Modest Neighborhood Becomes Scene Of Carnage

KENNER, La. (AP) - In the scorched afternoon Saturday, the air was still. No birds flew. And a plume of acrid gray smoke rose from the twisted hulk of a Boeing 707.

A neighborhood of tidy ranch houses and people of modest means turned into a scene of carnage when Pan Am Flight 707 dropped from the sky on them.

Daill-blackened magnolias. Pieces of clothing dangling from leafless trees. And plastic bags holding some of the 145 passengers from the plane and at least eight from the neighborhood.

The plane came to a halt beside Joseph Pace's house and burst into flames. "I have 100 dead people in my front yard," he said.

"If you were half asleep you would have swore you were in hell," said George Cusack, who lives two doors away from the path the aircraft tore through the enclave called Morningside.

A child's stuffed rabbit rested on its side in the wreckage. Houses that used to be across the street no longer existed. Some of the surviving one-car garages were pressed into service as temporary intensive care units and morgues.

The plane slammed into the foot of a big 18-wheel refrigerator truck, where the charred human remains were tagged, photographed and sprayed with disinfectant to cut the smell.

When the plane dropped onto Morningside, it pitched over on its left side and clipped tree limbs 20 feet off the ground. An 80-foot tree only yards away was unscathed.

The left wingtip carved a foot-deep trench on the airport side of Jefferson Parish, tearing the ground. An 80-foot tree only yards away was unscathed.

The plane skidded across the streets, scattering pieces and mowing a 200-foot swath through a vacant lot before it stopped.

"It's almost indescribable, when you see something of this magnitude," Mrs. Goldman said.

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The plane slammed into and through — one brick house on Taylor Street, killing Melanie Trahan and her 4-year-old daughter Bridget. The jettler's wheels came to rest there.

Mrs. Trahan's 18-month-old daughter, Melissa, survived — somehow. Two hours later she was found, red-faced and wriggling under an overturned sofa covered by debris, with only minor injuries.

After it was finished at the Trahan's, the plane rolled slightly and plowed into a house across Taylor Street, where Pace's wife, her daughter and a friend scrambled for their lives.

"I guess God was with us," Joe Pace said.

They escaped through a hole knocked in the back wall, just before that part of the wreckage burst into flames.

Residents had known there would be carnage in the neighborhood, beneath one of the takeoff flight paths from New Orleans International Airport.

It happened Friday. The streets filled with uniformed Jefferson Parish deputies, firefighters, Kenner police and paramedics. Shiny black body bags were still being shifted to cross. Then the aircraft dropped onto the roofs of two houses into a sideways, skidding belly flop.