



TheState.com | News | Business | Sports | Entertainment | Living | Classifieds | Jobs | Cars | Homes |

State, The (Columbia, SC)

1997-03-21

Section: METRO/REGION

Edition: FINAL

Page: B1

## 'THEY CAN REST IN PEACE' FAMILY, MINUS 5, SETTLES WITH USAIR

*LISA GREENE, Staff Writer*

Weekends are hardest for Elizabeth Jeter.

She wiped tears from her eyes Thursday afternoon as she sat in her lawyer's office explaining why. Jeter's family always visits on weekends. Those visits now are filled with memories of the five people who are not there.

The crash of USAir Flight 1016 took those family members away. It also brought Jeter to lawyer **Jack Swerling's** office Thursday: The family reached a settlement with USAir.

Jeter's son Charles, his wife Patrice, her son Jimmy, and the couple's two children, Charnesha and Shantell, all died together in the July 1994 crash.

"I'm glad it's over with," Elizabeth Jeter said softly. "They can rest in peace."

For the family members who remain, the last few months have been especially hard.

When the trial against USAir began in January, family members went to court. They returned almost daily, hearing the company deny responsibility again and again for the crash that killed 37 people.

Two weeks ago, the jury disagreed. It found the newly renamed US Airways to blame for the crash.

Since then, several passengers and families of those killed have settled for amounts that remain secret. But in airline crash cases, damages often exceed \$1 million for each passenger killed.

**Swerling**, who worked with Charleston attorney Larry Richter to represent the family, said the verdict "opened the path" to settling the case.

A US Airways spokesman said company officials are "pleased we were able to reach an accommodation that was acceptable to the family."

Thursday's settlement will go to April Jeter, Charles Jeter's oldest daughter, to compensate her for the deaths of her father and two sisters.

During the trial, Patrice Jeter's relatives, who live in Alabama, settled in her death and that of her son from her first marriage.

**Swerling** said April Jeter is "very happy it's over, as far as the litigation is concerned."

Now 23, she remains shattered by the loss of her family members. She did not come to Thursday's meeting and has talked about her loss only privately.

"It's been a nightmare for her, and I don't know that she's even fully accepted what's happened," **Swerling** said. "She will never be the same."

April's family was well-known and liked in the Arsenal Hill public-housing community. Patrice Jeter, a former community association president, managed the employee cafeteria at the Adam's Mark hotel; Charles Jeter worked in construction.

Patrice's son, Jimmy Edwards, 16, was a rising senior at Columbia High School. He was working two jobs to save money for a car.

The family was heading to New York for a reunion. April Jeter didn't go because she had to work.

Elizabeth Jeter said she still finds the loss hard to believe.

"Sometimes I can almost see him coming around the bend, calling our names," she said of her son.

The family has depended on prayer and each other to recover.

"Some families would pull apart, but we pulled together," said Tony Roberts, Charles Jeter's brother-in-law.

Roberts was in the car with his wife, Denise, and their four children, when they heard about the crash on the radio.

Denise Roberts knew immediately it was her brother's plane.

When they got home, their worst fears were confirmed.

"We kept saying, 'It's not true. We'll wake up in the morning, and it's not true,'" Tony Roberts said.

Roberts' children grew up with the young Jeter girls, ages 6 and 3. Their oldest child, Chiquita, had been invited on the trip as well.

Despite the sadness, Tony Roberts said, his faith has remained steady.

"God doesn't do . . . bad things to people," he said. "He's a good and loving God."

That faith kept him going through the trial too. He never doubted the jury's verdict.

"There was this little voice," he said, telling him everything would be fine.

The airline "said it was an act of God," he said. "Then it was the tower. Finally, the jury held them accountable."

Lisa Greene covers federal courts. She can be reached at 771-8659.

Elizabeth Jeter, center, lost her son, Charles, and his family in the crash of USAir Flight 1016 in Charlotte. The family has settled their case against the airline. Shown with Jeter are her daughter, Denise Roberts, back, son-in-law Tony Roberts and her grandchildren, from left, Jamal, Chinisha, Tornesha and Chiquita Roberts.



---

[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Real Estate](#)  
[About TheState.com](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [About the McClatchy Company](#)  
[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Copyright](#)