

Frisco Eddie's Revenge: The Return

A series by Balboa Ron Schweikert

(In last month's episode, Frisco Eddie and Lil were headed to Seattle, Washington, when the Boeing 727 on which they were flying developed engine problems just before they were to land at the Sea/Tac Airport. Chances of landing safely seemed bleak..., especially since the nose gear hadn't locked into place.)

They were 100 feet above the ground, and all hope was gone! Then, at the last second, Captain Johnson hollered out: "I've got the lights -- and the runway!" There was just barely enough time to "round-out" the controls on the 727 for the landing!

After the main gears hit the runway, they bounced around a bit, but it wasn't too bad a touch-down, considering. He had to "hold off" the nose gear as long as possible, because the warning light still showed that it hadn't locked into place!

Fortunately, they had touched down very near the approach end of the runway. They couldn't reverse the engines because of the loss of torque, and the nose-gear malfunction. Capt. Johnson held it off as long as he could, but the nose of the plane automatically began to lower as they slowed down. The crew held their breath now, anticipating the crash when the nose of the aircraft hit the runway.

By a miracle -- it didn't happen! The nose gear WAS "down-and-locked." The warning light had been giving a false indication! They were eating up the runway now. Capt. Johnson very carefully applied the brakes at first, then put on enough pressure to start slowing their roll-out. There was over 10,000 feet of runway, but it looked like it was going to be close! He REALLY got on the brakes then, as they flashed by the huge Boeing factory on their left. The end of the runway was approaching fast!

The emergency vehicles chased the plane at top speed. Besides the possibility of over-shooting was the fire danger on the left wing -- and the fuel that still remained inside the wing.

The flight attendants were giving instructions now: "As soon as we come to a full stop, the emergency doors will be opened and you are to exit them as instructed. Don't panic! We're going to be O.K. Wait your turn to exit, and use the emergency ramps. The main thing is to keep calm, and don't lose control!"

The aircraft finally came to a full stop a few feet from the end. Lil and Eddie were located one seat from the center emergency exit, and they were ready to get out! Lil went first and met Eddie on the ground after they slid down the air-filled ramp. They had been told to get as far away from the plane as they could -- and that's exactly what they did!

They ran for some distance before they stopped. When they looked back, they saw that the left wing of the plane was still smoldering, but the crash rescue fire trucks were shooting foam all over the engine and the wing. There were rescue vehicles everywhere and it appeared that it was all going to be under control.

They both sat down on the grass then. A sweet feeling of relief began to set in over them. Eddie lowered his head and gave thanks. They had made it! After a while, Lil said to Eddie: "This day will be permanently imprinted on my mind. I'll never forget it. I'll bet you won't either, Champ!" Eddie said: "That's for sure, Lil, but we're alive -- and that's the main thing. Next time, I think I'll take the train!"

They were picked up by a shuttle bus then and were driven over to the main terminal. The bus was alive with conversation about the emergency landing and how close they had all come to disaster. Lil and Eddie were quiet now -- just taking it all in.

There were medical personnel waiting when the shuttle buses dropped them off at the terminal. Everyone seemed to be in pretty good shape, except for a few old ladies who thought they were having heart attacks. After a while, Capt. Johnson and the crew came in. The whole crowd began to clap and cheer for them. They began shaking hands and giving hugs. It was a very emotional experience. Lil even had a hint of a tear in the corner of her eye!

After they had been medically cleared and had given some more information, they were cleared to leave. What a relief it was! When they got to the car rental area, Lil arranged for their transportation. After that was taken care of, she said she had to make a quick phone call to a friend she had in the local area. After a short, but lively conversation, she said: "O.K., my man, we're all fixed up for the night. Let's go!"

On the drive over, Eddie questioned Lil about where they were headed. She told him: "We're gonna spend the night at the home of a friend of mine. He's an old-time shuffler and we go way back. You'll enjoy meeting him, and we need to have a few (ha!) drinks to get over all this excitement. He always keeps a well-stocked bar and plenty of stories to tell, too. It'll be just what we need to settle down. They call my friend Tacoma Tim."

Eddie looked at Lil then, and he wondered about just how many more weird things could possibly happen on this trip. If he only knew....if he had any idea at all...

Don't miss next month's episode when Eddie meets "Tacoma Tim."