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Woman who captured Flight 93 image struggles a year later

By Charles Sheehan
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SHANKSVILLE, Pa. (AP) —
The horror unfolding on Val
McClatchey's television the
morning of Sept. 11 was just
beginning to sink in when a vio-
lent blast outside cut the power
to her home and blackened the
screen.

Running outside, McClatchey,
46, captured with a digital cam-
era the moment that the terror-
ist attacks, once hundreds of
miles away, came to this western
Pennsylvania town of 245 people.
The time and date recorded
on the image, however, marked
the beginning of a tumultuous
year for McClatchey. She came
to her home where she took
the picture, to mark the anniver-
sary with thousands of others
Wednesday.

"I just felt that this was one of
the only places I could kind of
blend in and find some anonymi-

ty," she said. "It's been chaos
since that day."
In the image, which has
brought news crews to the front
door and a limited amount of
fame to McClatchey, a sinister
black mushroom-shaped cloud
rises from an otherwise peaceful
view of a farm with a painted
red barn.

United Flight 93 crashed just
outside Shanksville shortly after
10 a.m. on Sept. 11. Investigators
say passengers aboard the
Boeing 757 fought hijackers for
control before the airplane
crashed upside down in an open
field, killing all 40 passengers
and crew.

The picture is one of the few
images of the crash, and within
two weeks it had been purchased
by major U.S. magazines includ-
ing U.S. News & World Report,
Newsweek, Time magazine and
also by several major magazines
in Europe.

But ripples from the terrorist

attacks had an almost immedi-
ate effect on McClatchey and
her husband, John.
JCM Industries, a sawmill
owned and operated by John
McClatchey with 46 employees,
was forced to file for bankruptcy
on Sept. 20.

"After the attacks, insurance
companies just didn't want to
cover companies that did work
that's considered risky," John
McClatchey said. "We had
always been able to get insur-
ance, but things changed."

He said the attacks may not
have been the sole reason for the
collapse of his business, but they
played a direct role.

In the year after the attacks,
with the sawmill gone, Val
McClatchey's health would take
a turn for the worse. She would
need gallbladder surgery and
tumors removed from her kid-
neys and liver.

"We're struggling," she said.
"My husband got a job brokering

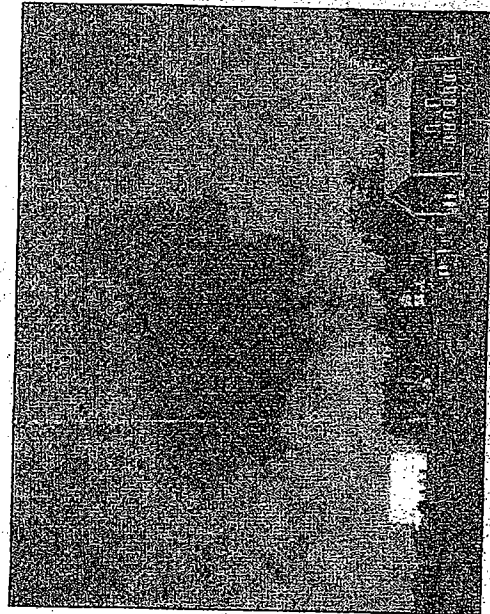
pallets. I took real estate classes
and got my license, but it's been
hard."

The images McClatchey said
she sold for \$250 to \$350 have not
done much to help the couple
financially.

Some residents of the region
who wanted copies of the image
have insisted on paying cash to
cover costs of printing, and
McClatchey said she has donat-
ed almost all of that money to
the Todd M. Beamer Foundation,
a fund named after one of the
passengers aboard Flight 93 that
aids children affected by the ter-
rorist attacks.

But the McClatcheys say they
are waiting to see what next
year will bring, and they remain
optimistic.

It depends on how things go
with the bankruptcy, but I know
we are stronger people now than
we were a year ago," she said.
"This whole town is, but I think
we're ready for a break."



AP photo
This image of the smoke cloud left by United Flight 93 after it
crashed in a field in Shanksville on Sept. 11, 2001, was taken
by Val McClatchey from the porch of her nearby home.

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