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Week 52: Fall Mission Feeding, last week

James and Betty Robison

Tammie Jo Shults

Betty: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! Thank you so much for joining us. I'm Betty and this is James.

James: We've got a pilot with us. You may not know this. I'm a pilot. I flew for the ministry for 15 years and I really began flying in self-defense because I was driving to all the crusades everywhere. Sometimes you and Rhonda, our baby girl would drive with us but I was literally in one year driven off the road five times -- each time near death. One time it's a miracle I wasn't killed instantly. I said, "Man, I've got to get off the road. I'm going everywhere." And so I started learning to fly. Over 50 years ago became a pilot.

So pilots understand something about what's going on and what's required. They also understand how absolutely safe airplanes are. I've got to be honest with you, they're safer than cars and you don't have to deal with all the people driving other cars. So it's the safest way to travel.

But when a problem occurs, I don't even think to say "nerves of steel" is necessarily the right response. You have to be highly trained and you're trained for emergencies. But when they hit -- The one that this pilot, a woman, a very talented Navy pilot and an airline pilot, she responded, and wonderfully, in a very difficult situation. But her *Nerves of Steel* had some support. She doesn't mind talking about it. There's 140 plus passengers that are glad she had help and that she was on top of it.

Would you welcome Tammie Jo Shults to *LIFE Today*?

Tammie: Thank you very much!

James: Well, this is a really, really cool picture and I know they're going to get a close-up on the screen.

Tammie: Like I say, I'd like it better if I were behind the jet, but it is, I do like a good aircraft.

James: That scene, that's just... I'm really amazed at what airplanes do for people. They, in a way, are a gift from God. There's nothing man, created in the image of God, can't do to bless people, and aircraft is one of them. It took us a long time to learn from the bird how lift really occurs. But it's a great thing.

Tell us, some viewers heard it, it's been in TIME Magazine, it was on all the shows, everybody knew about it, but you were in the plane when an explosion occurred. I want you to tell our viewers what happened and what went on inside your own mind and just your being.

Tammie: Well, we were leaving New York-LaGuardia Airport headed for Dallas; headed here. So we had a lot of fuel. We were full of passengers and heavy with fuel. About 20 minutes into the flight we felt like we'd been hit by a Mac truck on the left side. The jolt was so violent that Darren Ellisor, my first officer and I, comparing notes later thought that we'd been hit by another aircraft; that we'd had a midair... Our number one engine which is on my side, the captain's side had exploded and we went into a rapid roll to the left.

Darren and I both caught the controls and leveled the wings but at that point there was a shuddering that ensued that we couldn't focus our eyes on anything in the cockpit. Then we also had this stabbing pain in our ears and we realized we weren't breathing either. The noise got to a level immediately that we couldn't communicate over.

Of course, that's all we knew at that point. What we didn't know was that the explosion had peeled the engine cowling back. It remained attached, a little bit like a banana peeling. But at

500-mile an hour wind those big pieces of metal flailing underneath the wing were causing a shuddering that was something we couldn't control. And then some of the damaged pieces had torn out sections of the leading edge of the wing and had hit some windows, one of which had blown out.

James: And the oxygen goes out immediately. That is an explosion but that's when you say you couldn't breathe. Breathing would have been meaningless because there is no oxygen at that altitude.

Tammie: There is no oxygen. We usually have it at about 7,000 feet pressure at 32,000, and we suddenly went to 32,000 so that that is a little bit like a balloon popping; that pressure, that air pressure within, it is just forceful and rapid and equalizing. And so that happened and then the 500-mile an hour wind going by that window made it so loud.

So all of this happened and honestly, just the tiniest slice of a moment -- not even a second. It all happened at once. So it was very isolating. And adrenaline just kicks in. I think that's one of our God-given gifts is adrenaline when we need it.

I remember thinking in what I thought at the time was a very leisurely pace, good news/bad news. Bad news is I don't think everything is going to stay on the aircraft until we get it to a runway. And that kind of mentally had me running to the cliffs of what if? And that was then this would be the day that I meet my maker. And that's when my run just stopped. I realized that I wouldn't be meeting a stranger.

That's when I really had a calm and backed away from the cliff of what if, and realized, all right, that's the bad news fully investigated. And I turned around to the good news, which was we're still flying. I think the calm that's in my voice in the A.T.C. tapes reflects a calm heart which I needed to make a lot of decisions.

James: This is the sum of this just for a moment. Here's what happened too. When you lose the pressure and you lose an engine at that altitude you're going to descend. And you're just

trying to keep it stable. I know as a pilot you want to keep it as level as possible. But you were descending.

Tammie: Well, we lost 19,000 feet in five minutes. We were more than descending.

James: It's a steady decline. I want you to listen to her voice as she is talking to a controller. This is going to skip through a little bit of lengthy time right on down to the end. But just listen.

Audio Recording:

Tammie: Southwest 1380 has an engine fire, descending.

Philadelphia Approach: Southwest 1380, descend and maintain 6,000.

Tammie: Southwest 1380 down to 6,000.

Philadelphia Approach: And when you get a chance, I need a fuel remaining and souls on board.

Tammie: Okay. 149 souls on board, five hours of fuel.

Philadelphia Approach: Southwest 1380, I understand your emergency. Let me know when you want to go in.

Tammie: Yeah. We have part of the aircraft missing so we are going to need to slow down a bit. Okay. Could you have the medical meet us there on the runway as well? We've got huh, injured passengers.

Philadelphia Approach: Injured passengers. Okay. And are you, is your airplane physically on fire?

Tammie: No. It's not on fire but part of it is missing. They said there is a hole and someone went out.

Philadelphia Approach: Um, I'm sorry. You said there was a hole and somebody went out? Southwest 1380. It doesn't matter. We'll work it out there. So the airport is just off to your right. Report it in sight, please.

Tammie: In sight. Southwest 1380, airport's in sight.

Thank you. We're going to stop right here by the fire trucks. Thanks, guys, for the help.
End of Recording

James: Wow! Does that not sound like a calmness that is like... Would you say it's almost like a supernatural calmness and a confidence? Not only your training but you handled it well. Everybody talked about that.

Okay. So now you are coming on down. You want to tell us anything about before you actually were able to get on the runway and you were then ultimately able to see the damage and know that someone's life had been lost; what's going on? What do you want our readers and our viewers to hear?

Tammie: Well, as far as the flight details, I will say on the way down, as soon as I got my oxygen mask on, Darren and I got our oxygen masks on and he was flying. I made sure he knew he was still flying so there is not two people trying to control the same airplane. And I got on the P.A. It was the loudest portion of the flight. So it is really a miracle that they heard this because we weren't able to communicate for 22,000 more feet, it was so loud.

But I made a P.A. That just said we're not going down we're going into Philly. One of the things that we took away, passengers and crew alike is just having a destination, having a plan and a destination, it gives you hope. We were still in the same rough ride for 20 more minutes so it didn't change our circumstances. But hope changes us and that's enough.

So on our way down I switched with Darren, captains are supposed to land emergency landings. Darren was doing a great job but about 17,000 feet I took over and took over the talking as well because he took over damaged systems and talking with the flight attendants. At this point the flight attendants had unbuckled, gone through the very rough aircraft, above and beyond what their books call for them to do. They had sprained back, bruised ribs, cuts, lacerations from just going up and down helping people, and giving them that encouragement, "We're not going down. We're going into Philly."

They had discovered what had happened in Row 14. So they had called up and told us, "We've got to slow down. We've got big guys helping but we can't get the passenger back in."

And so Andrew Needham, Tim McGinty, godly men gave up their oxygen masks, got the nod from their wives to go help and went towards a stranger and a very dangerous window when it was still very rough and helped to get Jennifer Riordan back in. And then Peggy Phillips, 78-year old, retired nurse, unbuckled through this rough ride, went back and gave C.P.R. And so we had a number of calls. We knew that there was sorrow in the back, that this was certainly a dire medical situation.

When we got ready to turn in, level off over Philadelphia and turn in, we realized we had too much drag. We were about 10,000 pounds overweight for landing. We couldn't level off without going to zero air speed. So we couldn't level off. We had to turn in from where we were. We just had to change so many plans going in there, not realizing we were much more of a glider. We had counted on the thrust for the number two engine but with so much drag pulling you to the left, adding power on the right pushed us to the left so we had a diminishing amount of power available. And as we got ready to turn in, we'd always made any right turn we needed at idle power. So when I had a little power pushing me to the left, turning right wasn't working.

That was where when we went back and listened to the cockpit voice recorder, there's this silence both in A.T.C. and in our cockpit. Then you hear my voice in this question mark, saying, "Heavenly Father..." And then I didn't realize it was an outside prayer. I thought it was a private

conversation. But I remember just thinking, Lord, what am I missing? Because I know we didn't wrestle this thing for 30,000 feet not to be able to turn the last 2,000 feet. And you know prayer often takes that mental metal cage off and lets us have the freedom to think better and realizing, asymmetrical thrust being the problem was also the answer. Got turned around and landed.

I just have to say, one of the things that's such an important part of this story is that when we rolled out and I went back, and often people are very agitated and vocal about their aggravation. It was a rough ride and they had a right to be aggravated. Everyone was so silent and respectful. And the weight of just the value of human life was felt that day on the flight. No one knew Jennifer on that flight and Jennifer knew no one but our American culture, which is not a perfect culture because we're not perfect people but it's rooted in Judeo-Christian values which says life is sacred. And that you don't have to be known to be worthwhile. Your life is purposeful. And so I just was touched at how all the passengers just treated each other with a selflessness and a tenderness of a family.

148 people went home to their lives and loved ones and one didn't, Jennifer Riordan. And that will always weigh heavy on my heart and my crew's heart and my company's heart.

That evening, my husband Dean called me. He's always flown the same aircraft I have. So he totally understands the dynamics going on there. Besides being a godly man himself and knowing God's word, and he just encouraged me that night knowing that there was such a conflict. Of course, we were thrilled that we had a safe landing, which wasn't guaranteed, but the loss of one, it can never be outweighed. And he reminded me of those beautiful words in Ecclesiastes that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. I'd always thought those were on different days. But that day obviously, showed me that that dichotomy can happen in a moment.

James: I feel like you got in that, being a pilot and knowing you can't turn right when you've got the drag on the left by putting more power on the right. And you need power to deal with altitude and direction and everything else. Somehow did you find it to some degree amazing that

you were able to get it on the runway with some degree of let's say directional control?

Tammie: Well, I won't say I was surprised. I guess I was always trying. And so I just thought, I will be trying until we're at zero air speed on the ground.

One of the things that I think God does for us so often, he doesn't come down and fly the airplane for us. He gives us years of preparation and years of experience and opportunity to learn the things that we're going to need later. So some of the things in my Navy background and even my Southwest background were not necessarily compliments. I dealt with some ornery characters and then I also dealt with some aircraft that didn't behave either.

One of the assignments in particular I think about that phrase in scripture that says, man... you know whenever Joseph is talking to his brothers. And he said, "You didn't mean it for good but God used it for good." Whenever I wasn't allowed to teach gunnery pattern with my peers as an instructor and told, "No girls and guns in this squadron." And sent to fly out-of-control flight. Take it up, depart flight ten times, spins, spiral, stall, whatever and the student recover it. So a year of doing that about every day. And that turned out to be some of the best training I had from the Navy, and it was not a peach assignment.

James: Well, you've written the story well. I want to say, Thomas Nelson I really appreciate you as a publisher. Y'all are the first ones who published my life story and then published a number of our books that I've written. But this is a dandy! I want to thank you, Tammie for just being available and knowing to talk to the Father who really cares, and somehow gave a comfort that went way beyond the cockpit when you walked back. But you were really one who helped deliver that comfort and I want to thank you.

Would you thank God and would you thank Tammie for the way she really used the training and experience to really, likely save over 140 lives?

Father, just thank you for this miracle; in Jesus' name.

I tell you what. This book is really worth getting and reading. Tammie, our viewers -- think about this -- I'm not exaggerating. We've had reports from African countries that we've saved 14 million plus children's lives. That's a lot of love. That's a lot of care; came from our viewers to support the mission outreaches and feeding, to feed all these children, save their lives in the most horrible crisis in the world. I want to thank you.

I want you to watch this because this is the cruelest killer but there is a perfect cure and it's delivered by love. I want you to watch very prayerfully because you can be the miracle someone desperately needs. Please watch! Please pray.

On the mission field:

Announcer: I am a mother's worst nightmare. I thrive on the pain of children. I thrive on the pain of children. I do not discriminate, and I show no mercy.

Sheila: You look into the eyes of a child who is seriously malnourished and there's just nothing. It is like somebody just turned the light off.

>> You won't see me coming but you will soon hear me in your children's cries.

[Child crying]

>> My touch brings bloated stomachs, thinning hair that changes color, painful skin disorders and tiny bodies so thin and frail they appear as living skeletons.

Sheila: And to see this little helpless one with the skin literally peeling off his arms and his legs was such a horrifying sight.

>> I am slow but sure. My name is malnutrition and my legacy is death.

Sheila: I heard someone on the news one day make a comment about the devastating deaths of

children in some countries in Africa. Yet, the reporter suggested that perhaps the mothers there were more accustomed to that because it's very much a part of their life.

I've seen with my own eyes what I knew in my gut – No mother will ever become accustomed to burying a child. The thing that really has blown me away the most... all of this is reversible.

End of video

In the studio:

James: I love to see that beautiful smile! Sheila, I love you! Thank you for going all over the world with *LIFE Outreach* putting God's arms around the precious and the suffering.

I want all of you to listen real close now. Please hear me. Betty and I traveled all those places for 20-25 years and we marched into hell, you might say, for a heavenly cause until Betty experienced a potentially life-changing experience of being paralyzed from being hurt where there are no roads and banged around. So we know what it is.

And Sheila, you're just such a blessing. When you look at this horrible killer, and I can't help but think of all the little children we watched die, sometimes in their mother's arms. I remember one of them when Betty and I were in Luanda, Angola and we were watching them try to pump -- they didn't have an oxygen machine. They didn't have oxygen. They had a little rubber tube and they were squeezing it trying to get oxygen to a little baby that wasn't breathing. We watched that little baby take his last breath that nothing could save. And we watched the mother in the hall, and you and Ann Pretorius, Betty trying to comfort this mother.

We appealed to you and said, "We can save these children. They're literally dying by the millions." You know this. This is not an exaggeration. The reports have come back to us from the African countries that we've saved between 14-15 million children's lives. When we say "we" that's you. Somebody just like you -- you did that.

Listen to me. When we saw... this is one of the most famous pictures that has ever been taken in history, it was Lady Di, Princess Diana holding a little African child in her arms and that little baby was the healthiest, prettiest little baby any mom would want to take home. She was standing in front of that orphanage where those babies were dying and we watched them. And we said to you the viewers, "We can save those children." And here's Princess Di holding one of the babies, love through someone like you saved. Not only that one but millions because somebody said, "I'll be the miracle. I'll be the answer to prayer."

That's what we're asking you to do. This last week of mission feeding right now, we're asking you to make the greatest gift you can possibly make. If you could give \$1,000 or \$10,000! Think about it. With a \$1,000 we can feed 100 children -- 100 children the next months! Let me break it down more simply. For \$30, \$50 or \$100 we can feed three, five or ten children for the next months. I don't know what you can do but would you be a miracle for as many children as possible? Would you right now?

Father, please move people to get your arms of love around those that are so precious. Give them life; in Jesus' name.

Would you do that right now? Please? Would you go get your bankcard, or get a check and make that check to *LIFE*? Get your bankcard, use it like a check? Please! Go online right now, it is so easy to do it that way or you can dial that number, it is a prayer line, and make the gift. If you mail it, call us and tell us what you're sending in because in this last week we really need to hear from you. We're going to need a lot of help. We have 400,000 precious, little malnourished lives that you can change with love.

We have some gifts to send you to say thank you. But you're going to be giving the greatest gift, you're going to be giving life all because of love. God's love. Thank you so much for doing it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Mission feeding began with a promise to be there in times of crisis for thousands of hurting and hungry children in their time of need.

Now more than ever we need your help to save lives by feeding and caring for children across the continent of Africa. With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish our supplies to reach the 400,000 children who are counting on us. Your gift of love can be the miracle answer to a desperate mother's prayer.

Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50 or \$100 that will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift, we'll send you the authored worship CD by Anthony Evans. This powerful full-length album includes unique versions of some of today's most cherished worship songs that are sure to uplift and inspire you.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the "Filled with Faith" and "...Joy" travel mug set. These 12-ounce mugs are crafted with large handles, double-layered insulation and vacuum sealed lids to prevent spills. Each mug includes a message to remind you of God's blessings and faithfulness.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

James: Well, I'm just thanking God. I know you are too, Betty for the love that you're expressing. By the way, if you call and get a busy, don't give up. Be determined, I'm going to help save lives. This is the last week and I want you to remember special -- real special year-end gifts. Would you? Because we really need your prayers and support. These children's lives

depend on it.

A lot of lives depended upon *Nerves of Steel* but she knew who to call out to. And boy, Tammie is a blessing. This is a fabulous book. It's a great story. You help us give life to these children and feed them and you say, well, I know you're going to send us Anthony Evan's beautiful CD and other gifts but would you send us Tammy's book? Yes, we will to bless you and those you love.

Would all of you in our audience join Betty and me in saying thanks to Tammie for blessing all of us? Bless you. Bless all the people that God blessed with life.

Thank you so much for watching. Thanks for sharing life.