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Co-pilot refused to quit after 9/11

By WILLIAM J. GORTA and DAN MANGAN

American Airlines co-pilot Sten Molin stared down his fears after witnessing the World Trade Center attacks, his grief-stricken father said a day after the plane his son was piloting crashed into the Rockaways.

Molin's father, Stan, said a friend had suggested after Sept. 11 that his son quit being a pilot.

"His answer was that he would pay them to fly those big airliners," the father said outside his Greenwich, Conn., home yesterday.

And Stan Molin said that fact eased some of his pain. "He died doing what he loved — that helps a little," said Stan, a retired Eastern Airlines pilot who taught Sten to fly.

Although Molin was the co-pilot of American Airlines Flight 587, he was at the controls Monday when the plane crashed after takeoff.

Stan Molin said his son particularly liked working flights to the Dominican Republic — as he was doing Monday — because of the schedule.

On Sept. 11, Molin, 34, was on the runway at JFK when his plane's takeoff was delayed after authorities found $20,000 in cash on board. His dad said Molin saw the explosion when the second hijacked plane hit the World Trade Center.

Molin's captain on Monday, Edward States, 42, was mourned yesterday outside Princeton, N.J.

"Those of us who knew Ed have suffered a deep and tragic loss," said family friend Tom Murray, a fellow American Airlines pilot.

Murray said States' "activities centered around his children": Bradley, 10, and Daniel, 8. States was a Cub Scout leader, Little League coach, Sunday-school teacher, and a volunteer at his sons' school, Murray said.

A steady parade of visitors entered the States home in Plainsboro, where his widow, Mary Alden, grieved with her sons.

Alden's parents, Nancy and John Alden of Hyde Park, N.Y., said the couple had met while both were in the Air Force.

States was with American Airlines for 16 years, and was a captain for the past decade.

Last month, he and a fellow pilot carried a U.S. flag on a 14-mile-long leg of a cross-country run that re-created the intended Boston-to-Los Angeles flight of the planes that were crashed into the Twin Towers.

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