busche of Seattle met while students at Western Washington University and married in 1998. "Both of them were very outgoing," said Mr. Busche's mother, Marianne Busche of Olympia. "They both were very creative."

Mr. Busche was working in Microsoft's games group as a temporary employee for ArtSource, a Bellevue-based design and art-production company.

Abigail Busche had also worked for ArtSource but had recently been hired full-time by Microsoft.

"Obviously our hearts go out to everyone that was involved in that incident, not only people that were connected with us," said Dan Leach, a Microsoft spokesman.

Mr. Busche grew up in Olympia, attending Capital High School. Mrs. Busche grew up in Bow, near Mount Vernon.

Source: <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20000201&slug=4002393>