

[<<Back](#)

Family and Friends remember those lost on Air Evac Crash

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By Josh Ault - [Bio](#) | [Email](#)

COLBERT COUNTY, AL (WAFF) - Tuesday, December 30, marks the first anniversary of the Air Evac helicopter crash in the Shoals.

Three crew members lost their lives that day.

WAFF 48's Josh Ault spoke to family and friends who returned to the crash site. The helicopter crashed in Western Colbert County, near the Barton Community.

A memorial to the crew was built earlier this year, but Tuesday was the first time several family members had been to the site.

This was the first time for 18-year-old Evan Bragwell to see where his father died, flight paramedic Allan Bragwell.

"It's beautiful. I think it's wonderful, all the work they put into it," said Evan Bragwell.

Alan's dad, Steve Bragwell says the memorial is a sacred place, "Me and my wife both feel like he is buried down there, instead of where he is buried."

Co-workers of Air Evac Pilot Michael baker, flight paramedic Allan Bragwell, and flight nurse Tiffany Miles constructed the memorial in their honor.

You have to travel through rough terrain to get to the site. The crash site is about 3 miles from the main road and it takes a 4-wheel drive to get there.

"They have 3 monuments honoring each one, fallen hero, and they have a bench with the helicopter on it. It's very peaceful down there," says Carol Crowson, the mother of Miles.

Crowson was unable to make it all the way down to the crash site due to a physical injury, but says she came as far as she could to remember her daughter.

"That's where she drew her last breath; that's where I feel close to her." Crowson says, "I couldn't be there when it happened; I could be there now."

18 family members were able to go to the site. They prayed together, cried together, and remembered the lives that were lost here.

Crowson says the thing she will remember most about her daughter is her smile and her kindness.

Evan Bragwell remembers his father cutting up all the time, playing jokes, and loving everybody.

The family of pilot Michael baker was not able make the trip from Oregon because they were snowed in.

After family members went to the site, the public was allowed to go. Junior Riner, the fire chief with Highway 247 Volunteer Fire Department, was in the woods when the helicopter went down.

He says coming back to the site helps him grieve.

"It's hard to explain," says Riner. "It brings back all those memories of knowing them before the crash. It's peaceful."

He was in the woods that night, searching for a missing hunter and says he can still see the helicopter going down and exploding.

He went to school with Allan Bragwell.

"You wanted him around. When he came off an ambulance on a call, he was always smiling," says Riner of his schoolmate and friend Bragwell.

Colbert County 911 dispatcher Angie Wright helped organize the memorial at the site.

"We came down yesterday, cleaned up, blew the leaves off and made sure we could get the ATV's down there," says Wright.

She worked with Allan Bragwell and Tiffany Miles and believes that going to the memorial makes her feel closer to those lost.

"When you're down there, you feel them down there," Wright said. "You feel their presence down there."

Both wright and Riner say Bragwell will be remembered for his smile, and making them laugh, but they say he also knew when it was time to be serious.

Wright remembers Tiffany as being a good-hearted person.

They hope this memorial will be a place of healing and a place to reflect.

Riner says "It just brings things back to perspective that it something we do, and we'll go again."

The cause of the crash is still under investigation, but the NTSB says a report should be finished by the end of January.



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