



Remarkable Missions

As I started to write this editorial about the 40th anniversary of EMERGENCY MEDICINE, I was alerted to the crash landing of a fully-fueled commercial jet carrying 155 people in the Hudson River across town, moments after taking off from LaGuardia Airport. After losing both engines to a flock of birds, the pilot glided the plane to a perfect landing in the river. Everyone on board disembarked, to be met by a flotilla of boats and crews who executed rescues they had trained to perform.

While the passengers were being transported safely to shore, the sinking plane floated down the river until it came to rest only a few feet from where two other jetliners had been piloted into the twin towers of the World Trade Center more than seven years earlier. On both occasions, the president of the United States addressed the nation in the evening but, unlike his speech on 9/11, last month he did not even mention that day's events: a perfectly executed landing in desperate circumstances accompanied by coordinated evacuations and rescues, all seemingly taken for granted only a few hours later.

These extraordinary accomplishments remind me of what we all strive for every day in the emergency department: many people performing difficult jobs quietly and effectively, perfectly coordinated to

provide the best possible care to acutely ill patients in unexpected or rapidly changing situations.

Only 40 years ago, organized, high-quality emergency care was virtually unavailable anywhere. Today, it is taken for granted. In the history of medicine, 40 years is a very short flight, yet in that brief span of time our specialty has created superb standards of care, high-quality undergraduate and graduate medical training, and cutting-edge research. Emergency physicians have begun to assume leadership positions in medical schools, academic hospital centers, national organizations, and all levels of government.

When the first few talented physicians with clear visions of the future began to organize emergency medicine into what would become our specialty, a medical publisher named Steve Fischer was watching. He saw the need to support their pioneering efforts with a practice journal to help define and teach the new discipline. In February 1969, the first issue of emergency medicine appeared, a full decade before emergency medicine was officially recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

Both specialty and journal have continued to thrive and evolve ever since. In this issue of emergency medicine, eight physicians share their views of where we are now and their visions of where we are headed. Nicholas Jouriles, current

president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, calls for a future of increased funding, more research, and a greater academic presence, including an NIH section. Knox Todd describes advances in the study and treatment of pain, while Keith Hentel envi-

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sions advanced radiologic studies interpreted 24/7 by emergency radiologists and Corey Slovis sees emergency physicians doing more research and making even greater use of technology. Larry Goldstein writes of dramatic advances in stroke treatment, Susan Stone calls for palliative care to become more integrated with the practice of emergency medicine, and Carl Schultz predicts the emergence of disaster medicine as a subspecialty.

Rounding out these forecasts for the future, Joe Toscano reminds us of the importance of “meeting these challenges, while continuing to save lives.” That is no less important for fulfilling the mission of emergency medicine than it was for airline captain Chesley Sullenberger to heroically complete his. □