JULY 30, 1995

TROPIC

THE HERALD

Tracking Butch and Sundance

Have Aliens Invaded the NBA?

HELL'S *Angel*

After a terrorist's bomb ripped a hole in the American soul, Vicki Cummock put words in a president's mouth, and hope in the hearts of people no one else could console.

A Million Minutes of Pain

Vicki Cummock's husband was blown out of the sky in the worst terrorist bombing in U.S. history. It was the only thing that could have prepared her for the challenge to come.

By
MEG LAUGHLIN

Nobody asked Victoria Cummock to leave her Miami home and fly to Oklahoma City. But on the day after the explosion at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, she knew she had to go. From her own experience with loss, she knew she had to pull the hideous tragedy close to her heart and try to help.

Her husband had been murdered by a terrorist bomb on a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, six years before. She had been to hell and back, which made her think she could say to the grieving families what few others could say: "I have been in your place." And having been there, she felt compelled to pass on what she had realized: Knowing the truth, looking at it dead-on, is the only way to heal.

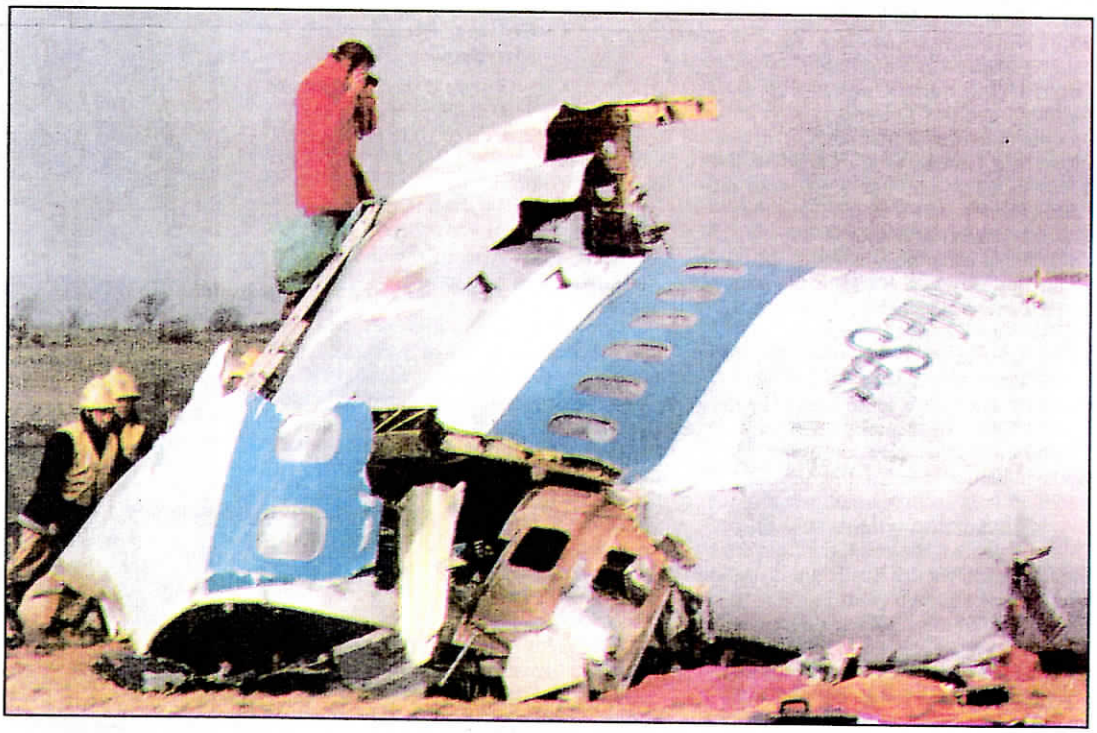
After two days with the families at the death notification center in Oklahoma City, Cummock steeled herself to visit the federal building where their loved ones had been murdered. It was a chilly, rainy day — the day rescue workers were filling in the crater made by the bomb. She stood on the edge of the gaping hole — 20 feet wide and eight feet deep — and looked down. Then she looked up at what was left of the eight-story building. More than 60 bodies had been pulled from the debris; 100 people were still buried in it.

The bomb had sucked in everything around it and left only a jagged skeleton of charred steel and crumbling concrete. She scanned the wreckage, trying not to breathe in the smell of mildew and rot, and her eyes stopped on something familiar. Amid the rubble and wires was an attaché case. It was similar to the one she had seen on the ground amid the wreckage in the photos of the plane crash that killed her husband six years before. It had been a birthday present to her husband, John.

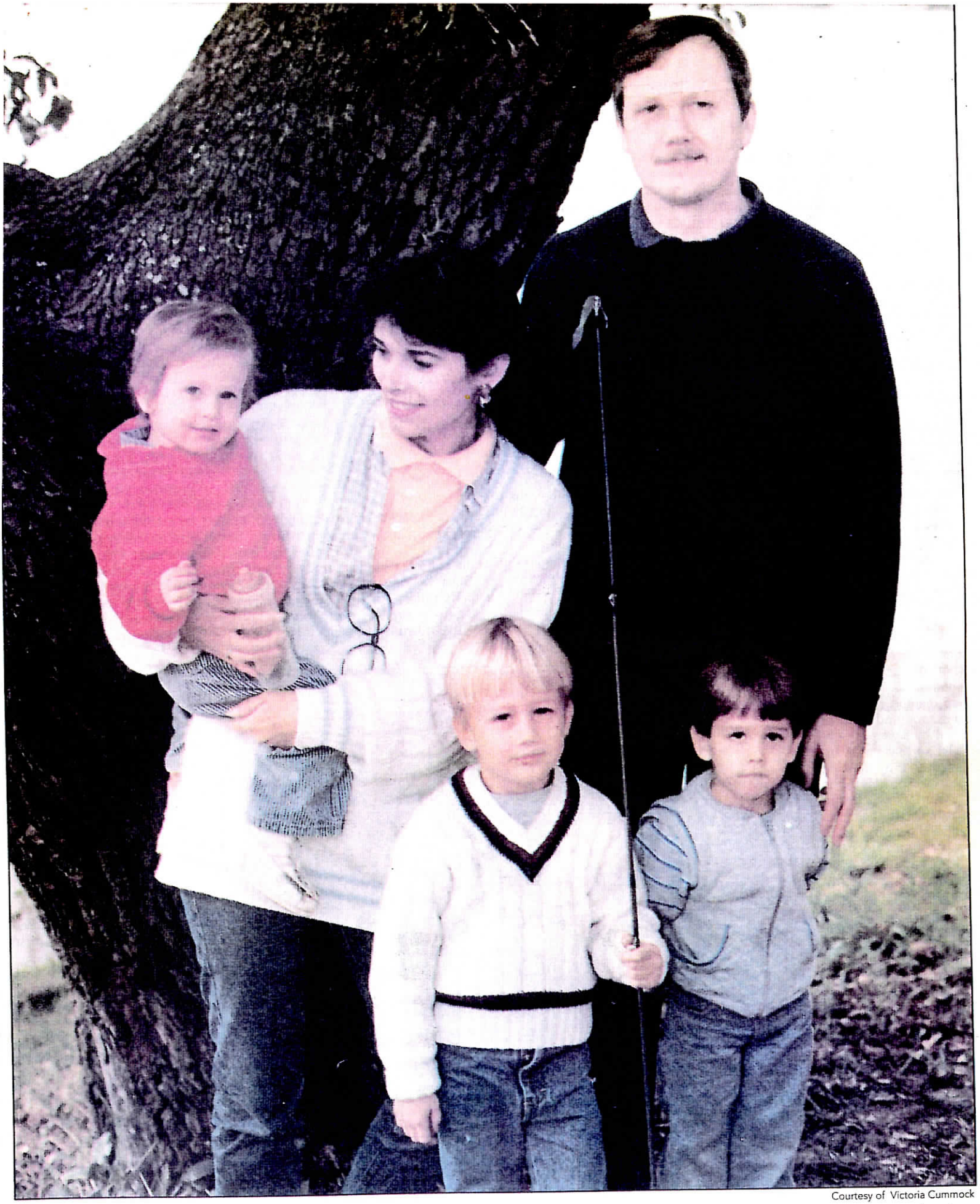
She stared at the attaché case on the ledge of a lower floor of the building, thinking how much it would mean to someone, thinking how much John's had meant to her.

Years before, when Pan Am representatives had told her that there was nothing left of her husband's personal effects, she had insisted that there was, telling them she'd seen his attaché case in the crash-site photos. When the airline finally sent the case to her, she took it out of the box it was mailed in and hugged it, soggy and caked in dirt, as if it were John himself.

In those first few days at the death notifi-



Victoria Cummock spotted her husband's attaché case (lower right) in a newspaper photograph of the crash site. When Pan Am returned it to her, she hugged it, soggy and caked in dirt, as if it were John himself.



Courtesy of Victoria Cummock

Victoria and John Cummock with (from left) Ashley, Christopher and Matthew. This photo was taken before John's plane was blown up by a terrorist bomb over Scotland in 1988.

A Million Minutes of Pain

cation center in Oklahoma City, she had maintained her composure and kept going with a growing sense of purpose. She had read stories to children who had lost their mothers. She had sat for hours with mothers who had lost children. She had gone with people to hear that their missing spouses' bodies had been found. But here at the bombed-out building, seeing the attaché case, she felt the full impact of the shocking, sudden loss: "Oh, God, how could this happen, *again*?" she said aloud, the tears streaming down her face.

'As Many Tomorrows as It Takes'

She was driving home from the gym when word of the explosion in Oklahoma City came over the radio. Her heart started to pound and she sped home to turn on CNN. There in front of her were the flames, the smoke, the sirens that she had seen on TV six years before when her husband's plane went down. "I couldn't sit up," she said. "I was nauseated; my stomach was in knots. I started to cry and couldn't stop. Nothing I had tried to do to heal mattered at that moment. I was right back to the day of John's murder."

The Oklahoma City bombing was the second-worst mass murder of civilians in American history. The worst had been the terrorist bomb that killed Cummock's husband and 269 other people on Pan Am Flight 103. As an advocate for the families of Lockerbie victims, Victoria Cummock spoke to a Clinton aide in the first days after the Oklahoma bombing about proposals for new anti-terrorist legislation. The aide asked her if she had any thoughts on what the families of the Oklahoma City victims needed to hear when Clinton gave a speech at the memorial. When she said a few things about letting them know the government supported them, he asked her to fax her thoughts. Her words turned out to be the crux of Clinton's speech.

She was particularly concerned, she wrote in her letter to Clinton, that he "address very specific emotions and issues," rather than offering "the unspecific and general rhetoric" the Lockerbie families got from the Bush administration after the Lockerbie tragedy.

Because of this "lack of direct contact, caring and foresight, I felt I had lost two things I loved so much," she wrote. "My husband and my country." It was very important that the victims' families feel the country stood solidly behind them, sharing their anguish, she said. They must be encouraged to keep going and not let the terrorists destroy their lives, too.

"You have not lost America, for we will stand with you — for as many tomorrows as it takes," Clinton told the grief-stricken, dazed families, as Cummock watched him on TV from Miami. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good," he concluded. "Some day we will be with them [the victims]. But until then their legacy will be our lives."

On the day after the speech, Cummock got a phone call. The voice said: "Hello, Mrs. Cummock, this is Bill Clinton. I want to thank you for giving me the words for the eulogy. I could see in their faces that they were the right words. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"When we saw Victoria," says Karen Sitterle, director of the death notification center, "we thought we had another Kirstie Alley. Only we weren't sure what kind of celebrity Victoria was."

Cummock was taken aback. The president was calling out of the blue, while her three kids — Christopher, 13; Matthew, 11; and Ashley, 9 — were yelling about Boomer the dog jumping in the swimming pool. She motioned to the kids to be quiet and tried to think of something meaningful to say. What came out was: "Oh, sure."

Then Bill Clinton said something to Victoria Cummock that made her cry — something she had waited almost seven years to hear from someone in a position of authority in the government: "Mrs. Cummock, I'm so sorry you lost your husband."

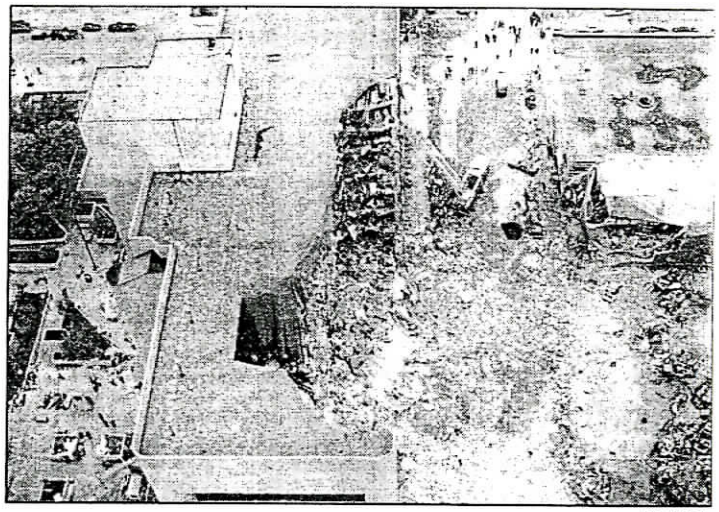
Calling Murder Murder

The next day, Cummock was on the phone trying to arrange to go to Oklahoma City to help out. She wanted to be available for the families of the victims. She called a Clinton aide, who put her in touch with the national office of the American Red Cross. Elizabeth Dole, Red Cross president, gave her the go-ahead.

"You get invited to disasters; you don't just show up," says Barbara Cienfuegos, the Los Angeles County Disaster Coordinator who oversaw the death notification center in Oklahoma City. Cienfuegos got a call from Dole's assistant at the national office of the American Red Cross: A woman from Miami who had talked to the president was coming to help. When Cienfuegos asked what Cummock's credentials were, the aide said Cummock had helped with the president's speech.

"Oh, great," she said sarcastically. "Just what we need."

A month later, Cienfuegos said this about Cummock: "Victoria was so genuine, so in touch with what the victims' families and the rescue workers needed that she opened doors that never would've been opened. We had 350 mental-health professionals, and she taught us



Herald File

When Cummock saw the damage to the Alfred Murrah Federal Building, she felt nauseated.

Herald File

Rescue workers on three floors clean up debris and search for victims in Oklahoma City. It was scenes like this one that moved Victoria to want to comfort the relatives. She knew what they must be feeling.

Courtesy of Victoria Cummock

President Bill Clinton greets Victoria Cummock at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Lockerbie Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.

all something."

Cummock arrived in Oklahoma City on April 28, nine days after the explosion. She had hoped to go straight to the center where the families were. But she quickly learned things were not that simple. Instead, she was driven from place to place and interviewed for five hours to see if she would be allowed to talk to the families.

Each interviewer would begin by asking what her job in Miami was, and she would reply sheepishly: "Interior decorator." After an uncomfortable silence, she would explain that Clinton quoted her because she had lost her husband when terrorists blew up a plane he was on. She would quickly add that she had spent the past six years dealing with the same thing the families in Oklahoma City were having to deal with: the sudden, unexpected loss of a loved one to a violent mass murder.

"She was the first person to call it *murder*," says Cienfuegos. Before that the words most used were *tragedy* or *incident*. "I realized that she did that to make it real and tangible, to give the families a place for their emotions. It helped tremendously."

Prime Time

Victoria Cummock started the screening process just after television celebrity Kirstie Alley had finished it. The screeners took Alley's Scientology literature away and — as they did with all volunteers — advised her on what was acceptable to say to the families: Do not talk about religion of any kind. Do not tell them you are sorry about their loss; most of them are still hoping their loved ones will be found alive. Do not offer advice or say you know how they feel.

Celebrity volunteers were useful because they served as welcome distractions for the families — especially the kids. For this reason, well-known stars, politicians, coaches, athletes and various animals were allowed in the death notification center when hundreds of mental health workers, journalists and ordinary people were turned away.

"When we saw Victoria," says Karen Sitterle, a director at the death notification center, "we thought we had another Kirstie Alley. Only we weren't sure what show she was on."

Sitterle says that after a few minutes of talking to Cummock she knew why she was there and that she would work out: "She was not pushy. She knew how to be supportive and available without taking control."

An Act of Congress

Bruce Hiely-Young, a post-traumatic stress syndrome specialist from San Francisco, met Cummock when she arrived at the death notification center. The first thing he said to her was that he was amazed she'd passed the screening process without credentials in disaster relief. "It takes an act of Congress to get in here," he told her.

"I know all about that," replied Cummock. "Two years of eight-hour days, six days a week."

She was referring to the two years that she and other Lockerbie family members had spent lobbying Congress on the National Aviation Security Act, which it finally passed in 1990. The law set up procedures for airline security to help prevent disasters like the Lockerbie explosion.

Then Bill Clinton said something she had waited almost seven years to hear: "Mrs. Cummock, I'm so sorry you lost your husband."

The Lockerbie families — led by Cummock and New Yorker Paul Hudson, whose 16-year-old daughter was killed in the crash — testified before Congress dozens of times and got 220,000 names on a petition before Congress agreed to an independent investigation of Pan Am. The investigation revealed that the $2 to $4 security surcharge on every Pan Am ticket was being used for advertising instead of security and that some government employees had been warned to avoid the flight — powerful arguments for closer scrutiny. The families still had to woo the support of Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and Minority Whip Robert Dole before the act was passed. And it was Cummock, says Hudson, who was most successful at this.

"I had to forget what I'd learned in civics," Cummock told Hiely-Young. "Laws get passed by inner circles inside inner circles, not the House and Senate."

Two Ziplock Bags

The death notification center was in a church a few miles from the bomb site. The building was surrounded by National Guard troops; getting inside required passing seven checkpoints. Three tables were set up right inside the door, where families registered and provided information to help with identifications. Descriptions of jewelry, birthmarks and clothing were organized at these tables, along with doctor, dentist and hospital records.

The center was in a large room that held 500 people. Each family waiting for word of a missing loved one was given a table and chairs. To one side of the table area was a play area for kids with a video machine, games and books. To the other side was a rest area with lounge chairs and sofas. In the back of the room were phones and a kitchen.

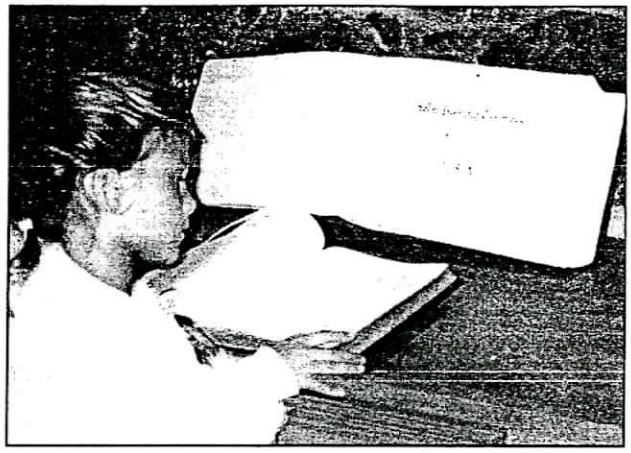
Every family was assigned an escort, a mental-health worker who was to assist the family with anything it needed. The escorts also notified the doctors and nurses on the second floor when they saw signs of extreme stress like red faces from sky-rocketing blood pressure, vomiting or uncontrollable trembling. These symptoms usually occurred when a family was asked to go to the fourth floor. It was on the fourth floor that families were actually told that enough of a body had been found to pronounce the missing family member dead.

It was dinner time at the center when Cummock arrived. She leaned against a pole and watched. The people looked like zombies, which reminded her of how she was for months after the Lockerbie crash: "I'd look at my watch and see 1 o'clock. Then, I'd have to get up and go to a window to see if it was 1 in the afternoon or the middle of the night."

And yet, here in Oklahoma City, her heart soared. After the Lockerbie crash, she would have given anything to have had a death notification center — a place to go to be with other people feeling the same emotions, a place to go and get information before it appeared on the national news, a place where she would not feel so alone.

"It was 13 hours after the crash before

A Million Minutes of Pain



Courtesy of Victoria Cummock

Ashley at the Lockerbie Memorial for the victims of Pan Am Flight 103. The book contains the biographies of the people murdered there, including John Cummock.

I got anyone at Pan Am to talk to me. Then it was 2½ weeks later before I knew what had happened to John's body. I got a call from the airport saying two ziplock bags containing my husband had arrived."

The Seed of Reality

Dec. 22, 1988: Victoria Cummock was wrapping presents with her mother, who was visiting Miami from Greenwich, Conn., where Victoria had grown up. They had just seen reports of the crash over Lockerbie on the 6 o'clock news. Like most Americans, Victoria was shocked and saddened by the news, emotions given added resonance by the knowledge that John, on business in London, would be flying the same route home the next day. Still, it was a tragedy that touched her only in the abstract.

Victoria and her mother were having a glass of wine before dinner when the doorbell rang. It was John's boss at Bacardi Inc., where he was vice president in charge of product development.

He said John had been on the Lockerbie plane. He had finished his meetings a day early and taken that flight. Victoria insisted there had been some mistake. John was not on the plane. He would have called her, she said. He was due back the next day. No, the boss said. John had called the office and said he wanted to surprise Victoria by showing up a day early.

She turned the television back on and watched crumpled pieces of metal burn as sirens blared and helpless rescue workers stood by. The commentator said the plane had blown up at 31,000 feet. A bomb was suspected.

The next day, The Herald listed the passengers' names.

Courtesy of Victoria Cummock

John Cummock's children visit his grave in Lockerbie, Scotland.

ncluding John Cummock. But Victoria still held out hope there was a mistake because no one from the airline or the government had called her. Even when she gathered her three kids together that afternoon to tell them their daddy was dead and would never be coming home, she kept thinking there would be a knock on the door and it would be John.

It was only when the body arrived, when she actually saw it, that she *knew*. This experience, the hardest of her life, turned out to be the one that best prepared her to help the families in Oklahoma City. She understood the power of denial and the inability to let go of hope. She understood the dazed faces and zombie-like personalities of the Oklahoma City families.

Miami grief counselor Edie Stark: "After a violent death, the seed of reality is planted with seeing the body. If you do not view the body, fantasy takes over. With viewing the body, the grieving can begin."

Face to Face With Death

John Cummock's plane was traveling at 550 knots when a battery-sized bomb hooked to an altimeter and placed in a Toshiba cassette player went off in the luggage compartment. FBI and Interpol investigators believed the bomb plot was paid for by Iranian terrorists in retaliation for the accidental shooting down of an Iranian commercial jet, carrying 290 people, by a U.S. warship, the Vincennes. Investigators also said the bomb was made by Syrian terrorists and put on the plane by Libyan terrorists. But none of those accused has ever been extradited to stand trial.

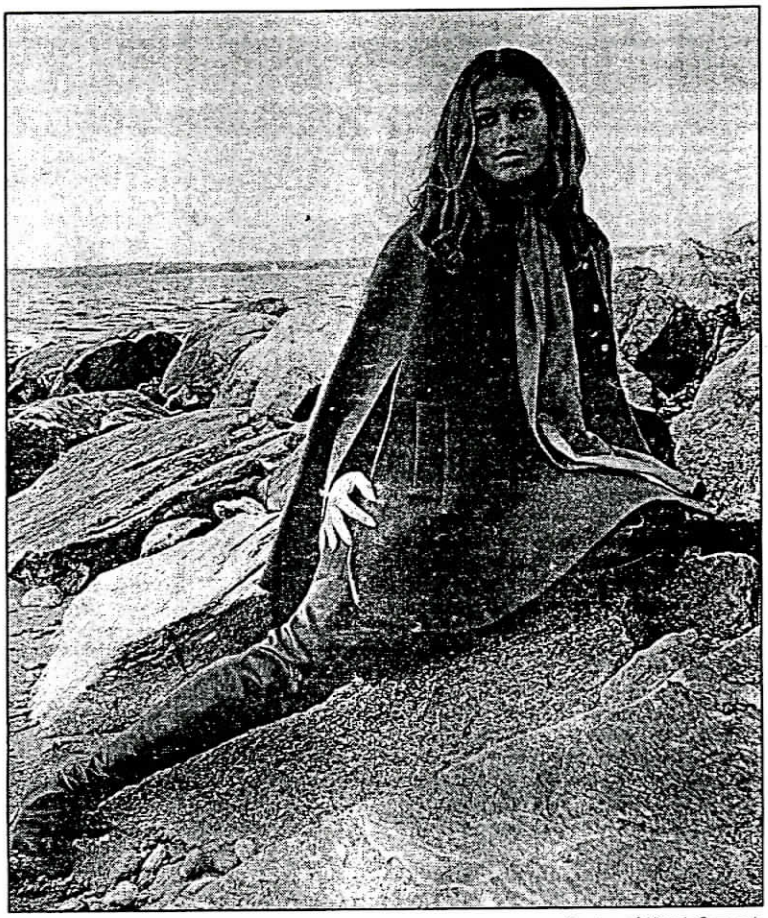
The plane broke into three pieces: the nose cone; the center section where the bomb was and a section from the wings back. The middle section, where a number of U.S. military personnel were, broke into a million pieces. The back section, full of U.S. college and high school students, including Paul Hudson's daughter, glided downward as if the plane were still intact, taking five minutes to hit the ground. The nose cone, where John and other U.S. executives were, turned nose-down and spiraled toward the ground like a badminton shuttlecock.

"John was here," says Cummock, pointing to a photo of the nose cone. "He died upon impact when he was gutted by the open tray table."

She was told by the airline, the funeral director and her minister that the body was "unviewable," and that she could not see it. But she insisted and would not give in, saying over and over what she told the grief counselors in Oklahoma City: "The families should be the ones to decide about seeing their dead loved ones, not the professionals."

Tamara Varga, director of the family room at the death notification center in Oklahoma City: "Because of Victoria, we were much more forthcoming with information. She helped us to see the families' needs."

Because of Cummock, no one in Oklahoma City was was told that a loved one was "unviewable."



Courtesy of Victoria Cummock

Victoria in her modeling days.

After Cummock finally persuaded the funeral-home director to let her see her husband, she laid her head down on his chest and realized it was padding. John's face was bruised and swollen, and his nose and neck were broken. The lower half of his body was covered. Desperate to touch him, she reached under the cover and took his hand. To her horror, it was encased in a flimsy white glove.

"The gloves have to go," she told the funeral director. "John would never wear these gloves." But the funeral director told her that the gloves had to stay because John's hands were damaged.

He was *her* husband, she said. Shouldn't she be the one to decide if she wanted to touch his hands or not?

When the gloves came off, she gently took his hands in hers and started to cry: "They were cut up," she says, "but they were John's hands."

Speaking From Experience

Word spread quickly among the waiting families in Oklahoma City that a woman was there whose husband had been murdered by a terrorist bomb six years before. Victoria told her story over and over to each person who wanted to talk to her: To the man ranting about suing the company that had made the fertilizer used in the bomb, Cummock said she had not been able to think rationally for months after her husband's death. She told him he had three years to sue, that now was the time to think about taking care of his mother the way she had taken care of him. He broke into sobs for the first time since his mother's death.

"He listened to Victoria when he wouldn't listen to anyone else," said family room director Tamara Varga.

For the man with glazed eyes and a distant stare who had lost his 7-year-old son, she wrote a letter to his boss, which she got signed by Red Cross officials. It said he would not be coming back to work in five days despite company policy. She told this man that she was so dazed after John's death that she couldn't even drive a car for six months, much less work.

When the mother from rural Mexico arrived after a two-day bus trip with only her purse and a few pesos, Cummock bought her clothes and shoes and found her a place to stay when the center closed every night.

A weeping husband told Cummock about his missing wife's tennis shoes. They were blocking the back door at home, but he couldn't bring himself to move them, he said. Nor could he put away her earrings on the bedside table.

She told him that when John died she had a few balloons in the house that he'd blown up for their daughter's birthday party. She said she couldn't bring herself to throw them away when they got partially deflated because in her mind they contained his breath. She told him it took her a year to face packing up John's clothes.

Victoria told these people and dozens of other family members who asked that, for her, it was not a question of existing from day-to-day or even hour-to-hour. It was a question of trying to make it to the next minute: "There were a million minutes of pain," she said. "There was nothing but the minute of acute pain and the anguish that the next minute would be the same way. I couldn't imagine how I'd be able to go on."

She showed children who had a missing parent pictures of her children with John. She said that their daddy had been killed by a terrorist bomb and that they had had a lot of thoughts that scared them and made them cry. She said her kids would like to talk to them if they wanted, and gave out their phone number.

To the 23-year-old sitting on the floor hugging her knees and trembling, saying over and over they would never find her mother, Cummock said the worst part for her was waiting for the body.

"Without a body," she told her, "I was stuck in purgatory. Without proof of his death, I felt I was betraying him when I tried to think of him as dead. When I got his body, it got better."

Days later, when the search for bodies was about to end and the young woman's mother had not been recovered, Victoria had her worst moment in Oklahoma City. Cienfuegos found her in a back room trembling and crying. When she asked her what was wrong, Cummock told her the felt horrible about what she had told the woman. She pleaded for someone to get *something* from the building to help the woman start grieving.

Karen Sitterle says that on the day the building came down the young woman was there. She walked up to the fire chief and told him her mother was still in the building. The fire chief, who had heard of Cummock's concerns, went in the building and got a double handful of ash and gravel. He stumbled out and dumped the rubble into the young woman's open hands.

"They stood there together, leaning on one another and sobbing," says Sitterle. "Because of Victoria, both the young woman and the fire chief were able to start grieving."

The next day, the body of the young woman's mother was found in the rubble.

After a week in Oklahoma City, Cummock called a Miami friend, Mimi Kelly, late one night from her hotel. "Oh,

Continued on page 23

A Million Minutes of Pain

Continued from page 11

Mimi," she said, according to Kelly, "it's so horrible here, but I'm so glad I came. "They know I know."

The Book of Love

Victoria Cummock will tell you that marrying John Cummock was the best thing that ever happened to her. The fifth of seven girls, born in Lima to a Peruvian diplomat father and an American mother, Cummock grew up in a home with rigid ideas about what she would do with her life: Marry a wealthy man by the age of 20 and manage the servants and the house.

When she was 7, the family moved to Greenwich, Conn., but the expectations did not change. When Victoria started modeling in New York at age 16, her parents assumed she was going along with the plan. After all, modeling would make her more poised, which would help her hook the kind of man they had in mind.

But Victoria rebelled. At 18 she moved out, using her modeling money for a small apartment, a car and her college tuition. In her early 20s, she got a job in the accounting department of Cheeseborough Ponds Inc. and went to the University of Connecticut at night. She became friends with John Cummock, a WASPy-looking guy at work who spoke fluent Spanish.

John was a fallen Mormon who had gone to Argentina on a Mormon mission and dropped out to join the Peace Corps. Then he'd gotten an MBA. He was smart, mild-mannered and "totally liberated about women," says Victoria. They married in 1980 and moved to Miami two years later with their infant, Christopher. She headed up the Miami office of the New York advertising firm of J. Walter Thompson, and he ran the new-product division for Bacardi Inc. They bought a six-bedroom house in Coral Gables in anticipation of a large family. Victoria likes to tell about a snapshot in her memory: John critiquing her Burger King advertising campaign for "broiled not fried," while cleaning the baby's rectal thermometer. "That's the kind of marriage we had," she says.

In 1983, when Christopher was a year and a half old and she was pregnant with Matthew, she told John that she wanted to be with the kids more. She didn't want to be a high-powered advertising executive; she wanted to be an interior designer — she'd minored in design in college — and a good mommy. She had thought a lot, she said, and she'd decided that the important things in life had more to do with love than work.

John didn't like the idea, she says. He thought that like him, she could work *and* be a good parent. They argued for months, until finally they agreed to set a date on which they would decide once and for all what she would do and then stick with the decision. On decision-day morning, John left for work without waking her, which was unusual. When she woke up, she knew he was angry at her, and she got sluggishly out of bed. Then she noticed a piece of paper on his pillow. It was a check signed by him for $10,000 made out to "Cummock Designs."

JEFFERY A. SALTER / Herald Staff

Victoria and the kids today, nearly seven years after the Pan Am bombing. Front to back: Christopher 13, Matthew 11, and Ashley 9.

"Those four years we had together, after I left advertising," she says, "were the best years of my life."

She carried John's ashes all over the country after he died, trying to find a place to bury them that seemed right. He loved a rugged landscape of hills, cliffs, wind and trees — the kind they had always gravitated to on summer vacations with the kids. But when she went back to these favorite places, the nearby cemeteries were either full or somehow not right, and she always returned home with the ashes. Her friends whispered that she would never let go.

It was when she went to Lockerbie for a memorial dedication that finally she found the spot. The nearby cemetery was exactly what she was looking for: green, rolling hills and cliffs, huge trees, and 25 miles from New Cumnock, Scotland, the town founded by John's ancestors. On his gravestone is a poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson. She says she wants it on her gravestone, too:

"Success: To laugh often and much. To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children. To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends.

"To appreciate beauty. To find the best in others. To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition.

"To know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

She has taken the kids to the grave where their father's ashes are buried. They have played hide-and-seek behind the trees in the cemetery and had a picnic in the green-green grass. They have spent hours talking to their father. And they have visited the nearby Lockerbie memorial and looked at the book that contains the biographies of the people murdered there.

But the page for John Cummock is blank.

"I couldn't bear to put him in past tense in that book," says Cummock. "It meant closing the final page."

To Rest in Peace

When she returned to Miami from Oklahoma City, she called her cousin Marta Risco, who had been concerned about Cummock's decision to go to Oklahoma. "I was afraid that the very thing that made her so valuable — her deep identity with the families — would make her too fragile," says Risco. "But she assured me it had made her stronger."

Miami grief counselor Edie Stark: "Victoria and I talked when she got back. I knew she knew she had made a difference. She told me: 'Edie, now I truly feel John did not die in vain.' "

In the past month, she has decided she wants to dedicate her life to helping mental health workers help families who lose loved ones to violent mass murder. Over the next year, she will be a volunteer speaker at a number of mental health conferences and write papers on the subject. "Somehow picking out people's wallpaper pales by comparison," she says.

A Note From a Friend

This past May 31, John Cummock would have been 45. Usually on this day, Memorial Day, Victoria talks to her three kids about John, telling them things to help them know their daddy better. But this year the holiday fell just three weeks after she had returned from Oklahoma City. She wanted it to be a larger Memorial Day. She wanted her country back.

The kids helped her hang an American flag from the eaves and put red, white and blue Americana decorations on the front door and in the entrance hall. Then they talked about what they would put on their daddy's blank page in the Lockerbie book, which Cummock is ready to fill in.

What brought her to this decision — that she could now put her tragedy in the past tense — was a card a child gave her the last day she was in Oklahoma City. He was a 9-year-old who had lost a parent in the bombing. She had read him stories every day and played Chutes and Ladders with him.

On the front of the card he drew the federal building, a rectangle with windows and a big gash through the middle. Beside the building he drew a cross and wrote the words "Red Cross." Inside the card he wrote:

"Dear Red Cross Volunteer,

Thank you for helping out, for saving the kids and parents in the bombing. I hope that never happens again. But if it does, I will try to be there, too." ■

MEG LAUGHLIN is a Tropic staff writer. Her most recent story was about a German tourist who spent nine months in prison over a misunderstanding.