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# Loss keenly felt by those close to Sherman bus crash victims

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/ The Dallas Morning News  
Brian Whitley contributed to this report.

Memories become amplified once death enters the equation.

Last-minute changes in plans. A goodbye hug. The smiles of a father.

Those close to the victims of the Sherman bus crash offered a tapestry of such moments to describe lost loved ones.

For nearly two decades, Nhung Cao, 60, drove with her 11 kids to Carthage, Mo., for the annual Marian Days religious festival. Things changed this year when the plans of visiting relatives fell through.

Because of that, most of the family chose not to make the annual pilgrimage – except for Ms. Cao, of Houston.

Daughter Mary Pham, a 29-year-old radiologist, said her mother actually had two tickets, but her father couldn't get time off from work. "They were supposed to be in seats 5 and 6, three rows from the driver," she said. "Can you imagine if my dad had [gone]?"

The family immigrated to the United States from Vietnam in 1989 with nothing, establishing a dry cleaning business and a restaurant to pay the bills, she said. Ms. Cao's most prized accomplishment was her children – all of whom went to college.

Peter Nguyen, whose 81-year-old father, Khiem Thanh Nguyen, was killed in the crash, recalled his father's love of gardening and constant smiles. He also remembered what turned out to be his father's last hug and kiss, which came a few weeks ago.

Like many others, Khiem Nguyen came to America in the late 1970s with little. But in the years since, he had built an auto parts business and emerged as a respected member of the Vietnamese Catholic community.

"People always used to say, 'Every time I see your father, he has a smile on his face,'" said Peter Nguyen, 42.

Others who died:

- **Tuong Lam**, who would have been 63 on Monday, was a social worker, according to the Rev. Joseph Vu at Vietnamese Martyrs Church.
- **Soi Pham**, 71, was a member of Vietnamese Martyrs Church. "She's dedicated to the church," Father Vu said.
- **Dung Thi Hoang**, 71, had 10 children. She was a member of Our Lady of Lavang Catholic Church in Houston, and made the trip to Missouri annually, said her son, Sean Hoang, 39, of Houston. "She thinks of others more than herself," he said.
- **Phong Le**, 67, and his wife **Hue Phan**, 59, both died in the crash.
- **Xuan Nguyen**, 50, had three children. She went to Our Lady of Lavang, said her daughter Ly Pham, 19, of Houston. "She would drive the elderly ladies who couldn't drive," Ms. Pham said. She said they had trouble getting information on her mother's status, mostly because authorities misspelled her first name.
- **Cham T. Nguyen**, 89, of Port Lavaca, was "very religious," said Anh Ta, 20, a great-granddaughter who also lives in Port Lavaca.
- **Boi Nguyen**, 84
- **Mindy Hoa Ta**, 49
- **Hanh Viet Nguyen**, 60
- **Xuan Hoa Dang**, 59
- **Vivica Nguyen**, 29
- **Catherine Tran**, 59
- **Thuy Thu Vu**, 27
- **Phu Van Bui**, 76

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