



## Irony in the Sky

By Edward Naperski

“Tell them we lost both engines.” Those would be the six words that would change my life forever. The words are constantly replayed in my mind. It’s like a song that skips and continually replays the same lyrics over and over. However, I will never forget the first time I heard these words.

It was a typical Sunday morning in late May 2000. I was a sophomore in high school and enjoyed the luxury of sleeping in until noon on the weekends. It was May 21st and I got up around 10:30 a.m.

I went downstairs and turned on the computer. To my astonishment, I received a message that said, “Did you



Edward Naperski (second from the right) with his grandfather, Bernard Kachinko, Sr. (far left).

hear about the plane crash?” I immediately developed a sinking feeling in my stomach as my grandfather’s flight was cancelled the night before due to a thick

layer of fog that blanketed Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and all of its deep valleys.

The weather that morning was not one of those typical May days you dream about when you’re stuck in an endless cycle of April showers. It was rainy, foggy and unseasonably cool.

However, the weather was the least of my concerns at this point, as now I had to try to figure out if my deepest fears were now becoming a reality. I had a difficult time processing the information and thinking about what to do next. I grew up very quickly in the next ten minutes, as I had to tell my parents that I think my grandfather, Bernard Kachinko, Sr. was involved in a plane crash. The next hour was filled with phone calls that all started with shock and ended with every emotion imaginable. The phrase that ran through everyone’s head was, “Is this for real?”

The rest of the day was a complete blur. Everyone met at the airport to wait for the official word. Here in the small

## Change for Greater Safety

By Andrea Waas, Wings of Light, Inc.

On Tuesday, October 30, 2007 all five Phoenix area news stations had helicopters back in the air. This was the first time all five stations were flying since two news helicopters collided killing all four on board on July 27, 2007.

Also for the first time since July, NewsChopper 3 (KTVK-TV News-Channel 3) is back in the air, but there’s an important change. There will be one additional person on board. As a result of the tragic loss of two members of the Channel 3 family, every NewsChopper 3 flight where a pilot is reporting will have an additional pilot/observer so there is always one person focused on flying

the aircraft, particularly “see and avoid.” Sure, it’s going to increase the cost of operations, but for those of us who have lost a loved one in a crash, we know there is a much greater cost at stake. I personally applaud the management of KTVK-TV NewsChannel 3 for going the extra step to increase safety, not only the safety of their own employees on board the aircraft but also the safety of other flight crews in the air and people on the ground. I like to think the lessons learned because of my father’s fatal crash have helped save lives since then. Although we will never know, the steps taken by NewsChannel 3 may be doing the same.

(See page 5 for more on the loss of colleagues at NewsChannel 3.)

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# WINGS

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*Assisting those affected  
by aircraft accidents*

Wings of Light, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting those touched by aircraft accidents. The most important goal of the organization is to bring people together through the existence of three support networks.

## **Survivor Support Network**

The Wings of Light Survivor Support Network is a support group for those who have been involved in and lived through an aircraft accident. This group helps individuals understand the feelings and issues of surviving the accident and coping with the impact on their lives.

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The Wings of Light Rescue/Response Personnel Support Network brings together individuals involved in the rescue, recovery and investigative efforts. An often overlooked group, individuals in this network are given a forum for peer counseling and voicing concerns.

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Wings of Light, Inc. is a 501c3 public charity; contributions are tax-deductible. If you are interested in more information or would like to make a contribution, contact: Wings of Light, Inc., 16845 N. 29 Avenue, Ste. 1, Phoenix, AZ 85053 or online, [www.wingsoflight.org](http://www.wingsoflight.org).

# Four Broadcast Professionals Killed in Collision

*On July 27, 2007, four members of the broadcast community in Phoenix, Arizona were tragically killed when two helicopters they were riding in collided. Those killed were Richard L. Krolak, photojournalist, and Craig D. Smith, pilot (both from KNXV Channel 15); and Jim Cox, photojournalist, and Scott Bowerbank, pilot (both from KTVK-TV NewsChannel 3).*

*In memory of Richard Krolak and Craig Smith, the following is an article which appeared in Scripps News, reprinted with permission.*

**E**rnst Pyle died on the island of Teshima covering the war in the Pacific in 1945, and Henry Taylor died covering the Congo for the Scripps Howard News Service in 1960. They were believed to be the only two Scripps reporters to die in the course of reporting – until July 27, 2007, when KNXV tragically lost two beloved colleagues who were covering a Phoenix police chase in a news helicopter.

A chopper carrying ABC15 photojournalist Rick Krolak and pilot Craig Smith collided on that Friday with a helicopter carrying two employees of



*Photojournalist Rick Krolak from KNXV Channel 15 was killed on July 27, 2007.*

KTVK, Channel 3, who were covering the same breaking news. All four perished.

Rick Krolak's exceptional talent made him one of America's most-respected photojournalists. Before joining KNXV, he shot for Discovery Channel, Travel Channel, The Weather Channel, ABC Sports and MTV. In 2001, he helped raise the largest American flag in Arizona to memorialize victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Craig Smith loved his job as a helicopter pilot/reporter. He performed the same duties for the Scripps sister station in Detroit for 14 years before moving to Arizona. His passion for flight, music and cars was contagious, and he realized many of his dreams before he died – including seeing his 1932 Ford Roadster on the cover of Rod & Custom magazine.

Janice Todd, vice president and general manager of ABC15, said "The Phoenix broadcast community lost four wonderful people. Because this community is so close and connected, the sadness of their deaths was felt at every station in Phoenix. At KNXV, Craig and Rick were our family and they lit up the station with their good-natured presence and the passion they shared for their jobs and flying together. They are missed by all of us."



*Pilot Craig Smith often flew with his companion, Molly, his West Highland White Terrier. Molly was not with Craig when he was killed on July 27, 2007.*

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Location \_\_\_\_\_

Type:

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If you are applying for the Family and Friends Support Network, please provide the following information about the person involved in the accident:

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## Our Sincere Thank You...

As of November 12, 2007

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# Irony

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fire station, nineteen families sat. The mood in the room matched the dreary day outside as the tears that were falling tangled with the already wet pavement. As hard as it was with everyone expecting the worst, there was a sense of togetherness in that tiny fire station which words cannot express.

As nightfall approached, we received the news that all nineteen passengers and crew aboard the ill-fated Jetstream 31 were dead. An overwhelming sense of grief overcame the room and reality set in that this was for real. The dark clouds would open and the sun would shine again, yet I was faced with the reality that I would never see my grandfather again.

The next week was an emotional roller coaster that took us from the initial tears to the anger, which led to helplessness and ultimately back to tears that were now filled with love and support. My grandmother's house turned into a makeshift-grieving portal where family and friends could escape reality and simply comfort each other. The outreach of support from hundreds of family members and friends was overwhelming. Knowing they were there really aided in the process. Six days after the crash, my grandfather was finally laid to rest. I will never forget what the priest said to me that day in Mass. As I walked up to the casket for the final time, with the hint of tears shimmering in my eyes, the priest stopped me and said, "Your grandfather loved you." This simple expression turned into a lasting inspirational quote that will stay etched in my mind forever.

I was now faced with the fact that the one person who shared my passion for aviation was now gone. When I was at the airport watching planes, I felt alone yet very alive at the same time. The roar of the engines coming to life helped me feel like my grandfather was right there

with me. However, it was difficult to enjoy the beauty of flight as I was faced with the ultimate irony. The person who sparked my interest in aviation and helped turn it into a career aspiration was killed in a plane crash. Many people questioned my choice and couldn't understand how I could press on with my decision to fly.

The one person who understood my passion was a man named John Millington. He was in charge of a local Aviation Explorers group that I was involved in. John and I started with a student-teacher relationship, yet our bond ultimately turned into a lasting friendship. No one could ever replace my grandfather, but John could help me continue my passion and help me succeed in turning aviation into a career. John became my mentor for my senior project in high school, which was the history of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Airport. This was a very demanding project, yet John helped me through every step and I was rewarded with a distinguished status. As high school ended, John was very influential in helping me make my college plans. I attended Marywood University and received a BBA in Aviation Management, a program in which John helped discover and ultimately make nationally known.

Thinking back, my grandfather passed away before I graduated high school. I really wish he could have been there to see me walk across the stage. Late in 2005, I received another tragic message while working at the airport. John had suddenly passed away. I had to sit down, as I could not believe what I was hearing. To me, John was invincible. He was full of knowledge and inspiration. John paved the way for me to get where I am today. He was involved in many groups and organizations, including Wings of Light. I was faced with more grief, as John too would never see me walk across the stage at my college graduation, in which I would represent a program he was so proud of. John Millington was something special to everyone and he was very inspirational

in my life thus far. Looking back, I feel very blessed that I was one of the lucky ones who could call John Millington my friend.

As we approach seven years since the crash that killed my grandfather, I've had a lot of time to reflect. We all have influences in our lives, but the two biggest aviation influences in my life have been my grandfather and John. I can thank both of them for helping me become the person I am today. I like to take a little bit of each of them wherever I go. John's knowledge and passion for aviation coupled with my grandfather's love and strong sense of values help me daily in life's journey. It's hard to think about what happened on that rainy day in May 2000, but I think the experience has taught me a lot about myself and has given me the power to overcome any obstacle and be a success at whatever I put my mind to.

I have heard many people say that "life's not fair" and "something like this shouldn't happen to me", yet we need to look past the obvious and see how we can become a better person from our experience. My grandfather was very civic-minded and instrumental in the community. A memorial volunteer service scholarship award was established by the Larksville Lions Club to honor his forty-one years of faithful service. My uncles (his sons) are members of the club and continue to serve by carrying on this tradition while representing his spirit as well as his great devotion. My mom and aunt (his daughters) represent his kindness and his ability to stay strong and fight for what they feel is right. My grandmother (his wife) is clearly the foundation of our family and I know my grandfather would be very proud of her ability to keep our deep family tradition alive. We have all come together to part the gray skies and let the light of my grandfather shine down upon us as we grow in his spirit. Personally, I hope to grow up and be just like him. For now, every time I am cruising at 33,000 feet, I know I will be that much closer to my grandfather.

# Heavy Heart

By Steve Bodinet, Senior Reporter  
KTVK-TV NewsChannel 3

We've all heard the saying, but the words take on real meaning when it happens to you. On July 27th of this year, it did happen to us when we first heard our NewsChopper 3 had been in a midair collision with another station's chopper. Right there, in the middle of our chests, in the middle of our beings, we felt it take up residence. A heavy heart. An unbelievably heavy heart.

Our first thoughts were predictable. Who was flying that day? Who was running camera during a police chase that was happening at that time in the busy uptown section of Phoenix? Who did we lose? It took only a few seconds to realize that the answer to that question could only be devastating. We are known far and wide as Arizona's Family. It's a catchy slogan that has worked well for us over the years, but it's so much more than that. We are a family. A close family. And no matter who was on board, our family had just lost two members, two coworkers, two friends.

But as we started to grieve, we also went to work. This terrible personal loss was also the lead story that day. Everything else we had shot, written, produced, edited was pushed aside. We now had to cover the collision of two helicopters and the loss of their pilots and photographers. Our photographers started shooting as our reporters and producers divided up the angles. We needed to tell our viewers who was on board, where and what happened, was anyone on the ground hurt? We set up live shots, and did cut-ins that quickly turned into continuous live coverage. Back and forth from the anchor desk to the field. We were on the air and we needed to be professional. That's what the main part of our family, the viewers, expect from us everyday, on every big story. And almost all the thousands of e-mails, letters and phone calls that we received in the weeks following this dark day gave us a pat on the back for being professional at a time when falling down on the ground and sobbing would



*Pilot Scott Bowerbank was killed July 27, 2007.*

have been much easier.

So how did we tell the story of what happened to our beloved pilot Scott Bowerbank? Our beloved photographer Jimmy Cox? We just did. It sounds simple, but we just did. We had no choice because this is the line of work we chose and it's what we're good at. Everybody worked incredible hours under heart-

breaking circumstances, but we covered our tragedy the same way we cover someone else's tragedy. Get the interviews, get the pictures, get it edited, and get it on the air. Our shows weren't as tight as usual as we filled in the blanks as we went, but they were honest and

*continued on next page*

*Photographer Jim Cox was killed July 27, 2007.*



# Heavy Heart

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truthful to the best of our ability. For almost all of us, it was a first ... covering a huge story, while being part of it. Many who are behind the camera, stepped in front of it to talk about the guys we lost. Scott and Jimmy both were long time members of Arizona's Family and both were just wonderful men. Just wonderful. Adding to the day's pain, many of us

also knew the pilot and photographer who were lost when Channel 15's helicopter fell from the sky. They, also, were wonderful men.

We have had a few people ask us how we liked having a camera stuck in our face during such a tough time? It's no secret that all news operations catch grief for doing just that to others during their tough times. Some think we enjoy it and have no feelings for those who are suffering. Of course, that's ridiculous. In thirty-one years of covering news, I've never met

a single newsperson who has not just hated that part of the job. Think about it. It's hard, and while we do work in news, we are still people with families, and friends, and hearts. That's why following one of many live shots, our crusty, hard-as-nails lead reporter fell to his knees and cried. That's why in the few moments we weren't running, we took time to hug each other. We held each other up because our knees were weak, our legs wobbly. We did our job even though our hearts were broken and unbelievably heavy. So very, very heavy.

