

Dear Jim,

12/2/74

Yesterday's first 727 crash was not far from here. Maybe 30 miles southwest.

I certainly hope there are none among the victims to trigger the Skolnickery!

I've been coping with that stuff for ten days now by phoned broadcasts and it has reached and twisted too many minds. Very many.

All crashes have strange aspects. The proximity to a top secret installation whose users include CIA will foster conjectures because of the radio installations. Ian McDonald raised this question yesterday. The weather was bad but not bad enough to keep him and Chris from driving here for dinner. But it was not the kind of bad weather that usually poses a danger without other factors causing it. In this case the factor was elevation. The plane was much too low. The question is why. Absent some reason for believing the pilot was unable to broadcast, the obvious answer is that the pilot didn't know how low he was. This recalls what you have said in the past about altimeters.

It was not until nighttime that we had the unusual for this time of the year, an electrical storm with it. I suppose a bolt of lightning if the electrical disturbances existed then and there, could have prevented transmission. Not until night did we get really high winds although they were high enough for some unroofings earlier.

If the flight recorder is found intact, perhaps there will be answers.

My wonders include how the pilot's radar would not have told him of the solid mass before him. He appears to have hit close to the top and from the west. Or, at slightly higher elevation and he'd have made it. From this one could wonder if the Mr. Weather apparatus could have jammed the radar but if so, how could Dulles operate safely? The weather was bad enough, by the way, so that the pilot might have had no visibility at all and could not have flown line-of-sight or visually in any way. More indicative that this should not have been possible is that the area is part of the Washington stacking area. I've been stacked there awaiting clearance to land at National. Most of my flying from National has taken the planes that way.

However, I remember my first experience with an air pocket. It was in the same mountains but had to have been farther southwest. It was in a DC 2 in 1937. It made so much of an impression I still recall the plane and have a mind's-eye view of the seat. My last was more frightening, CAT and in the same general area, less than 200 miles west. It was on my last direct return to DC from LA. We were in the approach, being to lower from whatever the elevation had been, maybe six miles. The pilot had announced we had passed Charleston, and suddenly we just dropped. A pilot of 10 years flying experience was in the next seat. He never experienced one like it, he said.

From the early reports I have a hunch that the pilot became aware just a fraction of a minute too late to rise because the tail broke off first, was found to the west of the rest. Makes me think it hit first. Or, like Chicago, perhaps an attempt to rise too rapidly caused a stall.

Anyway, it also reminds me that the ~~wife~~ waif had often spoken of agency places in that area. I'd not then known of them. One of which she is not the only one to have told me apparently was fixed up for the R & R and entertaining of homosexuals.

That is the third underground ~~ix~~ communications center of which I've heard in this area. One appears to be operated by the phone company, maybe five miles north of where we used to live. Five stories underground, I've been told. It is supposedly secret. Then the place that is referred to as Ft. Ritchie, which is in Maryland near Hagerstown, isn't. It is part of that complex but is actually at Raven Rock, Pa., where years ago a mountain was disembowelled for a "second Pentagon" in case of nuclear attack. It was probably the cause of most of those ruinous helicopter overflights. And Ritchie, which was a military intelligence base in World War II, since then has had CIA and AEC functions. I rather suspect they all have more than one purpose and use, including Mt. Weather. It is close to Langley by road, more by chopper. Best, HW