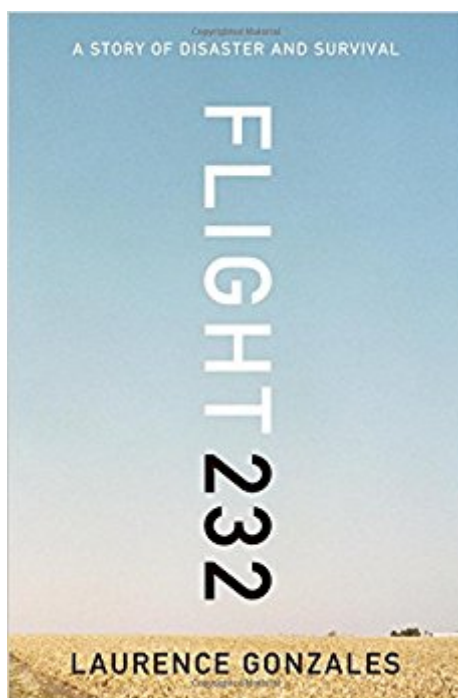


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# Flight 232: A Story Of Disaster And Survival



## Synopsis

Twenty-five years after the catastrophe, a dramatic and extraordinarily rare 360-degree view of the crash of a fully loaded jumbo jet. As hundreds of rescue workers waited on the ground, United Airlines Flight 232 wallowed drunkenly over the bluffs northwest of Sioux City. The plane slammed onto the runway and burst into a vast fireball. The rescuers didn't move at first: nobody could possibly survive that crash. And then people began emerging from the summer corn that lined the runways. Miraculously, 184 of 296 passengers lived. No one has ever attempted the complete reconstruction of a crash of this magnitude. Drawing on interviews with hundreds of survivors, crew, and airport and rescue personnel, Laurence Gonzales, a commercial pilot himself, captures, minute by minute, the harrowing journey of pilots flying a plane with no controls and flight attendants keeping their calm in the face of certain death. He plumbs the hearts and minds of passengers as they pray, bargain with God, plot their strategies for survival, and sacrifice themselves to save others. Ultimately he takes us, step by step, through the gripping scientific detective work in super-secret labs to dive into the heart of a flaw smaller than a grain of rice that shows what brought the aircraft down. An unforgettable drama of the triumph of heroism over tragedy and human ingenuity over technological breakdown, Flight 232 is a masterpiece in the tradition of the greatest aviation stories ever told. 8 pages of illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, July 2014: Twenty five years ago this month, a United Airlines flight

from Denver to Chicago burst into a fireball and crashed in a cornfield outside of Sioux City, Iowa. It was one of the worst plane disasters in history--but it could have been worse. Of the 296 people on board, 184 survived. In his very long and gripping *Flight 232: A Story of Disaster and Survival*, journalist Laurence Gonzales takes us through the moments before and after the crash (as best remembered by those survivors and observers on the ground). He also goes back through records, scientific documents, and his own experience as a pilot and aviation reporter to piece together what went wrong with the jetliner that was as majestic (and, ultimately, doomed) as the Titanic. (The last third of the narrative delves into the tiny, microscopic flaw that likely brought the plane down.) As you might expect, there was plenty of terror on Flight 232, but what is surprising is how much inspiring behavior Gonzales discovered there as well--flight attendants who truly did put the passengers' needs first, crew members whose quick thinking probably made the crash less devastating than it would have been, not to mention the plain dumb luck in evidence, as well--at least one woman moved out of first class at the last minute. Her original seat was eviscerated; she survived. This is a hard book to read because it addresses some of our worst fears and some we've never even thought of (apparently, the blue water in the toilets on planes can leak out, freeze and get stuck, as ice, to the outside of the plane). But it is also a story of survival, a tale of science, of heroism and of faith. --Sara Nelson

Gonzales (*Surviving Survival*, 2012) revisits the crash of United Flight 232 in this gripping narrative that includes numerous survivor accounts as well as insight from those in the Sioux City control tower, rescue personnel, and specialists who worked for months to determine the cause. In particular, the survivor stories recounted here in painstaking detail remain no less riveting now than when they were reported 25 years ago. Through numerous interviews and research, Gonzales places readers as close to the accident as possible, from the cockpit to the main cabin, revealing the catastrophic failure of the single part that destroyed not only one of the three engines but, more critically, the entire hydraulic system. There are heroes aplenty, from those who did their jobs beyond all measure to the many who lent a lifesaving hand at risk of their own survival. Emotion rather than thoughtful post-crash analysis carries the book, but Gonzales does make clear how the lack of seat requirements for infants and children, which remains the same today, cost lives. A powerful, unforgettable look at a devastating accident. --Colleen Mondor

There were so many amazing anecdotes in this book about a tragic plane crash. Most of us fly, and who doesn't think about what a crash must be like? Well, this satisfied my curiosity, and more. This

is a story of heroism and tragedy and humanity. I am really glad I read it. But it fell short in some ways. Parts were confusing, with the author shifting unclearly among people and places and times. The book seemed stretched out with so much on the cause of the crash, with more technical info than I needed. The amount of time dealing with corpses seemed excessive, too. I skimmed through some of those parts, and slowed down for the parts about the people involved - both the crew and passengers. In spite of its flaws, I still recommend this book. It was both sad and life affirming.

Gonzales' book is filled with first-hand accounts resulting from his numerous personal interviews with survivors. However, his writing style jumps all over the timeline making it difficult to read. The narrative jumps from pre-crash to post-crash, investigation summaries to lawsuits and back to pre-crash, etc. At one point, Gonzales present the discovery of the fan disk and other parts in the fall of 1989, then promptly jumps back to the survivors on the night of the crash in July. We are introduced to passengers in the early pages and in the next sentence informed that their memorial mass would take place the following week. A little more continuity would greatly increase its readability.

Gonzales wrote *Deep Survival* in 2004. I appreciated his work and felt he could do well breaking down what went so wrong that day and also why people survived the crash. Gonzales did a fine job breaking down the physics of the crash and did so while weaving in the personal stories of those people who survived and the impacts the event had on first responders as well as the aviation industry. The book may not be good to read while traveling by air. The descriptions are graphic and may cause some to be overwhelmed however it is a good read.

Flight 232 is an extremely well researched, compelling, and especially harrowing story of the ill fated United Airlines Flight 232 in 1989. The reason that flight merits an entire book has to do with the sheer amount of survivors on what should have been a non survivable catastrophic engine failure situation. As well, it was a watershed event leading to the development of many modern safety practices as well as crash response procedures and investigation. It's also notable for laws that did not (and perhaps should have) been changed about airline safety. Author Gonzales, a commercial pilot, uses meticulous research to give a very complete story of the crash. From passengers to crew, hospital workers to ground support, manufacturer reps, radar operators to crash investigators, all provide a very large picture of the airline industry at the end of the 1980s. Inside these 400 packed pages, Gonzales will give us the scope of the issues the plane encountered, the harrowing

tales of escape and death, survivor remorse, PTSD not only from the survivors but also the workers and volunteers who had to handle the morgues and hospitals, to those who were near the airport when the plane crashed and ran to help. The stories are tragic, uplifting, horrifying, intriguing, daunting, and most especially emotive. I don't think anyone reading this book could be left unaffected. Most will likely read for the human aspect of the crash. But very detailed descriptions of the metal fatigue issue (from how the metal is made, manufactured, etc.) as well as complex flying technical and physics are also included. Readers can really read in detail about all aspects of the crash (technical, personal) or choose to hone in on the detective aspects of finding the cause or the experiences of those inside the plane when it went down. For me, I skimmed through the very detailed technical aspects while reading the first time and then went back and spent my time on the physics descriptions at leisure. The people story was far too compelling to stop and suddenly get a physics manual in the middle of their tales. The only detractor for me was that the book started to switch up very emotional and harrowing scenes with hard science around the middle and through to the end. I would have liked to see the book broken down into three distinct sections: personal experiences of those involved, the detective work and changes in the industry, and then the hard physics. It was truly frustrating and annoying to read about a mother going through the crash watching her 2 year old fly through the air - then changing abruptly to 20-30 pages of metallurgy and titanium anomaly detection techniques before we find out what happened to the 2 year old and if he survived. Those who are faint of heart with blood and gore descriptions would probably want to avoid this book and stick to Air Craft Investigation/Mayday episodes instead. The book is very thorough and descriptions of injuries/deaths and how the morgue worked right after the crash are especially horrifying. As well, keep in mind that the plane was full of young children due to a promotion from the airline - most with no seats to be belted into. I have seen a lot of crash documentaries/tv shows and nothing compares to what I read in this book. It wasn't just the terrifying crash itself that was harrowing - it was the account of everyone who had to deal with what happened or what they saw that day. Most people never realize that someone has to work with horribly disfigured bodies strewn across an airport and find ways to quickly identify, process, and preserve those bodies for relatives - all while others are saving the injured, placating shocked relatives and media, keeping the airport facilities running, or trying to find out exactly what happened to the plane - so it doesn't happen again. The nature of the Flight 232 crash allows author Gonzales to really give all aspects of what happens when a plane makes an 'unscheduled landing.' Thorough, well documented with resources listed, and with interviews of nearly everyone still alive connected in any way to the crash, whether in Japan or San Diego, the author has done an impressive job. The book contains 16 color images

but I recommend also checking sites or videos online to see the people/crash. Reviewed from an ARC.

Absolutely AMAZING! I could NOT put this book down. And despite the grim nature of an airline tragedy, this book is actually a very uplifting and life affirming read. Laurence Gonzales intricately details the incredible, true story of one of the largest domestic airline disasters in US history, from both the scientific and human interest perspectives. The author's painstaking research and explanation of the aeronautical logistics involved in this horrific aviation disaster, are interspersed with very candid accounts from the individual survivors of this tragedy. There is a powerful spiritual overlay to this story as well, as many of the passengers and crew members divulge their innermost thoughts and recollections of the moments leading up to, and immediately following the crash, as well as the subsequent impact of this event on their lives. This story is remarkable not only for the magnitude of the tragedy in terms of lives lost, but for the many legal, commercial, and practical consequences spawned by this incident within the airline industry, as well. I was engrossed in this book, literally from the first page, and highly recommend it to anyone who savors a powerful, gripping and thought provoking read. This was one of the three best books I have ever read.

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