

24 July 2017

To: Sean Houlihan FAA

From: Captain John E McEvert City of Avalon Fire Department (Santa Catalina Island)

Subject: 30 June 2017 Plane Crash on the 405 FWY John Wayne Airport

Dear Sean,

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Thank you for your request of my memory of the incident details of the morning of 30 June 2017 405 FWY Plane Crash. I feel very blessed to have only been able to assist the husband and wife from their plane after their crash landing. I'm grateful for all my years of training and being able to react in such a way that the outcome was very positive.

The plane crash overview....

I had just gotten off of shift duty on the island the morning of the accident and arrived in Downtown Long Beach where the Catalina Express docks their vessels. Arriving around 0900. I was then proceeding to my mainland residence in Rancho Santa Margarita in Orange County. This drive usually takes me about an hour. My commute takes me on the 405 south to the 133. Driving by John Wayne (SNA) Airport on a weekly bases, one gets use to seeing air craft flying over the freeway and making their landing.

0935 The accident / incident

I was on the phone with my father at the time. Traffic seemed to all of sudden become less congested and was flowing as we passed the 55 interchange. I was traveling in the number one lane next to the POV lanes. I had just made the turn where one can now see the flight path or inbound air craft making their approach to land. I almost always look to the East in that flight path just to look and see what aircraft are coming in. It was this time as I was still on the phone with my father telling him that boy this plane seems really low. I do not remember seeing if the landing gear was down. I do remember seeing how the plane was moving from left to right while losing altitude. My next glimpse was I think this plane is going to hit me and thinking it was high enough above my vehicle and would make the air port, next visual my vehicle was being hit by the aircraft coming directly across the front of my vehicle. I remember seeing the aircraft spin behind my vehicle once or twice and nosing into the right wall and the explosion of fuel. The aircraft spun off the wall once or twice and came to rest in it's final location. Both wings on fire - and or engines. I remember never having a issue handling my vehicle after the collision and coming to a safe stop. I placed my vehicle hazard lights on and made my way back across four or five lanes after visualizing the fire ball and now the plane final resting area which is now surrounded by fire. My thought was to keep my vehicle a safe distance from the wreckage. I immediately stopped jumped out of my vehicle and started to run towards the plane. My thoughts "there can't be anyone alive, it doesn't look very safe..." And then I see a head pop up on the passenger side of the aircraft. My next thought "If she can be there then I can be there..." I made my way along the rear - tail section of the aircraft along the passenger side to the female occupant / passenger. At this time she was already outside the aircraft and trying to pull the Pilot / her husband from the aircraft. I was able to get her to understand that I will get him you just need to move to a safe area as I guided her back along the aircraft. I then made my way back to the passenger side, Pilot was seated with his back towards me as his legs were towards his seat, I then bear hugged him pulling him from the aircraft, then I processed to drag him to a safer location.

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I was able to start asking the Pilot questions as we do with all patients to gather more information. I was able to get his name, wives name, how many people on the aircraft, his injuries, I briefly left his side to ask the wives injuries. I came back to the Pilot and started to do a quick exam, I cut his shirt off with a knife that I always carry "as a tool", took his shoes and socks off and did a initial lower neurological check. At this point many people were on scene, individuals with fire extinguishers, a young gentlemen that had taken off his "yellow" T-shirt and was using it as a bandage on the wives head. I remember seeing a women wearing hospital scrubs with her stethoscope and another female kneeling next to the wife and feeling very grateful for their help and giving her assurance.

The first arriving Airport crash apparatus arrived from the Airport along side the freeway and I remember having the firefighter ask me if I was "on the Job" I quickly told him I work on Catalina Island and that I was a Captain. It was just nice to know that he felt comfortable enough with what I was doing that he then proceeded to open a Medical gear compartment and started to hand me gear. I proceeded to just start to go to work, I gave the females that were assisting the wife, I gave them gauze for the head injury / wound care. I placed the pilot in a C-collar, took his blood pressure. I'm not sure the duration but I was able to give arriving units a quick rundown of the incident and of their patients. I just assisted packaging the Pilot with the crew for transport, as another group assisted with the wives care for transport.

Some of the questions and conversation with the Pilot,

Me: where did you come from

Pilot: he stated John Wayne

Me: you are here

Pilot: I called in a mechanical failure, Mayday, Mayday I was returning to land, I thought I could make the fence line.

Many wonderful individuals stopped to assist. It is a miracle that there were not more vehicles and possibly other injuries and or lives lost. We are blessed that we have what I call Angels and I was able to be their Angle that day.

Thank you again for the recognition.

John E. Meert
City of Avalon Fire Department
Captain on the B-Shift

Passenger Side View



Pilot Side View





Front of my Vehicle
Only one big scratch and a
few dents