



Ex-Lincolnite among dead

By COLLEEN KENNEY / Lincoln Journal Star

A former Lincoln man was among the 49 passengers killed in the Kentucky plane crash Sunday, his brother said.

Steve McElravy, 57, a social worker who worked in the field of drug- and alcohol-abuse prevention here until moving to Maryland about four years ago, was heading home after a business trip, said Bruce McElravy of Lincoln.

He graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln — Bruce thinks his brother was there from 1968 to 1972 — then received his master's degree in social work in Ann Arbor, Mich., and returned to Lincoln.

He said his brother worked at the Lincoln Regional Center and at the Nebraska Council to Prevent Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

"He had master's in social work. That was his life endeavor, to help people," Bruce said Monday. "I'm sure a lot of people — whether they were clients or friends — knew and respected him, and will miss him."

His brother flew around a lot as part of his job, Bruce said. He helped set up drug and alcohol treatment centers around the country.

He has a grown son, David, from a first marriage, and two sons, Rory and Aidan, and a stepdaughter, Michelle, from his second marriage.

His wife, Audrey, was waiting for him at their local airport, Bruce said.

Bruce can't believe his brother died in such a "stupid" accident.

The two used to fight with boxing gloves as kids, said Bruce, a self-employed welder.

"Of course, it wasn't fair. He was three years older. I always lost, of course."

He chuckled at the memory.

A few weeks ago, his big brother came to Lincoln to visit him. He was on his way to counsel their aunt, who had lost a daughter to breast cancer.

The two sat in lawn chairs in his back yard under a big green and white umbrella.

Steve was 6 feet tall, with red hair and a beard.

"I can still see his face, sitting there. He was looking at me. I was looking back at him, and we were enjoying the nice summer afternoon."

Sunday morning, Bruce turned on CNN as he usually does, and saw footage of the plane crash.

"And I just immediately thought of my brother."

Bob Schroeder of Lincoln worked with Steve at the Nebraska Council to Prevent Alcohol and Drug Abuse. He recalled his old friend as a bright man with a deep acceptance of himself and others.

"He was very gentle in his approach to people, and because of this, people just took a liking to him.

"He was big into meditation, just very much at peace with himself."

Schroeder said his friend moved to the Washington, D.C., area, where he helped several states implement a program that monitors stores to make sure they weren't selling cigarettes to minors.

"He was in town a few weeks ago and called, left a message wanting to get together. But we kind of played phone tag."

Someone called him Monday morning to say Steve was dead. And for some reason, he said, he knew without being told his friend was on that Kentucky plane.

Monday afternoon, Bruce McElravy sat on the lawn chair where his brother sat.

He said he keeps thinking about the crash, the exploding fuel tank, the final thoughts his brother must have had.

"Steve was just a real nice guy. He didn't deserve this. None of the people on that plane deserved this."

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