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"Heroic Actions" by SoCal Nurse Save Pilot Mid-Flight

A nurse gives an ailing pilot life-saving treatment during a cross-country flight

By Patrick Healy

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A Camarillo nurse is being praised for her mid-air heroics after helping a pilot suffering from a heart attack while traveling as a passenger. The woman, Linda Alweiss, administered cardiac life support to the United Airlines pilot on a flight from Iowa to Colorado. Patrick Healy reports for the NBC4 News at 6 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 10, 2014. (Published Friday, Jan 10, 2014)

Updated at 8:32 AM PDT on Monday, Jan 13, 2014

Linda Alweiss was relaxing with a Sudoku puzzle on a flight home to Southern California from Iowa for the holidays Dec. 30 when the flight crew asked if any passengers could provide medical help.

The registered nurse from Camarillo quickly volunteered. The flight attendant took her to the cockpit for the medical emergency.

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The pilot was slumped in his seat.



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After years in pediatric intensive care, Alweiss was thankful she had recently recertified her advanced cardiac life support.

"He was clearly suffering from a possibly fatal arrhythmia," Alweiss said.

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Her husband, Alan, and another passenger helped move the captain from the cramped cockpit to the galley floor. Alweiss and another registered nurse, Amy Sorenson, of Wyoming, went to work, hooking up a diagnostic defibrillator and starting an IV.

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And they stayed with their patient right through the emergency landing in Omaha.

"We couldn't leave his side, fortunately smooth landing."

Paramedics met the United jetliner on the tarmac -- with the pilot still alive, to sighs of relief from the nurses and the co-pilot.

"Her actions were heroic," Alan Alweiss said. "She didn't hesitate for a second."

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When the interrupted flight resumed the next day, Linda Alweiss found herself seated next to the copilot from the night before, and she got brought up to date on the captain.

"They were able to get him into a cardiac unit," she said. "He had survived."

Published at 6:10 PM PDT on Jan 10, 2014

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Tammy Seay · University of Wisconsin-Madison

Awesome story, Midwestern love your neighbor story warms my heart. So glad the pilot survived. Likely his first cardio event.

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Brian Warder · Works at Progrexion Marketing

The nurse in this story is from southern California. West coast love your neighbor stories can be heart warming as well

Like · Reply · 1 · Jan 12, 2014 9:59am

Cheri Silverstein · Claremont, California

The point of AEDs is that the non-medically trained public should be able to use them. Not discounting the value of the RNs' service, the flight attendant should have known what to do even if there were no RNs on board

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Natalie Goldberg Klein · Owner/Partner at Hot Moms Club

This is my aunt and uncle!!! Wahoooo

Like · Reply · 18 · Jan 11, 2014 1:50am

Lily Tiger

What about the other RN, why they only give credit to the first one?

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Walter Schmidt

I agree. Also, I am tired of "hero" being used so much. Granted, both the nurses performed admirably and should get the credit and thanks, but they did what any qualified person should do.

Like · Reply · 1 · Jan 11, 2014 4:17pm

Doug Hosie · Lenape High School

Rusty Shackelford Both nurses could have remained seated with no one being the wiser, but they chose to help! They both were willing to put their reputations on the line, even if the pilot had died.

Like · Reply · 2 · Jan 11, 2014 7:39pm

Michael Colin Deibert

An angel on the plane!

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Randy Markin · UNLV

Nurses are heroes.....

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Walter Schmidt

Some, not all.

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