

like. I've made a point of not even opening them," he says, "because as soon as you start to relate to something as an individual you become overwhelmed."

As the search extended to the ocean bottom, Dockerill knows that even more gruesome discoveries lay ahead. But Dockerill quickly adds that the search team members are professionals who are keen to see the job through in the hopes of helping victims' relatives. The same mixture of grim determination and compassion was evident

last week at the makeshift morgue at CFB Shearwater where a staff of about 200 attempted to identify victims' remains using such aids as X-rays, dental records and DNA samples. In addition to overseeing the round-the-clock operation, Nova Scotia chief medical examiner John Butt also met with several family members of the victims to explain why they could not claim the bodies of their loved ones. "I spend a lot of time sitting down and making contact with them," said Butt during one of several media briefings, "actually touching them and looking them in the eye."

Not everyone swept into the post-crash maelstrom acted so nobly. Civil litigation lawyers, most of them American-based, were clearly open for business. On Sept. 9, the first lawsuit was launched by boxing legend Jake LaMotta, who lost his son and business partner, Joseph, 49, in the Swissair crash. LaMotta is seeking \$190 million in actual and punitive damages. In the aftermath of a major air disaster, litigation is both inevitable and often beneficial to the aggrieved parties. But the haste with which the U.S. lawyers (many of whom stand to rake in up to 50 per cent of any eventual awards in contingency fees) acted in the wake of the Swissair crash struck some observers as unsavory—if entirely predictable. "Lawyers are pushing would-be clients into action because they can negotiate lucrative contingency fees," says Michael Milde, a professor and immediate past director of McGill University's Institute of Air and Space Law. "These ambulance chasers are a shame to the profession."

Through it all, the victims' families—and the communities along Nova Scotia's south shore who had reached out to help them—continued their attempts to cope with the tragedy. During the course of the week hundreds of grieving relatives from Europe and the United States arrived in Halifax, then made the 45-km journey along winding roads to the scenic granite promontory at Peggys Cove. There, they threw flowers in the water, picked

up pebbles to take back home, or simply gazed out at the sea.

On Wednesday night, a public memorial service at Indian Harbor, near Peggys Cove, was attended by more than 175 family members of the victims, as well as hundreds of ordinary Nova Scotians. "It's nice to be here for the families," said Andrew Lapointe, a local volunteer fireman who had participated in the initial land search in the hours after the crash. "I feel they are a part of me now." As Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Swiss President Flavio Cotti looked on,

a choir from St. Margaret's Bay Elementary School opened the service with a popular song that evoked the bond that had developed between the foreign mourners and their host community: "Lean on me when you're not strong/I'll be your friend/I'll help you carry on."

The sunset ceremony featured speakers and hymns from four faiths. But perhaps the most stirring words came from Claire Mortimer, whose father, retired *New York Times* executive John Mortimer, and step-mother Hilda perished in the crash. In an impromptu address, delivered in a steady, even voice, Mortimer recalled how local fishermen had scrambled into their boats in the dark hours just after the crash to look for survivors. "Your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed," she said. "Your outpouring of help will not be forgotten." Mortimer later told *Maclean's* she had found the service cathartic. "I think we needed this," she said. "It gave us a feeling, some sense, of closure. Now, the grieving process can begin."

It will not be easy—either for the stricken relatives or the Nova Scotians touched by their sorrow. O'Neill points out that, because of the intense media interest in the crash, victims' relatives may be reminded of their loss for years to come, when they pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news. "They will relive the event and that will generate the emotional pain," he says.

As for the fishermen who responded to the plight of Flight 111's victims—as well as the police and military personnel who are still sifting the wreckage for clues—they will also need time to make peace with the tragedy that happened in their backyard. "We all saw too much horror that night," says Ralph Kerrivan, a retired fisherman from Lower Tantallon, who jumped on a friend's boat to respond to the crisis on Sept. 2. "Seeing death like that up close, it plays on your mind. No one will get over this easily—if at all."

With SUSANNE HILLER in Peggys Cove

A tale of two aircraft

Boeing's MD-11 jetliner is generally considered exceptionally reliable, with only two fatal crashes in its eight years in service. But an analysis of reports filed with the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board reveals a relatively high number of potentially dangerous problems associated with the plane. Halifax doctor Alex Richman, who conducted the study, compared the MD-11's reported difficulties between 1991 and 1995 with those filed concerning the far more frequently flown Boeing 757, an aircraft similar in age:

	MD-11	757
Flying hours	594,000	5,200,000
Number of departures	96,500	2,200,000
Number of planes studied	43	300
Number of safety-related reports filed	167	144
Percentage of planes reporting dumping fuel	23	0
Percentage reporting shutting down engines	37	20
Percentage reporting unscheduled landings	72	51
Percentage reporting vibrations	28	8

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