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Airplane vs. Birds - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/1/19 4:23

5 white-knuckled minutes aboard Flight 1549

By DAVID B. CARUSO — Sun Jan 18, 8:49 am ET

NEW YORK — The birds flew majestically, in perfect formation, and the co-pilot saw them coming.

For a moment, it looked like they would pass beneath US Airways Flight 1549, but when Capt. Chesley B. Sullenberger looked up, they were there in his windscreen. Big. Dark brown. Lots of them.

His first instinct was to duck.

Then there were thumps, a burning smell, and silence as both jet engines cut out.

For a moment, the Airbus A320 hung in the sky 3,000 feet above the Bronx, its engines knocked so completely dead that one flight attendant said it sounded like being in a library.

Investigators provided this dramatic new description Saturday of what unfolded on the flight in the five brief minutes between its takeoff from LaGuardia Airport on Thursday and its textbook splashdown in the Hudson River.

The plane had been in the air for only 90 seconds when disaster struck. Air traffic controllers hadn't picked up the birds on their radar

screens and were still giving climbing instructions when the pilot radioed that something had gone very wrong.

"Aaah, this is Cactus 1549," he said. "We lost thrust in both engines. We are turning back toward LaGuardia."

But he announced a new destination within moments. LaGuardia was out. So was Teterboro Airport in New Jersey.

Sullenberger reasoned that his jet was "too low, too slow" and near too many tall buildings to reach any airport. And heading for Teterboro would mean risking a "catastrophic" crash in a populated neighborhood.

"We can't do it," he told air traffic control. "We're gonna be in the Hudson."

National Transportation Safety Board member Kitty Higgins recounted those radio transmissions and gave a detailed summary of Sullenberger's testimony to the investigation team on Saturday. She also recounted the NTSB's interview with the plane's first officer, Jeff Skiles, and three flight attendants.

Their account illustrated how quickly things deteriorated during the flight, and laid out the split-second command decisions that ultimately ensured that everyone aboard the plane survived.

The flight was supposed to have been the last leg of a four-trip day. The crew had begun the day in Pittsburgh, flown to Charlotte, N.C., then to LaGuardia, and were to head back to Charlotte in the afternoon. They got departure clearance at 3:25 p.m., and a minute later the jet was 700 feet in the air, heading north.

The birds came out of nowhere, Higgins said. They hadn't been on the radar screen of the air traffic controller who approved the departure, although other radar facilities later confirmed that their path intersected the jet as it climbed past 2,900 feet.

Back in the cabin, the passengers instantly knew something was wrong. They heard a thump, then eerie silence. A haze hung in the air. The flight attendants smelled something metallic burning.

"I think we hit a bird," said a passenger in first class.

In the cockpit, Sullenberger took over flying from Skiles, who had handled the takeoff, but had less experience in the Airbus.

"Your aircraft," the co-pilot said.

While the pilot quickly leveled the plane off to keep it from stalling and thought about where to land, Skiles kept trying to restart the engines. He also began working through a three-page list of procedures for an emergency landing. Normally, those procedures begin at 35,000 feet. This time, he started at 3,000.

Sullenberger made a sweeping left turn and took the gliding jet over the George Washington Bridge, and scanned the river, his best bet.

Pilots are trained to set down near a ship if they ditch, so they can be rescued before they drown or freeze to death in frigid seas. Sullenberger picked the perfect spot. The channel was 50 feet deep and clear of obstructions, but only minutes by boat from Manhattan's commuter ferry terminals.

It happened so fast, the pilots never had time to throw the aircraft's "ditch switch," which seals off vents and holes in the fuselage to make it more seaworthy.

Sullenberger issued a command over the intercom, "Brace for impact." Only 3 1/2 minutes had elapsed since the bird strike.

"Brace! Brace! Head down!" the flight attendants shouted to the passengers.

Security cameras on a Manhattan pier captured the spectacular landing. The jet came in easy, like it was coming down on land, and threw up spray as it slid on its belly.

Two flight attendants likened it to a hard landing — nothing more. There was one impact, no bounce, then a gradual deceleration.

"Neither one of them realized that they were in the water," Higgins said.

That changed quickly. The crew got two doors open. One water slide deployed automatically. The other had to be activated by hand. Passengers grabbed life preservers and seat cushions.

At the rear of the plane, a third flight attendant stopped a passenger from opening a rear door and letting in a gush of water, then made her way forward.

As the passengers made their way out onto the wings, she started to feel woozy. Only then did she notice that her leg had a severe cut — the most serious wound to anyone on board.

Sullenberger walked the cabin twice before abandoning ship.

He hadn't spoken to reporters yet on Saturday, but Higgins said, "He could not be more happy that he got everyone off the airplane safely."

The plane, too, was finally pulled from the river late Saturday night.

The bottom of the fuselage appeared to have been shredded and torn. Big chunks of loose paneling peeled away as it was lifted onto a barge — a sign, perhaps, of how close the jet came to breaking apart during a landing hard enough to rip metal, but slow and low enough to save 155 lives.

Associated Press writers Adam Goldman, Larry Neumeister and Colleen Long contributed to this report.

Source

Re: Miracle on the Hudson - posted by Lysa (), on: 2009/1/19 6:06

HeartSong,

MSNBC and NBC named it right, "**Miracle on the Hudson.**"

Who correctly said it....

"We had a miracle on 34th Street. I believe now we have had a miracle on the Hudson," Gov. David Paterson said.

Re: - posted by White_Stone (), on: 2009/1/19 10:46

Quote:

-----miracle on 34th Street.

A book promoting Santa Claus and the worldly Christmas celebration is NOT a miracle. I hope Gov. Paterson was only using the 'play on words' and not intending to imply there was actually a 'miracle on 34th Street.'

That the passengers all survived was an Act of God and Jesus is praised for it.

Kind regards,
white stone

Re: Airplane vs. Birds - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/2/5 20:10

While I am fully aware that the Lord can do anything, somehow this whole thing amazes me. That a flock of birds, positioned precisely in the right place, at the right time can so easily take down a huge airplane. And then the way the Lord orchestrated the whole landing - that it was done in such a way that there was no doubt that His mighty hand was in control of the whole event. And then to see all of the passengers safely lined up on the wings of the airplane as it floats in the river. Oh, what an awesome God we have - it must delight Him to no end to do these things.

'We're gonna be in the Hudson'

By Alan Levin, USA TODAY

With a voice that was as clear as it was cool, Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger made a final radio call to air traffic from his crippled jet.

"We're gonna be in the Hudson," Sullenberger said on tapes released Thursday by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The controller, who for nearly two minutes had been trying to find a safe landing spot for US Airways Flight 1549 — referred to by its call sign "Cactus fifteen forty-nine" — could not grasp what he was hearing.

"I'm sorry, Say again cactus," controller Patrick Harten, a 10-year veteran, radioed back.

The dramatic "Miracle on the Hudson" splashdown has transfixed the nation since Sullenberger and copilot Jeffrey Skiles successfully landed on the Hudson River near Manhattan on Jan. 15, saving the lives of all 155 people on the flight.

But the intensity of the drama that played out during 3 1/2 minutes is barely noticeable in the clipped phrases and calm tones on the radio.

It began at 3:27:36 p.m., a short time after the Airbus A320 struck a line of what the pilots later described as large brown birds.

Sullenberger's emergency call was slow and clear-voiced:

"Ah, this is, uh, Cactus fifteen thirty nine, hit birds. We lost thrust in both engines. We're turning back towards LaGuardia."

Despite the almost mundane tone in Sullenberger's voice, the radio call contains a hint to the urgency of the situation. The veteran captain used the wrong call sign, referring to his flight as 1539 instead of 1549.

Harten, identified by the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, wasted no time. Within seven seconds of responding to Sullenberger and instructing him to turn left so it could return to LaGuardia, he notified a LaGuardia tower controller that a flight with an emergency was returning to the airport.

"He lost all engines, he lost the thrust in the engines," Harten said. "He is returning immediately."

"Which engines?" an incredulous unnamed controller at LaGuardia replied.

"He lost thrust in both engines, he said," Harten replied.

"Got it," the LaGuardia controller replied.

Skiles had been flying when the jet struck the birds, according to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). After the impact, Sullenberger took the controls while the copilot tried to restart the engines and performed emergency checklist.

Sullenberger, a licensed glider pilot, knew soon after the impact that he could not make LaGuardia with virtually no power from his engines. After Harten asked the pilot whether he could land on a specific LaGuardia runway, Sullenberger replied:

"We're unable. We may end up in the Hudson."

"Ok, what do you need to land?" Harten said.

"I am not sure if we can make any runway," the pilot responded. "Oh, what's over to our right? Anything in New Jersey? Maybe Teterboro."

"Do you want to try Teterboro?" the controller said.

"Yes."

Eighteen seconds later, after Harten had alerted Teterboro controllers to the emergency, the controller tells Sullenberger he can land at Teterboro.

"We can't do it," the captain responded. There's no trace in his voice that he was about to attempt an almost unheard of water splashdown.

Harten continued asking Sullenberger which runway he would like at Teterboro. That prompted the pilot's pronouncement that the plane was bound for the water.

Twenty-three seconds later, the jet's radar blip disappeared from Harten's screen.

"Cactus, ah, cactus fifteen forty nine, radar contact is lost. You also got Newark (Liberty International) Airport off your two o'clock and about seven miles."

Sullenberger never replied.

audio/visual

Re: Airplane vs. Birds - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2009/2/8 18:46

You know what? I just love this story! I have watched this video several times and there is just something about it that grabs me - my heart is filled with so much praise and gratitude to the LORD for his protection. Did y'all see the cartoon depicting angels under the plane's wings holding the airplane up?

Is it not interesting that when something like this happens the news media is not slow to report people's references to God?

ginnyrose

Re: - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/5/21 1:34

Yesterday I read in the news about the passengers of this flight getting their soggy luggage returned four months after the crash. Leave it to the Lord to bring everything to perfect closure.

Later I was reflecting again on this whole situation, and it finally became clear why I was so intrigued with the birds. These small birds, flying in perfect formation, were precisely in the right place at precisely the right moment to take down a huge airplane. With no thought of their own life, they flew in perfect obedience to the command of their Maker - that His will would be done - and in so doing, the seemingly impossible was accomplished in the eyes of the watching world.

Oh that all of our hearts would be perfectly tuned to His every desire.