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Families: Waiting, mourning

09/13/01

By **LISA CORYELL**
Staff Writer

The Guadagno family of Ewing was crowded in front of their television set yesterday afternoon, desperate for some insight into downed United Airlines Flight 93, when a newscaster revealed that passengers on the hijacked aircraft plotted to overpower the terrorists on board just before the plane crashed near Pittsburgh.

For a moment, the family's mournful expressions brightened.

"I guarantee my son was part of that," said Jerry Guadagno, his grief momentarily forgotten in a burst of pride.

The news brought a measure of comfort to the family as they struggled to come to terms with the death of Richard Guadagno, 38, a Hun School graduate who was one of at least four local residents to perish on hijacked flights Tuesday.

At least four other local families spent yesterday waiting and hoping for word that missing loved ones had made it out of the ravaged World Trade Center before its twin towers collapsed.

Although Cathy and Robert Damiani of Hamilton had not heard from their 28-year-old daughter, Jeannine Damiani-Jones, they clung to hope that she still is alive.

The 1990 Steinert High School graduate, who worked as a financial trader for Cantor Fitzgerald, was on the 104th floor of the North Tower when it was struck by the first of two hijacked planes.

Despite no word, her parents placed hope in reports that some of her co-workers had been located critically injured -- but alive -- in Jersey City hospitals.

"We pray she was able to get down," said Cathy Damiani. "Maybe she's OK and just not able to contact us. We're praying maybe she's (just) injured -- not too seriously.

"At least there's hope," she added, her voice breaking.

For residents like Eric Bay of West Windsor there was no hope.



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Bay lost his wife, Lorraine, who was a flight attendant on United Airlines Flight 93. The flight was en route from Newark to San Francisco when it crashed.

Bay was too grief-stricken to talk to reporters yesterday, but neighbors remembered Lorraine Bay, in her early 50s, as a wonderful woman.

"I just saw them out washing the car. She smiled and waved. You never think something like this could happen," said a neighbor who declined to identify herself.

Margaret Gargiullo, who has lived opposite the Bays for 25 years, said Lorraine Bay was a flight attendant most of that time.

"You know there's a risk when you work for an airline, but you never think of this kind of thing happening," she said. "Everyone is so upset."

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Lower Makefield, Pa., resident Victor Saracini, 51, was the pilot of United Airlines Flight 175, which crashed into the World Trade Center en route from Boston to Los Angeles. He left behind a wife and two children.

"The family is grieving," a family member said, declining to speak further to reporters.

Guadagno's family, too, was grieving, but members welcomed the chance to speak about a man who loved life and outdoor adventures.

Guadagno, who graduated from Rutgers University in 1985, had moved to California to work as a project leader at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

He spent last week visiting his sister in Vermont and the pair drove to New Jersey on Friday to attend their grandmother's 100th birthday party.

A tearful Lori Guadagno said she and her younger brother were very, very close.

"He was one of my best friends," she said, as she sat with family in her parents' home on Pingree Avenue. "He was a passionate environmentalist. He was a tree hugger. He loved his dog, he loved the land and anything to do with the outdoors - kayaking, surfing, hiking and gardening."

Jerry Guadagno and his wife, Beatrice, still are trying to make sense of Tuesday's tragedy.

"If it were an accidental plane crash it would be one thing, but to deliberately crash a plane, it doesn't make sense," he said.

Guadagno's family are certain of one thing: Richard Guadagno died a hero.

His flight was the only one of the four hijacked planes that didn't

hit a high-profile target.

Guadagno's plane crashed about 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh after flying near Cleveland and then turning around. The plane was said to be flying erratically and losing altitude.

Some U.S. officials have said the Secret Service feared the hijackers may have been headed for Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland about 85 miles from the crash site.

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Just before United Airlines Flight 93 crashed, a passenger telephoned his wife, told her the plane had been hijacked and said he and some others were going to "do something about it," according to an Associated Press report.

Authorities have not said whether passengers struggled with the hijackers and whether that sent the airliner carrying 45 people into a western Pennsylvania field.

Others have speculated the passengers or crew on Flight 93 might have thwarted the hijackers.

"It sure wasn't going to go down in rural Pennsylvania. This wasn't the target. The target was Washington, D.C.," said U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa. "Somebody made a heroic effort to keep the plane from hitting a populated area.

"I would conclude there was a struggle and a heroic individual decided 'I'm going to die anyway, I might as well bring the plane down here.' "

The Guadagnos were certain that Richard, trained in law enforcement and self- defense, was among those who fought back.

"He would have been one of those people to do whatever it took to keep them from hitting their target," said Jerry Guadagno. "I'm very, very proud of my son."

"At least my brother had some control in the end," said Lori Guadagno. "They didn't take it all away from him. It's the only comfort I have in all this."

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For the families waiting to hear from loved ones, comfort comes in the form of hope.

While workers continue the painstaking task of digging through the rubble at the World Trade Center site, some families desperately waited for word.

Hamilton resident Jim Schuler's wife, Sue, was working on an upper floor of one of the twin towers Tuesday morning. He has not heard from her since the collapse.

"I'm still holding out hope," he said. "It is going very slow. All I can do is hold out hope."

Neighbors said they are praying for Sue.

"She is a great person," said Penny Kelsey, who lives next door. "She grew up on a farm and would give me tips on gardening and caring for my chickens. I sure hope she is OK."

Hamilton resident Lisa Harrah is waiting to hear news about her brother-in-law, Lower Makefield, Pa., resident Michael A. Bane.

Bane, 32, works at Marsh & McLennan, a global insurance brokerage on the 100th floor of the North Tower. He has not been heard from since the attacks.

"It's been horrible," Harrah said yesterday evening. "It's shock and then it's the waiting around and not knowing. Obviously, we're hoping and we're praying for the best. . . . We're just trying not to give up hope."

Bane is married to Harrah's sister, Tara. The couple, married since 1997, have no children.

Harrah said her family, which is rooted in the New York City area, is trying to contact hospitals and emergency service workers they know for any scrap of information or to help look for him.

"It's so hard to get through to them," she said. "His company called and they have two people looking for him."

Harrah, who runs her own insurance company and heads the Mercer County chapter of the New Jersey Association of Women Business Owners, said Bane is among three members of the family working in the financial district when the attacks occurred.

The others, a brother-in-law who had been scheduled to work as an electrician at the World Trade Center, and her father are safe.

At 3 p.m. yesterday, Cathy and Robert Damiani were preparing to go to Jersey City Medical Center to look for their daughter, Jeannine Damiani-Jones.

Their son-in-law of three months, Shawn Jones, worked in another brokerage house near the trade center. He has not heard from his wife since the attack.

Several men who worked with Jeannine communicated with their wives by cell phone and e-mail after the attack to say they were OK, but they haven't been heard from since, according to Cathy Damiani, who works for state Appellate Division Judge Anthony J. Parrillo.

Still, she is encouraged by the the fact that an hour and 44 minutes passed from the time the plane hit the North Tower at 8:45 a.m. and the time it collapsed.

"At least we know for a fact that people from the 104th floor in her section of the building got out," Cathy Damiani said.

Bill Baroni, a Trenton lawyer who was president of Damiani's

class at Steinert, remembered her as a popular class leader.

"She is someone who cares a great deal about everyone around her," Baroni said. "She was one of those people who was involved in almost everything."

Baroni spoke to other classmates yesterday.

"People are devastated by this news," he said. "It just can't be true. She has so much life in her. She has so much to give. People like Jeannine should not be victims of these animals."

As the hours pass, hope is overshadowed by a growing sense of fear and dread.

The family of West Windsor stock trader John Ryan was waiting by the phone last night for news of the 45-year-old father of three. Ryan, who worked for Keefe Bruyette on the 85th floor of the South Tower, spoke to his brother, a trader with another New York firm, shortly after the first plane crash.

"He said he saw the plane hit the other tower and he saw people falling out of the building," said Ryan's sister, Colleen Ryan of Haddonfield. "He spoke to my sister-in-law Patricia (Ryan's wife) a while later and said they had been told to stay at their trading desks, that (the crash) had been an isolated incident."

Others from the firm who escaped the building told family members the traders may have gone to the 90th floor to a fire-safe room and were unable to escape, Colleen Ryan said.

"We've called the Red Cross and everyone else we can think of," she said. "My brother is an extremely reliable person. If he could have gotten to a phone, he would have found a way to contact us by now. Our other brother is a cop in New York City and he's been to the site and said it's completely devastated. We're just waiting. Things are looking pretty dismal."

Yesterday afternoon a man at the Princeton Junction train station walked up and down rows of parked cars with a set of keys in his hand.

The man, who did not want his name used, said he had been dropped off to pick up his neighbor's car.

The neighbor, a 42-year-old Mercer County man who worked on the 90th floor of the South Tower, is missing. He would not identify the man.

The missing man called home a few minutes before the second crash to say he was OK, but he has not been heard from since, the neighbor said.

"It doesn't bode well for him," said the man, who added that his neighbor's wife gave birth to the couple's first child two weeks ago.

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