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# Being pilot was goal of plane crash victim

By Lori McGinnis

Freeman Staff and Associated Press

EAGLE — Jeffrey Gagliano, a pilot since he was 15, had no fear that he would one day lose his life in the career he loved.

Gagliano, 30, of Eagle, was the co-pilot on American Eagle's Flight 4184, which crashed Monday in Indiana, killing all 68 aboard.

Officials from the National Transportation Safety Board continue to investigate the crash.

Officials said today that Flight 4184 flew in a holding pattern for 32 minutes, then descended to 8,000 feet in rough weather when air traffic controllers asked it to hold for 10 more minutes.

"Thank you," the pilot acknowledged. Those were the last words heard from the crew.

"He had a love for planes. He said one day, 'Dad, I'm going to be a commercial pilot,'" said Gagliano's father, Al, of Eagle.

Jeff's interest in planes surfaced when he was 12, about the time he traveled by air with his father on business trips. Al Gagliano often gave his son models of the planes they flew in. At age 15, Jeff started to learn to fly.

"He got his pilot's license before he got his driver's license," his father said.

After graduating from Brookfield Central High School, Jeff attended Gateway Aviation in Kenosha. He later taught at Gateway and flew auto parts for Chrysler from Kenosha to New York to build up air miles so he could be a commercial pilot.

Jeff Gagliano's dream was realized five years ago, when he logged enough hours to be hired at American Eagle.

"He was a good, hard-working kid. He loved his job and he was devoted to it," Al Gagliano said.

The younger Gagliano lived at home with his father and mother, Cindy, and sister, Gina. He commuted to O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.

When he wasn't flying, he enjoyed working with his father with the 50 horses on the family ranch. He had no fear of flying, his father said.

"He was confident and strong. He knew exactly what he was doing every time."

The family heard about Monday's crash on the radio but was not certain Jeff was on the plane until the airline called about four hours later.



Gagliano

"My heart just dropped," Al Gagliano said.

"He was my son, my best friend. He was a son to everyone he met. He was always there helping other people, always with that big smile."

Al Gagliano said he was extremely proud his son accomplished his goals.

"I bragged to everyone. His picture is all over my office."

In addition to his parents and sister, Gina, he is survived by another sister, Cindy Sterle.

A Federal Aviation Administration official, who described the last minutes of Flight 4184, said preliminary transcripts show there were no transmissions or distress signals after the pilots agreed to circle for 10 minutes more.

Investigative efforts since the crash have been hampered by rain and mud, but weather today was clear. NTSB officials prepared to begin carrying out the remains of the 64 passengers and four crew members.

Searchers who slogged through the muck on foot soon after the crash described small chunks of smashed airplane and pieces of bodies.

"There's not one body that's intact," a firefighter said.