

I moved into my first North Park home in 1985/1986. It was just a few years after the infamous San Diego PSA crash of 1978. We had rented a small rear-house on Boundary which is close to where the crash occurred; in the vicinity of Dwight & Nile near Chris' Market on Myrtle & Boundary. I was a young woman in my early 20's back then, and while I knew of the tragic event as did everyone in San Diego, I was a busy and preoccupied young mother with other more "important" things on my mind. It was a sobering and expanding experience for me when I began to hear first hand accounts from my new neighbors about the day flight 182 landed in their front yards... and changed their lives forever. I'll spare you the unpleasant details they often needed to share, but suffice it to say, these long-time NP residents became people I admired a great deal. They were heroic and generous in a situation where I concede I might not have done as well. They weren't the old codgers I'd first made them out to be. Uptown News did a story about the events [here](#)

They helped me learn that the little "oh so important" world I lived in was not, after all, the center of the universe. Life altering things happened to other people everyday...even in my own backyard.

Below are some of the details of that crash as they pertain to our neighborhood. Perhaps next time you pass the NP library and the commemorative tree planted there (something I learned tonight on Wikipedia) you'll think to take a moment and pause for those who died...and for those brave neighbors who came out of their houses and did amazing things. I know I will. (editors note: A documentary was made last year about these events called "Return to Dwight and Nile" here is a [link](#) .

From Wikipedia:

Pacific Southwest Airlines (PSA) Flight 182 was a Boeing 727-214 commercial airliner that collided over San Diego, California with a private Cessna 172 on September 25, 1978. The death toll of 144 makes it the deadliest aircraft disaster in California history to date, and it was the first Pacific Southwest Airlines incident involving fatalities. It was also the deadliest plane crash in the history of the United States until American Airlines Flight 191 went down eight months later.

The Boeing crashed into North Park, a San Diego neighborhood, killing all 135 on board. The two men aboard the Cessna died, as did seven people on the ground, including two children. Nine others on the ground were injured and 22 homes were destroyed or damaged across a four block area.

Monday morning, September 25, 1978, was an unusually warm day in San Diego. Southern California was experiencing what locals call a "Santa Ana winds" day, and people in the San

Diego area would later experience 100 degrees F temperatures as the day wore on. At the time of the accident the winds were calm, the temperature 85 degrees F, the visibility 10 miles.

Pacific Southwest Airlines flight 182 was a popular early-morning commuter flight en route to San Diego's Lindbergh Field. The flight had originated in Sacramento, then had a brief stopover in Los Angeles.

According to several witnesses on the ground there was first a loud metallic "crunching" sound, then an explosion and fire that compelled them to look up. The wreckage of the Cessna plummeted to the ground, its vertical stabilizer not only torn from its fuselage but also bent leftward, its debris hitting around 1067 meters (3500 feet) northwest of where the 727 went down. PSA 182's right wing was heavily damaged, rendering the plane uncontrollable and sending it careening into a sharp right bank, and the fuel tank inside it had ruptured and started a fire.

It impacted in a high-speed, nose-down attitude while banked 50° to the right. Seismographic readings indicated that the impact occurred at 09:02:07. The jet impacted just west of the I-805 freeway, approximately nine meters (30 feet) north of the intersection of Dwight and Nile streets, with the bulk of the debris field spreading in a northeast to southwesterly direction towards Boundary Street. The largest piece of the Cessna impacted about six blocks away near 32nd St. and Polk Ave. The explosion and fire created a mushroom cloud that could be seen for miles, and first responders on the scene reported that there was nothing left but utter destruction.

In the aftermath of the devastation on the ground, a controversy renewed in San Diego about why such a busy airport should be situated in a heavily populated area. Despite relocation proposals in search of an alternative to San Diego International Airport, the destination for Flight 182 remains in use and is the busiest single-runway commercial airport in the United States.

Saint Augustines, a private Roman Catholic high-school situated a short distance from the impact site allowed the use of the gymnasium as a make-shift morgue for identifying human remains and pathological investigation. Large freezer units were utilized inside the school gym to preserve the biological remains since the San Diego area was recording 100 degree F temperatures, unusually high temperatures for the geographic region.

Staff photographer Hans Wendt of the San Diego County Public Relations Office was attending an outdoor event with a still camera, and was able to take the two photographs of the falling Boeing after the collision with the Cessna. Cameraman Steve Howell from local TV channel 39 was attending the same event as Wendt, and captured the Cessna on film as it fell to earth. For its coverage of the disaster, The San Diego Evening Tribune, a predecessor to The San Diego Union-Tribune, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for "Local, General, or Spot News Reporting."

A memorial plaque honoring everyone who died on both planes and on the ground is located in the San Diego Aerospace Museum, near the Theodore Gildred Flight Rotunda in San Diego's Balboa Park. On the 20th anniversary of the crash, a tree was planted next to the North Park library, and a memorial plaque was dedicated to those who lost their lives. The library is not in the immediate vicinity of the actual crash site, which is completely rebuilt and bears no visible evidence of the crash.

On September 25, 2008, over 100 relatives and friends of the victims of PSA 182 gathered at Dwight and Nile streets in North Park for the 30th anniversary memorial of that fateful day. A journalist on scene captured the carnage, damage, and raging structural fires on film of the immediate impact zone and aircraft debris field. The footage was dramatic and graphic in nature and captured the tragedy as it unfolded minute by minute post impact. The news footage was subsequently used in the 1979 cult film "Faces of Death". The video footage graphically captured images of the deceased and various unidentifiable human remains which resulted from the forceful impact and subsequent fires.

Pacific Southwest Airlines Flight 182