



Thirty Seconds to Impact

By Peter Burkill

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Thirty Seconds to Impact By Peter Burkill

When Peter took charge of the flight deck of the 777 and took off from Beijing airport, there was nothing to suggest that this trip would be anything other than a routine flight of the sort he had made so many times before. It was not until moments before landing that anything went wrong. Coming in to Heathrow Airport, the plane suffered inexplicable loss of power to both engines, and it was suddenly likely that the plane would plough into a built-up area outside the airport, with the loss of all lives on board. Peter tells us in graphic detail his thoughts and actions when he managed to help save the plane at the last moment thanks to a flash of inspiration that led him to change the position of the wing flaps, which appeared to gain the vehicle enough precious time to make it over the perimeter fence and land on the grass, short of the runway. For both Maria and Peter, their lives following the crash have resulted in experiences that they never would have expected to have happened. There isn't a handbook with rules to follow after a crash so the subsequent aftermath was laced with events that could have been handled better from all sides, which lead to Maria and Peter having to find strength inside them that they had never needed before. A little more than a year later, they have used these strengths to begin a new chapter in their lives; starting with leaving British Airways and celebrating a second chance to enjoy life. But there are still nights when they find themselves awake, crying about what could have happened on that fateful day.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Peter Burkill captured the world's attention when the aircraft he was captain of crashed into London Heathrow in January 2008. Peter was born in Chesham, Bucks in 1964 and educated at Dr Challoner's Grammar School, Amersham. He attained a BAHons degree in Business Studies at Portsmouth before working as a minilab sales representative with Kodak UK. Peter had been accepted to train as a commercial pilot at Prestwick under the British Airways sponsorship scheme in 1987, where he graduated in 1989. He has since flown for British Airways for 20 years flying Lockheed Tristars, DC-10s and Boeing 777s. Peter achieved his command on B777s in 2004 and during his career has accumulated over 13000 flight hours. He took voluntary redundancy from British Airways in August 2009. Maria Burkill was born on the Wirral, Merserside in 1974 and was educated at Upton Hall Convent, Upton. When she left school she followed her heart and became a Redcoat at Butlins, moving on to working as a holiday representative, travel agent and then into the aviation industry as an air hostess with British Airways. Peter and Maria met in 2002 and married 9 months later. Maria left British Airways at this time and joined an NHS ambulance service and started training as an ambulance technician. Within four years Maria and Peter were the proud parents of three sons and Maria had qualified in her profession. They are currently living in Worcester, UK.

Users Review

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Ronald Castaneda:

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