

ATTACK ON AMERICA - THE DAY AFTER - THE VICTIMS - An All-American kid with smile that would light up your day

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PAWTUCKET - Patrick Nassaney Sr. was pulling into his driveway Tuesday morning when he heard on the radio that United Airlines Flight 175 had crashed into the World Trade Center.

His son's plane.

"I must have the flight number wrong," he thought. It couldn't be true.

He knew that his son Shawn had flown out of Logan Airport that morning on his way to Hawaii, so when he heard the initial crash reports he canceled a business meeting and headed home, to Southbridge, Mass., just in case.

As he got there, his worst fear was confirmed.

"Your first reaction is disbelief," he said. "You refuse to believe when you first hear it."

Even yesterday, after breaking the news to family members, after attending a memorial Mass, and after watching the chilling replays of the terrorist attacks on television, Nassaney said, "It still hasn't sunk in."

Shawn Nassaney, 25, had such a zest for life that his death is incomprehensible to those who knew him.

"His smile was the biggest piece of him. It would light up your day," recalls Sister Regina Brennan, Nassaney's guidance counselor at St. Raphael Academy in Pawtucket, from which he graduated in 1994.

Smart, athletic and ambitious were some of the words used to describe Shawn yesterday when family and friends gathered at his home, at 227 Oriole Ave., in Pawtucket.

Growing up, the brown-haired, brown-eyed boy was an All-American kind of kid, playing Little League baseball and serving as an altar boy at his parish and elementary school, St. Teresa's in Pawtucket.

Shawn's father said, "One of his friends from high school called and said, 'It's amazing, Shawn was everyone's best friend.'"

At Bryant College, he excelled both as a student and as an athlete.

He was captain of the cross-country squad and twice won the team's MVP award, said Chuck Sullivan, Bryant's sports information director.

Brendan Shannon, a friend and former teammate, said, "When I first came to Bryant from Ohio, Shawn was the one who took me under his wing and helped me with everything I needed."

He was "quite a student, too," his father said. Shawn graduated from Bryant cum laude, with a degree in business, something he had been interested in since high school, Sister Regina remembers.

He went to work at American Power Conversion, in West Kingston, where he was a team sales manager.

Shawn lived with his brothers, Ryan, 27, and Patrick Jr., 30, in a triple-decker owned by their grandmother. Shawn's apartment was on the third floor. "It's funny," his father said. "I used to kiddingly ask him what's for dinner and he'd say, 'It depends what's being served on the first and second floor.'"

Although he lived in the same neighborhood for most of his life, Shawn was cosmopolitan. He studied in London for a semester during his junior year of college. And his job took him all the way to Sydney, Australia, where he lived for a year, until moving back to Pawtucket in December.

He then enrolled in Providence College's MBA program.

"For a 25-year-old, he had quite a resume," his father said.

Tuesday, Shawn left town for his latest adventure: a weeklong vacation in Hawaii with his girlfriend, Lynn Goodchild, 25, of Attleboro. They had been dating since college, his father said.

"I last talked to him Monday," he said. "He called the night before he flew out, in fact. My wife told him to watch out for the sharks."