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# Father's memories never

## fade after son's plane crash

Tuesday is the 12th anniversary of pilot's death

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EAGLE - Jeff Gagliano looked forward to Oct. 31 every year. It meant hard work but good times helping his father, Al, on the family ranch hosting Halloween hayrides.

Unfortunately, Oct. 31 also became the date of Jeff Gagliano's death.

Gagliano, 30, was killed along with 67 others when the American Eagle ATR 72 he was flying crashed into a field near Roselawn, Ind., in 1994.

According to a report on the accident issued by the National Transportation Safety Board, the cause of the crash was a buildup of ice on the control surfaces of the aircraft that occurred while the plane was in a holding pattern, flying in and out of freezing drizzle.

As he prepares for the customers that come out to celebrate Halloween at his Kettle Moraine Ranch in Eagle, Al Gagliano said he still misses his son, who was also his best friend.

"He liked to dress up in a gorilla costume and give the kids a scare," he said of Jeff, smiling at the memory. "He loved being with kids."

Jeff Gagliano, an alumni of Brookfield Central High School, also loved to fly, thanks to traveling with his father as a kid.

"I would take him with me and I would buy him a model of whatever plane we flew on," Al Gagliano said.

His son started taking flying lessons at a local airport at age 12, Al Gagliano said, and had his pilot's license before he was even old enough to drive.

"Back in those days, you could get your pilot license at 15, which he did," Gagliano said.

Early in his aviation career, Jeff Gagliano flew car parts across the country for Chrysler, his father said.

in the air, he was always calm and in control," he added with a laugh.

Gagliano said Jeff never really discussed any fear of flying, but that he did have nightmares about crashing.

"Sometimes I wonder if he had some sort of premonition," Gagliano said. "Sometimes he would wake in the night yelling,

"Whenever he was flying in the area, he would come over the ranch and dip his wing to let me know he was OK," Gagliano recalled.

After a stint in the Army, where he learned how to fly helicopters, Jeff Gagliano went to work for American Airlines, eventually becoming first officer in

that company's commuter airline, American Eagle.

"He was a great pilot," Al Gagliano said of his son, who had more than 4,000 hours flying time by age 30. "He was just a week away from becoming a captain when the crash happened."

"He'd get lost driving to Waukesha, but

"Jeff said he loved to fly because it was the closest thing to being in heaven. And that's where he is now."

- Al Gagliano

"We're going down, we're going down."

Jeff Gagliano is buried in a cemetery in Eagle but a large black granite monument marks his passing on a windswept hill at the ranch near a picturesque chapel Al Gagliano had built in memory of his mother.

Etched into the glossy black surface of the stone, which was imported from Africa, are two images of his son, in one of which he's waving, along with a tribute written by his father, Al Gagliano said.

"This monument upon a hill marks the spot, and always will, of a true man sent from heaven above, who showed children the meaning of love," the inscription says. "From his heart, he taught young and old, to reach out for their pot of gold. With his warm smile and all his love, encouraged others to rise above. He strived in his desires for what he wanted to be, and passed that on to others so they could also see.

"That's what it takes to be a man," it continues. "That's our Jeff, giving all he can."

To this day, Gagliano said, he still looks up to the sky whenever a plane flies over.

"Jeff said he loved to fly because it was the closest thing to being in heaven," Gagliano said, glancing up into a cloudless blue October sky. "And that's where he is now."

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Kevin Hamaco/Freeman Staff

Al Gagliano talks about his son, Jeff, near a marker remembering him while on the Kettle Moraine Ranch in Eagle. Jeff Gagliano, 30, a Waukesha County native, died Oct. 31, 1994, when the plane he was piloting crashed in Roselawn, Ind., killing all 68 people on board.