

October 21, 2015



Jerry Milligan, 48
~ 11/5/62 - 8/13/2011 ~
Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita, Kansas

By: Rosanne Milligan
USMWF - Family Members

I'm Rosanne Milligan, wife, now widow, of Jerry Milligan. Jerry died 2 days after a workplace fall @ Spirit Aerosystems. He was working as a member of the Overhead Crane Crew, where he'd been since March of 2011. At the time of his death, he had almost 25 years of service to Boeing / Spirit.

I'd like you to know who he was and what he was like. He was like the "energizer bunny". He was a high energy person who didn't know how to sit still and do nothing. He was the most aggressive worker I know. Not only did he work for Spirit, but for 8 years prior to his death, he also had a business where he spent several hours every day. He understood how things worked mechanically, and could fix about anything. Whatever he did, he expected to do it well. He was always early to work and appointments. He was open to learning new things. He'd done woodworking, operated heavy equipment, and learned locksmithing. He loved Fords, whether it

was an F 150, a Lightning, or a Mustang. Many of his coworkers have commented that his smile brightened their day and how he was always willing to help them.

On Thursday, August 11, a coworker called to tell me there'd been an accident, and Jerry was being taken to the hospital by ambulance. As I drove there I reminded myself of what I knew. Jerry was a strong man, competent, and a fighter. Surely it wouldn't be that bad. I was unprepared for what I saw and heard. Jerry was in a coma, with severe head injuries and brain damage. The Dr. said "There is no surgery for this". He had little chance of survival. If somehow he did survive, he would remain in a vegetative state. There were medical complications and other injuries not apparent right away. The next day his kidneys shut down. The agonizing decision was made to stop life support. On Saturday, August 13, Jerry went to be with Jesus. He was 48 years old.

Our lives have been forever changed. We lost a husband, father, grandfather, son, brother, coworker and friend. Our 25th wedding anniversary would have been January 1. Our daughters no longer hear their dad's fatherly advice, or have him there for the special events in their lives. He's not here to hug them or just say that he loves them. Our 17 year old grandson will graduate from high school next month, but his Papa Jerry won't be there to tell him how proud he is. He says his Papa Jerry was the best. He looked forward to activities they'd do together. Our 4 year old granddaughter will never again stand outside to say "love you" and wave goodbye to her Pa as he leaves for work. No more holding the flashlight for him as he looks under the hood of a car, or riding the 4 wheeler with him as they splash through puddles. Her Pa was THE important man in her life. Jerry's mom says he was her "rock", but he's not here to help her now.

Our world has been turned upside down. There are feelings of intense grief, fear, insecurity, anger and injustice. We don't know who we are anymore.

For me the last 8 months have been unreal. First there was the accident, then the death and the funeral. Then it's life insurance, health insurance and all the things that have to be dealt with and changed. The Boeing / Spirit income had provided well for us, and came with great benefits. It allowed me to be home with our girls and our grandchildren. Contrary to what most people believe, there will be no big settlement from the company. We don't get to sue them. What benefits I get from Workers Comp. is what I get, for a time.

Before Jerry's death, other employees had fallen under similar circumstances. They, fortunately, landed differently and weren't seriously hurt. If safety really IS the priority, why weren't additional safety measures implemented then, before a death? Since Jerry's death I've been told some changes have been made, but it's too late for him. Does it take a death to do what needs to be done? OSHA's investigation resulted in a "serious" safety violation. The fine? A mere \$7000. What a disappointment. That's like a slap in the face to us - hoping for some justice.

I hope as a result of Jerry's death, more emphasis will be placed on worker safety. The cost to the family of a lost loved one is great, and it is personal. We won't "get over it", we have to go on. But we will never forget.