

Hopeful loved ones wait out search for missing air crews



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Che Barnes' twin brother, Noah, talks about the pilot near where Che once recovered Noah's wedding ring on the family farm.

FROM CHILDHOOD, CAPAY OFFICER YEARNED TO FLY

BY BOBBY CAINA CALVAN
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He was described as a down-to-earth soul, the son of organic farmers, his sights pointed upward, to a destiny far above the horizons that encircled his tiny hometown of Capay.

When the crop-dusters roared from above, Che Barnes raced to the balcony of his family home, his gaze alight with wonderment as the plane flew over fields. He would record the sound of the machine in flight so he could replay it again and again, recalled his twin brother, Noah.

"From the very beginning, he loved planes. From the very beginning, his path was chosen for him," the brother said on a Saturday afternoon filled with remembrance and anxiety, as family and friends awaited word on the search for the missing Coast Guard crew that presumably perished near San Diego.

Che Barnes, 35, was the commander of the Sacramento-based C-130 Hercules rescue plane that apparently collided in midair with a Marine Corps helicopter during a rescue mission that went awry.

As a boy, he did his chores on the family farm along Highway 16 west of Woodland - picking turnips, moving irrigation pipes, everything to tend the family's

PILOT | Page A16

NINE FEARED DEAD

FROM THE COAST
GUARD CREW:

Lt. Cmdr. Che J.
Barnes, 35.

Capay, aircraft
commander

Lt. Adam W.
Bryant, 28,

Crewe, Va., co-pilot
Chief Petty Officer

John F. Seidman,
43, Carmichael,

flight engineer

Petty Officer 2nd
Class Carl P.

Grigonis, 35, May-
field Heights, Ohio,

navigator

Petty Officer 2nd
Class Monica L.

Beacham, 29,
Decaturville, Tenn.,

radio operator

Petty Officer 2nd
Class Jason S.

Moletzsky, 26,
Norristown, Pa.,

air crew

Petty Officer 3rd
Class Danny R.

Kreder II, 22,
Elm Mott, Texas,

drop master

FROM THE MARINE
CORPS CREW:

Maj. Samuel Leigh,
35, Kennebec,

Maine

1st Lt. Thomas
Claiborne, 26,

Parker, Colo.



Barnes



Bryant



Seidman



Grigonis



Beacham



Moletzsky



Kreder



Courtesy of Carrie Reynolds

Lt. Cmdr. Che Barnes piloted the Coast Guard C-130 Hercules rescue plane that crashed Thursday in the ocean off San Diego.

Pilot: He had a soft spot for helping children

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growing business, a pioneering venture of the area's organic farming industry.

"He didn't complain. He just did the work," said another brother, Freeman Barsoni, 26, who uses their mother's maiden name.

As a teen, Che Barnes squirreled away his small paychecks to save up the \$20 he needed every week to pay for flight lessons.

For his 10th birthday, his gift was his first solo flight.

He wanted to be a fighter pilot, but was disappointed when his vision was not good enough. His love for flying prompted him to pursue other opportunities.

He enrolled in the Coast Guard Academy, majoring in electrical engineering.

"This Coast Guard job was the best thing for him," said another brother, Thaddeus Barsoni, 28.

ranal and dived into the 30-foot flow of water, muddy and fierce. He raked the silt bottom for the ring, emerging from the water about a half-hour later with his mission accomplished.

Call *The Bee's* Bobby Green-Cahoon, (916) 303-3067. Staff writers Cynthia Hubert and Robert DeVito and researcher Jason Coughran contributed to this report.

Added Noah Barnes: "He was not a farmer, really. He was meant to do something else."

He took pride in his job and in the often-harrowing missions he flew.

Barnes often regaled family and members of the Northern California Aerobatic Club, to which he belonged, with stories about his recent missions, said friend Cory Lovell.

"He was flying helicopters, but he thought they were too dangerous because they flew in the fog and were so close to the coast," Lovell said. "So he switched to C-130s."

Earlier this year, Barnes was the pilot in command of a rescue mission that saved the life of a doctor whose plane went down in Half Moon Bay. "This crew performed flawlessly and saved a life" was an e-mail from a commanding officer that Barnes forwarded to family and friends.

"He would tell us stories that would give us goose bumps," said Thaddeus Barnes. He called his older brother a hero.

Barnes had a soft spot for helping children. He was a Big Brother, once renting a Corona to give his "little brother" a bird's-eye view of San Francisco. He spent countless hours contributing to a ring hosted by an 8-year-old airplane buff.

He met his girlfriend, Carrie Reynolds, three years ago at a fundraiser in San Francisco to benefit emancipated youth bound for college.

She sought his soothing voice on Thursday, hours before his fateful flight. He calmed her jitters over a new job and her impending move to Sacramento to be closer to him.

Thaddeus talked with him later that day to make plans to share dinner and to talk about reburying a fence at his brother's Davis home.

On Saturday, friends and family accepted the grim task, mended remembering and sharing stories.

Noah Barnes recounted how his twin brother rescued him from his wife's scorn when Noah lost his ill-fated wedding band in a raging cereal behind the family home.

Cher Barnes, retaining goggles in place, had himself in a pickup parked above the