



FIVE MINUTES to IMPACT

The Final Flight of the Comanche

DAVID F. OSBORNE

**FIVE
MINUTES**
to
IMPACT

David Osborne is a true business entrepreneur. He is a value-based businessman. David is also a skillful, experienced private airplane pilot. This is the story of a pilot's worst fears lived out! As a private pilot myself, I caught myself mentally following the story . . . a story of a miracle landing on a dark night with seemingly nowhere to land. Dave tells the story from his perspective—a faith-based worldview intertwined in every aspect of his life. I'm sure that you, like me, will not be able to put down this incredible story. If you know a pilot, give this book to her or him for an inspirational experience.

—LAUREN LIBBY

International President/CEO, TWR International

I have known David Osborne for over thirty years. He's meticulous and careful in every part of life. As a pilot, he used those skills to save his and others' lives, when a mechanical failure caused his plane to crash. *Five Minutes to Impact* is a riveting account of how David survived a traumatic event and emerged with a life-changing message. You will be inspired and challenged by his story.

—KEN R. CANFIELD, PHD

Author, International Speaker, Founder: National Center for Fathering and the National Association for Grand Parenting

It's one thing to be gripped by a "nail-biting" true life story you've never heard. It's another to have heard the story and still be glued to the book to the very end. David Osborne's story is truly one of divine intervention and genuine faith!

—ROSIE J. WILLIAMS

Author of *Repurposed Faith*, Contributing Author to *Military Families Devotional Bible*, *Faith Deployed Again*, and *Military Wives NT, Psalms and Proverbs*

The most important moment you and I will ever reach in life is the moment when we realize the question of our eternal destiny. On a dark, cloudy night in August of 2012, Dave Osborne was at peace, even in the face of almost certain death. This ordeal inspired Dave's thoughtful contemplation. He shares, "We don't have to live in fear of the present or the future. That was never God's plan for our life." In *Five Minutes to Impact*, Dave shares some of the extraordinary life lessons learned through this ordeal from his perspective as a businessman, father, pilot, and man of faith.

—LONNIE BERGER

Author and President of Every Man a Warrior

You will stop breathing. Your heart will race. You will whisper, "Dear God, no!" *Five Minutes to Impact* is every traveler's nightmare, yet simultaneously an inspiring story of supernatural peace in the darkest hour.

—JIM CONGDON, TH.D

Sr. Pastor Topeka Bible Church, Author, Chairman of Jews for Jesus



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AMBASSADOR INTERNATIONAL
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA & BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

www.ambassador-international.com

Five Minutes to Impact

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ISBN: 978-1-62020-587-7

eISBN: 978-1-62020-664-5

Page Layout by Hannah Nichols

Ebook Conversion by Anna Riebe Raats

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To my wonderful wife, Suzanne, and our children: Daniel, Matthew, Stephen, Kathryn, Jonathan, Carrie, Ruth, Andrew, Tim, their wonderful spouses, and our growing number of grandchildren.

In the course of life and God's timing, may you understand that He is the One that establishes the time of our birth, and the length of our days, that we might grow to understand His providence in the affairs of our short lives.

—Psalm 139



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	13
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	15
INTRODUCTION	17

Part I

MY STORY

CHAPTER 1:	
FROM SERENITY TO THE FACE OF DEATH	21
CHAPTER 2:	
GROWING UP IN KANSAS	25
CHAPTER 3:	
SEEDS OF A PASSION	29
CHAPTER 4:	
THE FIRST FLIGHT	31
CHAPTER 5:	
A PRIVATE PILOT	35
CHAPTER 6:	
KANSAS TO NORTH DAKOTA	39
CHAPTER 7:	
TIOGA, NEW TOWN, AND MITCHELL, SOUTH DAKOTA	43
CHAPTER 8:	
MITCHELL, SOUTH DAKOTA TO TOPEKA, KANSAS	47
CHAPTER 9:	
THE FINAL DESCENT TO TOPEKA	51

CHAPTER 10:		
	INCONCEIVABLE DENIAL	55
CHAPTER 11:		
	GRASPING FOR HELP	59
CHAPTER 12:		
	A PETULANT DESCENT	61
CHAPTER 13:		
	THE IMPENDING FACE OF ETERNITY	63
CHAPTER 14:		
	DIM LIGHTS OF HOPE IN THE DARKNESS	67
CHAPTER 15:		
	A CRASH IN THE DARKNESS	71
CHAPTER 16:		
	ALIVE	75
CHAPTER 17:		
	HELP ON THE WAY	79
CHAPTER 18:		
	LEAVING THE COCKPIT FOR THE LAST TIME	83
CHAPTER 19:		
	RIDING TO THE HOSPITAL	87
CHAPTER 20:		
	THE EMERGENCY ROOM	89
CHAPTER 21:		
	A NIGHT IN THE HOSPITAL	93
CHAPTER 22:		
	BACK HOME	97
CHAPTER 23:		
	THE ROAD TO RECOVERY	101
CHAPTER 24:		
	AFTERSHOCK	105
CHAPTER 25:		
	CONNECTING THE DOTS	109

Part II

**FOR THOSE SEARCHING
FOR ANSWERS TO THE
DIFFICULT QUESTIONS OF
LIFE AND CIRCUMSTANCE**

CHAPTER 26:

DEPOSITS FOR ETERNITY

115

CHAPTER 27:

EXPERIENCING PEACE

119

CHAPTER 28:

MOVING ON WITH LIFE

123

EPILOGUE

127

APPENDIX I

131

APPENDIX II

133

APPENDIX III

137

APPENDIX IV

143

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

155

FOREWORD

A TICK OF THE CLOCK, a few seconds of time: without warning, in a moment, everything in life can change. Relying only on a lifetime of preparation, we must navigate that moment. Sometimes, the moment lasts for minutes. Training and reactions take over, accompanied by a torrent of thoughts of eternity and fear of reality. This is what Dave Osborne faced on the night of August 16, 2012. Without warning, his Comanche 260 experienced catastrophic engine failure, transforming the airplane from a wounded, marginally-controllable airship to an unguided missile landing in total darkness, on a road only divine guidance could have found.

The toll of such a near-death experience cannot be fully described. Its aftereffects are sobering. The short-term and long-term emotional and spiritual impacts can only be navigated by the grace of God.

Our friendship with David and Suzanne spans decades; it was cemented by the rescue of our twenty-three-year-old son and teenage daughter from a Kansas blizzard. After receiving a desperate call from my son, I wracked my brain for someone to help them. We had met the Osbornes briefly at a Navigator conference. I remembered that they lived in Kansas, but I was not sure if they were near our stranded kids. I found their phone number, reaching Dave at home on that snowy night. Dave immediately set out to find them and took them into their home. This began a lifelong friendship centered on family, work, flying, and discipleship.

In Dave's story you will see his passion for flying and his commitment to God. You will see his personality—determined, self-reliant, and disciplined. You will see fear and faith, as well as his deep concern for his passengers and his family.

As I read Dave's account of what happened after the accident, I was reminded of another crash in 1988. I had arranged for Air Force security policemen under my responsibility at Hanscom AFB, MA, to be deployed on special duty for security at the 1988 Ramstein AFB Flugfest88 in Germany. On August 28, 1988, three Italian air demonstration fighters collided, crashing and burning right in front of the crowds, killing over seventy and injuring 368. The *Air Force Times* and many newspapers carried a photo of four AF Security Police carrying a victim. These were my security policemen from Hanscom AFB. Many were older, experienced police officers and state patrolmen, police sergeants, and seasoned trauma experts. They saved the lives of many. We immediately brought them home. All were in shock. All were offered counseling to process what had happened and what they had seen and participated in. None of them were injured—a miracle.

Similarly, Dave and his passengers and family had to process this near-death experience emotionally—and especially spiritually. Read on to see how both flight, spiritual training, and the unseen hand of God, saved their lives.

—Dr. Jerry E. White
Major General, USAF, Retired
International President Emeritus, The Navigators
2016, Colorado Springs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My original intent was to have the content of this book be much longer and to cover many more issues than are expressed in the following pages. Others have encouraged me to stay closer to the storyline of an unexpected event late one August evening that would forever change the way I looked at life and my future. From time to time, many of us have experienced events that, statistically, should have produced a different result. In my case, life and death weighed in the balance. My hope is that this story of my life and experience will be interesting to the reader but also encouraging in your journey through life and the pursuit of a lasting purpose.

I am indebted deeply to many people that have helped me through the process of recovery, moving forward, and writing down my story. My wife of forty years has never ceased to encourage me, standing faithfully with me in life's challenges and joys. Through this project, she has spent hours helping work through the details of this book. She is my sounding board, encourager, and the mother of our nine children.

I also want to thank my good friend Dr. Ken Canfield for initially helping motivate me to take on this project. I am indebted to my long-time friend and college roommate, Eric Nordgren, for taking time to read the script and suggest changes in the content and direction. My daughter Carrie helped sort through some of the earlier notes and script, cleaning up the content. I am grateful to our dear family friend Tammy Powell for extensive help in editing the book and checking my grammar. I need to also mention my friend Dr. Jim Congdon, who has been the pastor of a Midwestern church for over forty years now. I am equally grateful for my good friend since college days, Lauren Libby, President/CEO of

Trans World Radio, for taking time from his busy schedule to read the manuscript, encouraging me to finish, and making suggestions to the script. Thank you to Rosie Williams, who encouraged me not to give up when dealing with the challenges of a new experience. And thank you to Katie Smith who, through the publisher, kept the grammar and editing in line with modern rules and to Sam Lowry and his wonderful staff at Ambassador International for being willing to publish this for me.

Lastly, there have been dozens of close friends who I know from our church, the community, work, and civic organizations through the years that have written notes and given words of encouragement through this process. To name them all would be almost impossible, but their concern and help is truly humbling and heartening.

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS MY STORY—AN AVERAGE American growing up in the Midwest during the turbulent 1960s who developed a growing love for aviation. It is a story about an event that has forever changed my outlook and increased my gratefulness for the many privileges we have in this short life. There are no wasted experiences in life when we reflect on them and allow ourselves to learn from them. One late August night, the realization of how fragile and unpredictable the events of life are became unspeakably clear.

This book is written with the express hope that the story will capture the interest of readers. More importantly, it is written with the aspiration that all of us will invest our lives in the things that are permanent and of lasting importance. With those thoughts, my hope is that this will be interesting, entertaining, and life-changing.

Part I

MY STORY



Turning to final approach for landing
Runway 13 at Phillip Billard Airport, looking southeast

FROM SERENITY TO THE FACE OF DEATH

FROM OUR LAST STOP, WE had traveled just over 300 nautical miles heading for our home base in the heartland of Kansas. It was shortly before 10:00 p.m., and the long days of late summer had finally surrendered to the darkness of night. Since leaving South Dakota almost two hours earlier, the air had become even and still, providing an uneventful flight for my two passengers and myself.

In a little over ten minutes, we would be landing in the warm moonless night at Philip Billard Airport in Topeka, Kansas, bearing the call letters KTOP. The plane would be back in its hangar, my employees and I would be driving home, and we would all be returning to the routine life we were familiar with. The events of that day would soon pass into the distant corners of our minds.

As we soared smoothly through the sky, I looked out the window into the blackness of night that had now completely enveloped us. Moments before, the sky had been clear, but now we were below the overcast above, and the air had become dense from the heavy moisture that had formed as the summer air began to cool. My thoughts began shifting toward home and being reunited with my family. Then, as I had undertaken thousands of times before, I subconsciously began working through the steps in preparation for landing. Everything seemed ordinary and routine.

Due to the calmness of the night, as I began our final descent for Billard Airport, I increased our descent from the normal 500 feet per

minute to 700 feet per minute. This would result in increased air and ground speed but keep us in the yellow arc of the airspeed indicator allowable in calm conditions and bring us to the desired airport traffic pattern altitude just north of Topeka.

The euphoric tranquility of life's most serene moments often leaves us unsuspecting of life's most terrifying moments about to unfold. At the time, we had little comprehension of how true that statement could really be. In a moment, we would find out.

Unexpectedly, our senses came to life with a startled jolt. Instantly, the propeller produced a deep, fluttering sound at the distinct loss of power. There was a sensation of falling. The engine began to strain and run rough. Unknowingly, this flash in time would be forever immutably seared deep in the inner reaches of our memories. For a moment, I felt flushed and in shock. Like lightning, adrenaline shot into my system. After that, things seemed to go into slow motion.

Steve and Paul¹, my passengers and employees, were undoubtedly having similar feelings. Although no words were spoken, the silence was piercing. The unnatural roar of the propeller became immediately deafening. The violent banging and shaking of the aircraft intensified quickly as it instantly brought me back to reality; the engine was now obviously beginning to falter.

Instinctively, I pulled back on the control yoke to control the speed of our descent. Our speed was quickly dropping. Our descent was slowed only momentarily. The plane's controls were becoming sluggish and unnatural to me as they vibrated in my hand.

The instruments and gauges that had been perfectly normal only moments before now foreshadowed fatal disaster for the previously-reliable aircraft. The noise and fierce tremors of the plane were forceful and unrelenting. Like a wild animal fighting to save its last breath, the noise only intensified. Our initial shock turned to fear.

As the stark reality of our situation was now indisputable, no one spoke a word, but the realization of what we faced overwhelmed us. In the back seat, Paul, a non-pilot with limited experience in a plane, was no

1 Names in this book have been changed to protect the individuals' privacy.

doubt in shock from what was happening around him. He quickly sent a text to his wife to tell her he loved her and to pray for him. Thoughts flooded his mind that this might be his last communication. Slipping the cell phone in his back pocket, hoping to hold onto it if he was thrown from the plane, he remained in silent disbelief as we continued to fall from the sky.

Steve, who had earned a pilot's license a few years prior to this while working at the company, was on my right side in the co-pilot's seat. Wanting to help but at the same time not wanting to distract me, he made minor adjustments to the radio but remained silent. He knew all too well that this was no time for idle conversation. Precious moments of life seemed to be ticking away, slipping from our grasp.

In an instant, my tranquil demeanor had changed. My senses were on full alert, giving razor sharp attention to the plane and our surroundings. Shock and disbelief gripped me as a sudden, precipitous, rushing wind overcame us. I struggled to grasp just what was happening. Our expectations for that evening and the future had been radically altered beyond our control. Along with the sense of helplessness and grim awareness, the seriousness of what we were facing in the lonely darkness of night was beginning to sink in. No one dared utter their thoughts, but the pugnacious reality of what was happening gripped us. We all knew that in a few short moments we were going to die.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

David F. Osborne grew up in Kansas City, the only son of Harold and Geraldine Osborne. Upon graduating from Shawnee Mission High School in Overland Park, he attended Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Construction Science from the College of Engineering and was awarded membership in Sigma Lambda Chi Honorary Fraternity.

After making a decision to seek out a relationship with Christ in his high school years, he became heavily involved with The Navigators, a Christian organization committed to helping others develop that same relationship. On August 1, 1976, David married his life partner, Suzanne. After finishing her master's degree in Speech Pathology, she became the mother of their nine children, which has been her full-time occupation since leaving her professional life.

Since his graduation from college, David has been in the construction and development business in the Midwest, as well as constructing and leasing back single-tenant properties. David remains active in the business world, but, in addition to family, much of his time is spent with an Aviation Explorer Post helping young men and women experience the excitement of flying.

David and his wife, Suzanne, are also involved in various nonprofit organizations, encompassing both local and international ministry opportunities. They remain active in their local church.

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&

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