

Crash of TWA Flight 260

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## Summary:

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This moment-by-moment account of a major airplane crash on a beautiful and treacherous mountainside puts the reader at the pilot's side, describing the flight, its catastrophic ending, and the aftermath. At 7:05 a.m. on February 19, 1955, TWA Flight 260 took off from the Albuquerque airport for a short flight to Santa Fe. To avoid flying over the Sandia Mountains, the plane's approved air route was a dogleg running north-northwest from Albuquerque, then east-northeast into Santa Fe. But at 7:08 a.m. Flight 260 was headed directly toward Sandia Ridge, almost entirely obscured by storm clouds. A local resident who saw Flight 260 overhead observed that if the plane was eastbound, it was too low; if it was northbound, it was off course. At 7:12 a.m. the plane's terrain-warning bell sounded its alarm. Both pilots saw the sheer west face of the Sandias just beyond the right wingtip--an appalling shock considering they should have been ten miles further west. Reacting instantly, they rolled the plane steeply to the left, pulled its nose up, and started to level the wings. It was their final act. Hidden by the storm, another cliffside lay directly ahead. When they struck it, they were still in a left bank, nose high. Charles Williams was one of the first men on the scene of this horrific crash. His unraveling of TWA Flight 260's final flight is a tale of days, minutes, and seconds spread out over the span of half a century. His book resolves some of the controversies surrounding the crash, including the Civil Aeronautics Board's over-swift determination that the pilots were at fault.

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