

Cruel twist of fate cost Tony his life

TONY Hawkins should not have been traveling on Pan Am 103 Maid of the Seas.

He was in fact originally due to return home from England to the States a day earlier on December 20 1988.

But at the last minute he changed his plans to give him slightly longer in his home country.

His widow Helen said: "Tony was originally ticketed to return on December 20, but he called me a few days after he arrived in London to ask my permission to stay one day longer. He was feeling rushed not able to see everyone so I said 'Sure, what's one more day?'"

"That morning, forgetting the time zones separating us, he had awakened me at dawn to tell me for the first time when he expected to land at JFK. He didn't tell me the flight number. It was a Pan Am flight that would bring him back to New York at 9 pm."

Routine

That evening Helen followed a different routine to usual and didn't turn the radio on to listen to her favourite news programme while doing kitchen duty.

"I preferred to work in meditative silence. I had a lot of things to think about," she recalled. "These days of separation had also given me visions of disaster: cars crashing into trees, smashing headfirst into one another, planes bursting into flames, skidding off runways, exploding into pieces.

"Those images occurred randomly, flickered across the screen of my attention; I saw them as I walked down the street, sat at my desk, prepared dinner. I saw them again as I prepared our meal. They were unprecedented in my experience.

"Though Tony had travelled frequently during the early years in our marriage and again during the first two years after Alan's birth, I had never been excessively anxious in his absence; never before had I anticipated catastrophe."

Helen interpreted the 'daymares' as wor-

NEW Yorker Helen Engelhardt Hawkins was widowed in the 1988 Pan Am disaster. She has now released an audiobook, *The Longest Night: A Personal History of Pan Am 103*, dedicated to the memory of her late husband Tony.

In this special feature Helen talks about

New audio book looks back at jet bombing

ries over her finances and did not bother to mention them to her husband.

She was sitting watching A Child's Christmas in Wales on TV with her son Adam at about 9 pm when the phone rang.

As she answered it she told her son that it would be his father on the phone — but instead it was her husband's cousin, also called Tony, who was the chief of London Transport Police.

Initially she thought it was about their uncle who was suffering from cancer, but Tony's cousin asked her if she had seen the news.

Helen says she thought he meant a train crash outside London on December 12 but then he said: "Listen, Helen, we've had an airplane accident today."

Describing her reaction, Helen said: "Suddenly I had difficulty standing, difficulty hearing. I carried the phone a few feet into the dining room and sat down in slow motion."

Tony explained about the plane crash and asked what flight her husband was on but the only details she knew was that it was a Pan Am flight.

Helen said: "I could barely hold on to the phone. I braced my arm against the table leaning into the receiver."

As the conversation went on Helen recalls: "There was this cool precise part of my mind clicking away, ticking off all of the logical

possibilities, as though we were considering how many different ways someone could send a message, as though we were both detectives, as though we weren't discussing the end of the world, the victory of a nightmare, the triumph of terror.

"There was the rest of me, my body trembling severely, uncontrollably, as though I had been plunged into icy water."

Looking back, Helen said Tony's cousin had been the best person to tell her of the tragedy thanks to his training as a police officer as he only told her what she needed.

She said: "In fact, all I knew was that Tony was dead and so was everyone else on the plane."

Destruction

Helen went on to say: "Just as I had been in a state of heightened consciousness in the days preceding the destruction of the plane, seeing images of cars and planes crashing, I also knew that it had been a bomb the moment I saw the first news footage from Lockerbie on the TV screen within the hour after that phone call."

Included in Helen's new audiobook is a transcript of that fateful phone call. Along with recollections and memories of their time together, it includes a piece she has written 'Incident at Altitude', see below.

Helen's full story, *The Longest Night: A Personal History of Pan Am 103*, is out now and available from her website www.midsummersoundcompany.com and also through www.Audible.com



AUTHOR . . . Helen Engelhardt Hawkins

THIS is the transcript of the call Helen received from her husband's cousin breaking the news of Tony's death:

"Listen, Helen, we've had an airplane accident today."

Suddenly I had difficulty standing, difficulty hearing. I carried the phone the few feet into the dining room and sat down in slow motion.

"We've had a rather serious crash in Scotland of a Pan Am flight, flight 103. What plane was Tony on?"

"I don't know the flight number. He was flying Pan Am. When he called me this morning it was to tell me he'd be landing at 8.40 tonight. I thought he was calling me just now."

I could barely hold onto the phone. I braced my arm against the table, leaning into the receiver.

"I've been trying to get through to the police in Scotland or to the Pan Am office. There was a T. Hawkins on the manifest. Wouldn't he have signed his name Anthony or Tony?"

"He usually signed his name 'A. Hawkins'. Why don't you think the 'T. Hawkins' on the manifest is Tony?"

"No-one from the family saw him off to the airport, no-one saw him get on the plane. We knew he intended to fly home on the 103, but we were hoping he had been delayed in traffic, after all we all know that Tony tended to leave things for the last minute."

"What are you trying to tell me?" "You're trying to tell me there aren't any survivors, aren't you."

"Yes, that's right."

"And if there are any survivors, it would be better if Tony were dead, actually, the crash is that bad."

"That's right."

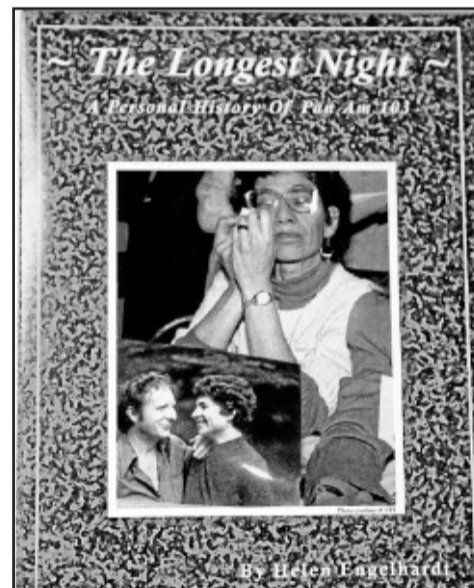
"In fact, the only hope we have is that Tony is not on that plane at all."

"Yes, that's why I've called you. We were hoping, the family was hoping.."

"But he hasn't called me! Where is he? There are only three possibilities: either he's been knocked unconscious in some sort of traffic accident, but then his papers would lead the police to contact me, so all his papers would have had to been stolen, that means he was mugged, or second, he's been kidnapped, or third, he's on that plane. Now which do you think is the likeliest possibility? The other situations aren't totally impossible, just utterly improbable. If he had missed the plane, he would have called me to reassure me that he's safe, not to worry. He has to be on that plane. HE HASN'T CALLED ME!"



TRAGEDY . . . the aftermath of the disaster in December 1988



NEW AUDIOBOOK . . . the full audio book about Helen's heartache of losing her husband in the Lockerbie disaster

INCIDENT AT ALTITUDE 12/21/88

For Tony/For Everyone

"All the controller saw was the aircraft breaking up. There were pieces all around the screen where there had been a single dot." 12/21/89 Newsweek

AIR The invisible ocean that has to be crossed.

The Maid of the Seas cuts through the sky bearing its cargo, the burden of your dreams. You are on your way home to us. (You are still trying to come home to us.)

FIRE On the Prestwick radar screen, you are a green electronic blip. At 7:03 pm the blip bursts.

"Like meteors falling from the sky. There were flames in the front and back garden and I could hear things falling on the roof . . . We didn't know what hit us." Ann McPhail, Lockerbie

"There was fire everywhere.

Ignited fuel was running along the street and balls of fire seemed to be everywhere." Irene Brown, Lockerbie

EARTH Pasturelands dark green in the cold December night. Sweet earth wounded one by one by one by one they fell to earth

our husbands, our sons, our daughters, our wives, our sisters, our brothers, our mothers, our fathers, our aunts, our uncles, our nieces, our nephews, our cousins, our sweethearts, our colleagues, our neighbours,

one by one through the dark cold air they came back to earth to Halldykes Farm you came at last to ground.

WATER The ocean was supposed to swallow the crime. We have our tears and time.