

Family and friends say their final goodbyes to pilot Kelle Hein



LAREDO, Texas (KGNS) - Family and friends of pilot and Pastor Kelle Hein, 56, helped lay him to rest on Monday in a home and sanctuary all too familiar.

Many community members gathered at the Family Baptist Church to say their final goodbyes to Hein, who passed during a tragic plane crash last Thursday.

The accident happened after the engine started smoking and Hein, along with 19-year-old Robert Christopher Marshall attempted to land the plane, but the plane nosedived into the runway and caught fire.

Hein was a pilot for many years and he worked with several people including Congressman Henry Cuellar, who he flew for over 15 years.

Cuellar says, "He would always say when he would meet somebody, no matter what the mood of the circumstance is, he would always say top of the morning to you and he was just a very jolly person. He was always in a good mood and always trying to find a way that he can help people."

Hein is a 1979 graduate of Groton High School. He graduated from Augustana College in Sioux Falls in 1981. He and his wife, Tammy Waldrop, were missionaries in Nuevo Laredo and Laredo for the past 32 years. He had been a flight instructor and commercial pilot since 1985.

Hein is survived by his wife Tammy Hein and his five children. Hein is the son of Darlene Fisher, formerly of Groton.

The National Transportation Safety Board is still investigating the actual cause of the crash.