

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Aviation

Medevac duo killed in plane crash lived Outside but were drawn to the Alaska outdoors

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Paramedic Maddox Burts and registered nurse Rob Cartner were only a few days away from the end of their monthlong shift with Medevac Alaska when their plane crashed Friday night on the Kenai Peninsula.

Burts, Cartner and pilot Glen Morthorpe died in the fiery crash above the Sterling Highway near Cooper Landing. The air ambulance was headed from Anchorage to Seward to pick up a patient.

The plane crashed under unknown circumstances, officials said, although other air ambulance firms declined trips on the same route due to weather concerns.

Morthorpe, 75, was a longtime pilot and flight instructor who was “willing to go out in the dead of night and rescue someone who needed help,” his friend Rob Stapleton said.

Cartner and Burts worked and lived in Anchorage every other month during their shifts for Medevac Alaska. They were scheduled to return home to their families in the Lower 48 for all of December.

Cartner went to school for nursing and eventually landed in Bethel as part of a travel nursing program, his sister Leigh Marshall said. He spent much of his time in Alaska hunting, fishing or cross-country skiing, she said.

Cartner worked in Nome before joining Medevac Alaska several years ago and working as a flight nurse based out of Anchorage.

Burts, who was 35, became a paramedic in his 30s. Mary Burts said the birth of their daughter spurred him to go back to school “and do something that was more than just working at a job.”

“It took him awhile to find his calling,” she said. “It’s like he had to find that niche and when he did it was just amazing.”

After finishing his paramedic training and certification at Coastal Community College, Burts worked at Lifeguard Ambulance in Mobile. His former coworker Maryleigh Salter said Burts was always goofy and turned strangers into friends with his contagious smile.

He started working every-other-month shifts with Alaska Medevac a few years ago, Mary Burts said.

“He loved the outdoors and wildlife and Alaska was kind of a bucket list thing for him,” she said.

Mary Burts said she thought he might be safer working in air ambulances because he’d be responding to a different type of call.

“On a certain level, anyone in a first responder position has some risk in their job,” she said. “He had military members in his family and duty and service just came naturally to him. The rewards outweighed the risk.”

Mary Burts said the shock of his death has been hard to handle.

“They’re all so thorough and so careful,” she said. “There’s so many things they look at — they were always trying to be as safe as possible.”

Morthorpe was a longtime pilot with over 40,000 flight hours, said his friend Rob Stapleton. Morthorpe was deeply involved in the aviation community and Stapleton said he will be remembered for his patience, knowledge and dedication to detail.

“I’d qualify him as one of Alaska’s legendary pilots,” Stapleton said.

Morthorpe volunteered as the director of Safety for the Alaska Wing Civil Air Patrol, taught flight instructions at Take Flight Alaska and worked for years at the Medallion Foundation, a nonprofit air safety organization that closed in November.

Morthorpe grew up in Australia but has lived in Eagle River with his wife for decades, Stapleton said.

He was working for Security Aviation when the plane crashed Friday. The company said in a statement Monday that Morthorpe was “one of our most experienced pilots. Glen was a true pioneer in Alaska’s aviation community, and we extend our heartfelt sympathies to his family and friends.”

Cartner was looking forward to spending Christmas with his family, Marshall said. He was scheduled to be home in North Carolina on Monday.

He leaves behind his wife, Xiaolin Cartner, and stepdaughter Katie Cartner.

Burts planned to fly home to Alabama on Tuesday with his 11-year-old daughter Madi and his mother, who had visited him in Anchorage for Thanksgiving, his wife said.

About this Author

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Comments