

Lament For Crash Dead Reflects Grief Of City

By CRAIG AMMERMAN
Associated Press Writer

"This town died today." With that cry, a nurse at Huntington Hospital reflected the grief at Marshall University and its home city after Saturday night's crash of a Southern Airways chartered DC-9 carrying the school's football team and others.

Among those on the plane, in addition to the players, coaching staff and boosters, were three prominent physicians and their wives, a newly elected state legislator who also was one of Huntington's wealthiest men, a past president of Marshall's alumni association, a city councilman, two past presidents of the Marshall athletic boosters club, an industrialist and the sports director of a local television station.

In all, there were 75 dead, and a school of 8,500 and a city of 75,000 went into mourning. At midnight, about 400 students and citizens joined hands in a campus memorial service, opened with the singing of an African hymn, "Kumbaya."

Most wept openly. Some fell to their knees as they sang.

"Someone's singing 'Lord, Kumbaya'... Someone's hurting Lord, Kumbaya... Someone's praying Lord, Kumbaya." Friends had to carry young Mrs. Roger Childers from a Huntington hospital, where she had gone "hoping for a miracle."

Childers had been a Marshall linebacker, but suffered a head injury. He successfully underwent dangerous brain surgery during the summer and while recovering was serving as student team manager, hoping to join the playing team again someday.

At a makeshift treatment center in the school's physical education building, doctors and nurses treated students in shock.

"Alas, please come back... please come back," a cool screamed as she lay on one of 100 mattresses set up in the center.

"God what has happened?" another coed cried. In hallways outside, secreta-

ries and football coaches sat staring and crying. Most of their bosses were aboard the twin-engine jet. Head coach Rick Tolley, and athletic director Charles Kautz, were among the dead.

At nearby Cabell-Huntington Hospital, citizens and students were ushered to a conference room. They had come late in the night, looking, hoping, for survivors.

At least 10 of them crumpled to the floor when the cordoned-off hospital, primed for caring for survivors, remained quiet. There were no injuries.

Three prominent Huntington physicians—Dr. Ray Hagley, a past president of the Marshall alumni association; Dr. H. D. Proctor and Dr. Joseph Chambers—were aboard the plane with their wives. So were Dr. Glenn H. Preston, a well known Huntington dentist, and his wife.

Other passengers included Huntington city councilman Murrill Ralsen and his wife, and Michael Prestera, a wealthy Huntington trucking executive who was elected Nov. 3

to the West Virginia Legislature.

The coaches, players and boosters who died were among those who, in the last two years, had rallied in support of Marshall. It was a tough two-year period—when the school went 27 games without a victory, was expelled from its conference for recruiting violations, and saw its head coach removed for alleged irregularities.

It was those people who had spearheaded drives that raised \$150,000 for scholarship funds and pressured the West Virginia Legislature into releasing \$1 million for an artificial playing surface.

At the airport at nearby Kenova, the wife of television sportscaster Ken Jones and their three children were in the crowd awaiting the return of the chartered plane.

They waited and watched in the cold night air as the big jet lazily circled beneath low, dark rain clouds, making its final approach.

Their gaze turned to horror when the jet disappeared behind a hill, followed by a brilliant flash and a mushroom of black smoke.

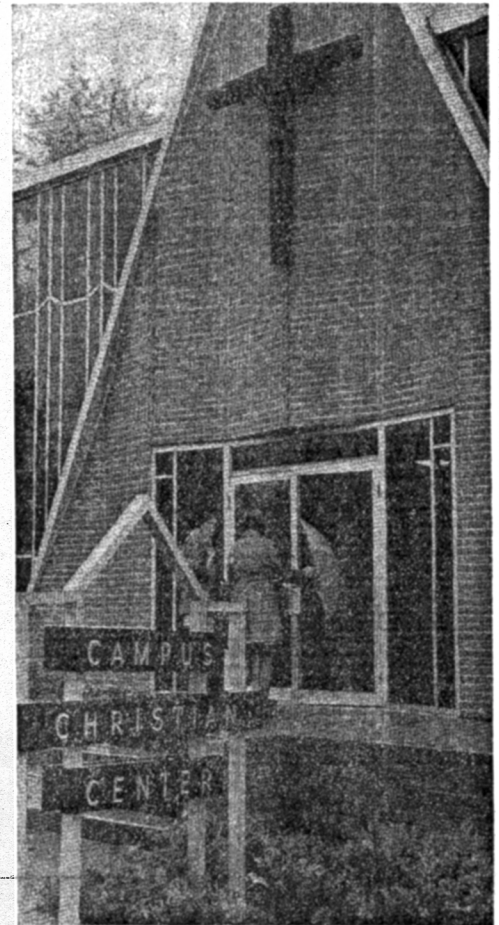
In Charleston, newsmen awaited another telephone call from Jeff Nathan, sports editor of Marshall's student newspaper. He had called the Sunday Gazette-Mail sports desk earlier after the game from Greenville, N.C., and gave sketchy accounts of the action.

But he said he had to hurry. "I don't have too much time. Our plane is leaving right away and I'll have to hurry." He added as he hung up, "The plane is leaving, I'll call when we land."

From a Huntington telephone booth Saturday night, Rich Taglang, a junior football player, told his parents in Bethlehem, Pa., that he was alive.

Taglang was late Friday when the plane departed for Greenville, and he missed the trip.

"I'm alive, he sobbed into the telephone. 'Nobody else is... they're all dead.'"



Coads Attend Memorial Services Sunday On Marshall Campus

Worst Air Disaster For W. Va.

The Associated Press

The tragic crash near Tri-State Saturday night of a chartered jetliner carrying the Marshall University football team, coaches and fans home from a game was the worst air disaster in West Virginia history.

The Southern Airways DC-9 skinned the top of a ridge near the West Virginia-Kentucky border before cartwheeling into a second hill, just two miles from the airport runway west of Huntington, killing all 75 persons aboard.

Prior to the Tri-State disaster, the worst crash of an airplane in the Mountain State had been the one involving a Piedmont Airlines plane at Charleston's Kanawha Airport on Aug. 24, 1968.

In the Piedmont crash, 32 persons were killed outright when the plane came in from Cincinnati early in the day and crashed short of the runway, and three persons later died of injuries.

Early morning fog and haze over the Kanawha Valley were cited as contributing causes.

Before that, the state's worst crash involved an Air National Guard plane which crashed April 8, 1951, also while attempting to land at Kanawha Airport. The crash killed 21 Guardsmen.

During World War II, an Army troop transport smashed into a mountain in McDowell County, killing a number of servicemen.

The mountains have been scarred by the crashes of many smaller aircraft, with the most recent being the crash of a plane which fell in Preston County the night of the general election, Nov. 3, killing one person outright and resulting in the death later of a second person.

Tri-State Airport was the scene of the crash Oct. 29 of a small Army airplane. Killed in the crash were Maj. Gen. Edwin Burba, deputy commander of the U. S. First Army, and two warrant officers.



Students Hold All Night Service At Campus Christian Center

Artists Series Called Off

City, Courthouse Offices Are Shut, Events Canceled

By BOB WITHERS

Several government offices, meetings and luncheons will be closed or cancelled here today and Tuesday as Tri-State Area residents mourn the loss of most of the Marshall University football team and coaching staff and several boosters in the tragic plane crash near Tri-State Airport Saturday night.

City Hall and all Cabell County offices will be closed for the two-day period. It was announced Sunday. The Cabell Court signed an order closing county offices at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Dr. Donald N. Dedmon, acting president of Marshall, announced that all classes at the university would be suspended on Monday and Tuesday. Cabell County's schools will be in session as usual, however, Superintendent Willis Herbig told The Herald-Dispatch. Mr. Herbig said that the board had not authorized the closing of the schools.

Dr. J. Bernard Poindexter, president of the Huntington Board of Park Commissioners, said Sunday that Park Board offices would be closed Monday. Also, all flags on park property will be flown at half mast until further notice.

Functions postponed until undetermined future dates include a Huntington East High School football banquet previously scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Friday and an initiation ceremony of new members into Kappa Delta Phi sorority, which was set for 7:30

p.m. Friday in the North Parlor of MU's Old Main.

Eight New Careers classes, sponsored by the Southwestern Community Action Council, set for Tuesday, were cancelled but will resume Thursday. The monthly luncheon meeting of the community affairs department of the Huntington Woman's Club, set for noon Wednesday, was also cancelled.

Mevinsville, flags will be flown at half-staff. In Boyd County, Ky., and Lawrence County, Ohio, officials said. Ashland Mayor Charles H. Gartrell said city officials will join in the mourning. Ironton City Manager James B. Skirvin said no decision has been made concerning office-closings in conjunction with the memorial service here.

The sisters of St. Marys Hospital announced Sunday that a memorial mass will be conducted at 3 p.m. today in the hospital chapel for the crash victims.

The executive committee along with members of the Marshall Artists, Inc., have decided in view of the period of mourning at Marshall University to cancel tonight's concert featuring Paul Mauriat. Those holding tickets should retain them and not discard them as they will be honored at a later date.

The vice president-manager of the corporation, Curtis Baxter, is making every effort to reschedule this concert soon.

The Huntington Audubon Society has cancelled a meeting scheduled for tonight at Marshall University.

Poor Visibility, Emotional Students Cause Overflights

Below minimum weather conditions 30 minutes after the crash of the chartered Southern Airways jetliner near Tri-State Airport and emotional Marshall University students were the reasons for overflights at the field by four airline flights Saturday night.

Piedmont Airlines flight 84 from Chicago was due to land at Tri-State Airport at 8:24 Saturday night—just 30 minutes after the nearest approximate time of the crash that claimed the lives of most of the Marshall football team, its coaching staff and several prominent Huntington residents.

A Piedmont spokesman said Sunday night that the tower was reporting visibility at three-eighths of a mile at the time of the scheduled landing. Minimum visibility for an instrument landing at Tri-State is three quarters of a mile.

Eastern Air Lines cancelled the landings of flights 657 from Newark at 8:25 p.m. and 651 from Washington at 11:35 p.m. as a safety factor, according to Robert Dillard, Eastern station manager.

"There were a lot of emotional Marshall students all over the ramps and taxiways trying to locate the crash of the team plane and we just decided it would be a dangerous operation to try and land the flights."

"Also, FAA likes to check out all the landing aids before they are used again after a crash such as the one Saturday night," Mr. Dillard explained.

Allegheny Air Lines flight 515 from Pittsburgh was cancelled after the crash but this action was attributed to poor weather conditions by an Allegheny spokesman Sunday night.

State's Grief 'More Than Our Share' — Hechler

WASHINGTON — "Our hearts go out to the families of those who were lost, as Marshall University and the entire community weep for their sons and daughters," Rep. Ken Hechler, D-W. Va., said of the plane tragedy that killed 75 at Tri-State Airport in Huntington Saturday.

"In the past few years," Rep. Hechler added, "West Virginia has had more than our share of grief-laden disasters — the Silver Bridge, Farmington and now this most poignantly personal tragedy which affects every one of us."

"Yet somehow tragedy always brings out the best in the rest of us, in unselfishness, cooperative spirit and determination to look to the future with confidence. Out of these ashes, the indomitable spirit of Marshall will rise to new heights."

"The saddened and sobered city of Huntington will move into its centennial year with a new resolve that what we accomplish will honor the memories of those we have lost," Rep. Hechler concluded.

Bryant Replacing Prestera As Planning Group Head

Louis N. Bryant of Ironton, chairman of the Lawrence County Board of Commissioners, will act as interim chairman of the K-v-a Interstate Planning Commission, it was announced Sunday.

Michael R. Prestera of Huntington, the chairman of Kyova and the Tri-State leader who spearheaded organization of the commission, was board the ill-fated Southern Airways jetliner that crashed near Kenova Saturday.

Ray Crabtree, commission director, announced Sunday that Mr. Bryant will become acting chairman by virtue of his vice-chairmanship of the commission.

Other officers are H. Glenn Fogle of Kenova, a Wayne County Court member, secretary, and Ashland Mayor

Charles H. Gartrell, treasurer.

Mr. Crabtree said a meeting scheduled for Tuesday has been cancelled. "A meeting will be scheduled in the near future when the nominating committee will recommend the new officers," he said.

Mr. Prestera, a Huntington trucking executive, had been Kyova's chairman since its organization in 1968. Creation of the planning commission followed a 15-year effort by him to have Huntington-Ashland-Ironton leaders work in union on regional-type problems and needs.

Mr. Prestera won election in the Nov. 3 balloting to the House of Delegates (D-Cabell County).



Bulldozer brought to site of tragedy to aid in sorting through wreckage of chartered airliner