# MARSHALL UNIVERSITY PLANE CRASH November 14, 1970

### Overview of Crash

Early evening on November 14, 1970, the Marshall University football team was coming back from a close 17-14 loss to East Carolina University. The Southern Airlines DC-9 aircraft carrying 37 football players, the coach, team doctor, athletic director, and 25 football boosters crashed only a mile from the Tri-State Airport in Kenova, WV. In all, 75 people were killed. On descent back to West Virginia, the weather was poor with mist, fog, and broken clouds below 500 ft. The plane dropped below minimum descent altitude (MDA). The NTSB came up with two probable causes for the crash. "The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the descent below Minimum Descent Altitude during a non-precision approach under adverse operating conditions, without visual contact with the runway environment. The Board has been unable to determine the reason for this descent, although the two most likely explanations are (a) improper use of cockpit instrumentation data, or (b) an altimetry system error. "

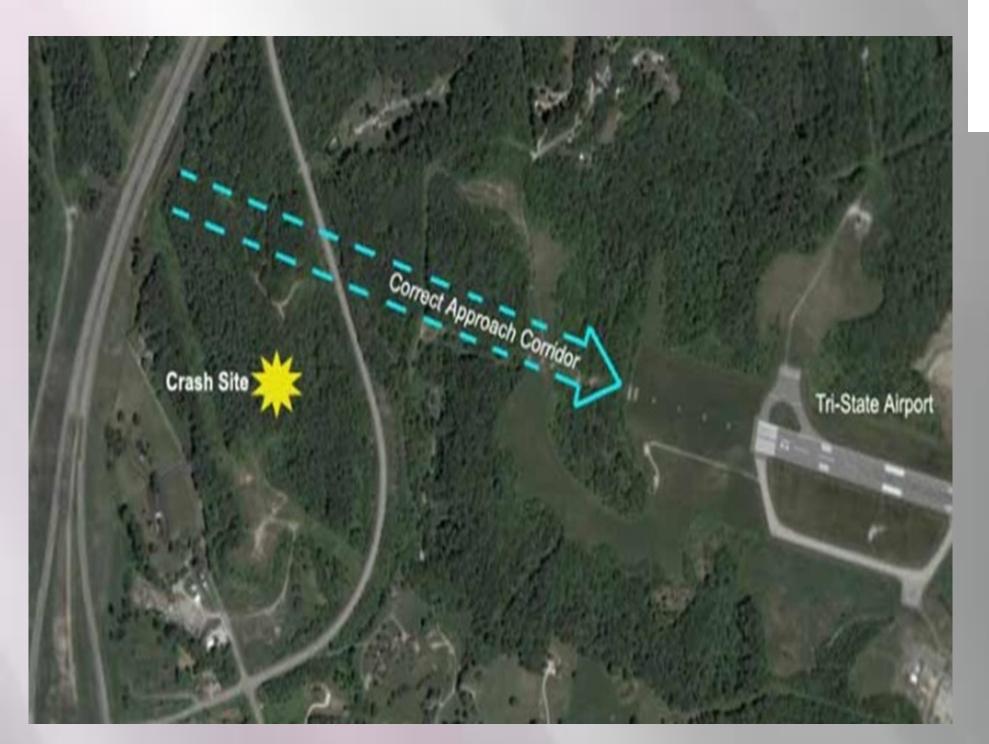
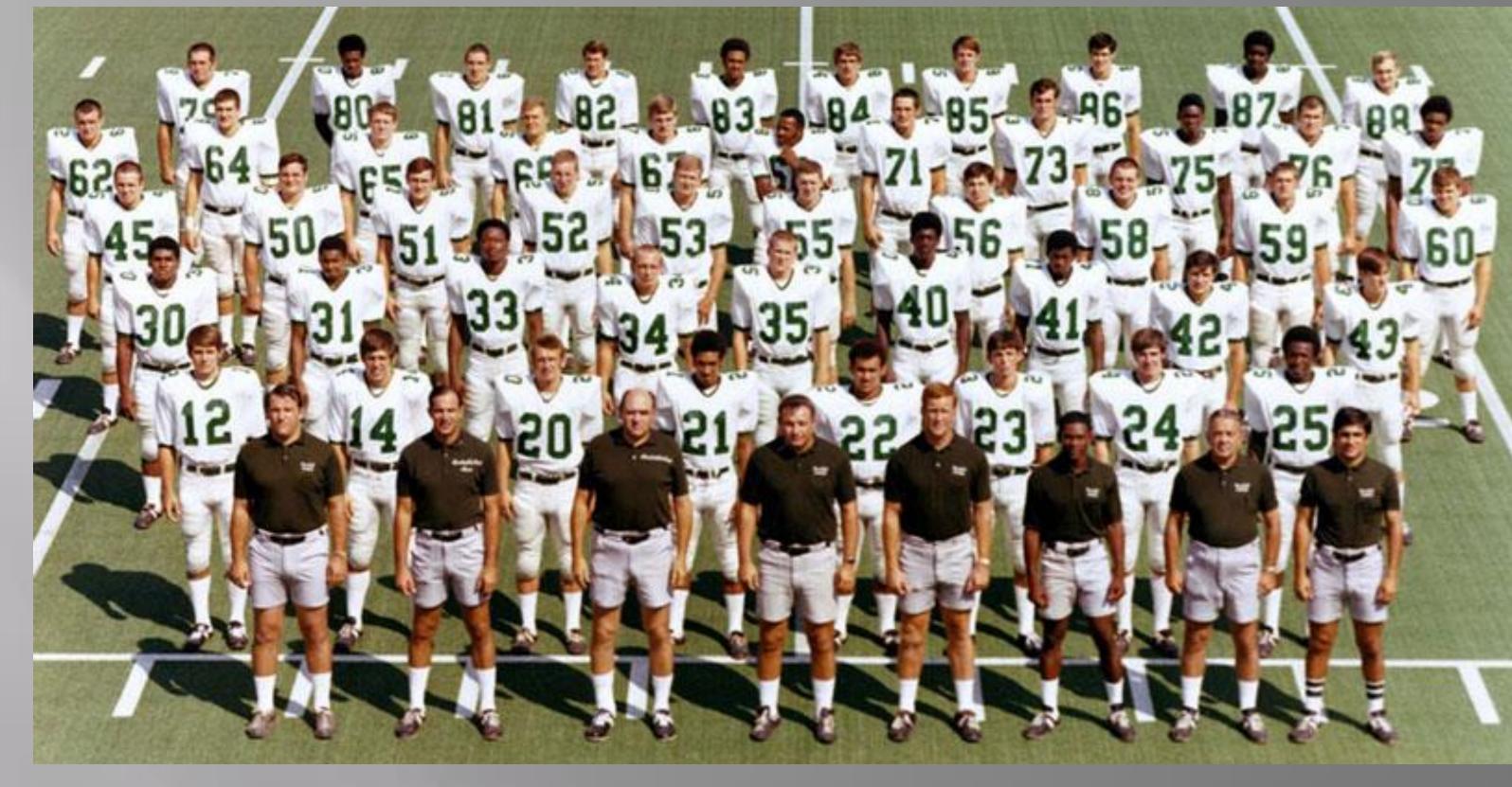


Image of the Tri-State Airport runway along with the ideal landing path (blue). The crash site is marked in yellow. Courtesy of six-check.com

## Impact of Crash

- Killed 71 players, coaches, officials, and administrators, plus the 4 crewmen on board
- Marshall cancelled the last game of the 1970 season
- "The whole fabric, the whole heart of the town was aboard."
  Huntington, WV citizen



1970 Marshall Thundering Herd football team. Courtesy of Marshall.edu

## THE HERALD-ADVERTISER This was the front page of the Herald-Advisor the day following the crash. Image from the Herald-Dispatch.com of Huntington WV. To Believed Aboard Plane; Airline Silent Adversely felder temperature and appropriate temperature and

Southern Airways of Atlanta, Ca., said its

Flaming Debris All That Remains...

Gov. Moore Declares At Scene:

"Tragedy Of Highest Degree"

by JACK EARSO

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List Of Players

Believed Aboard

This is a travel list of players and essense for Manshall University's football game Balanday with East Carolina University at Greenwille, N.C., released by the authoratity

Jen Adams, Manndreid, Chie, Ten Howard, Outside, W. Va.; Robby Hill, Dallas, Tenas, Bootsy Rosse, Wane, Tenas, Krain Gilmore, Raction, R. J. Tenas, Goodsy Rosse, Chapterside, Landburte, R. J. Manner, Chapterside, R. J. Marker, Chapterside, Chapterside, R. J. Marker, Chapterside, Marker, R. J. Marker, Chapterside, Marker, R. J. Marker, R. J. Lavy Brance, R. Marker, R. J. Marker, R. J. Marker, R. J. Marker, R. Marker, M. J. Marker, R. Marker, M. J. Marker, M. J. Marker, M. Marker, M. J. Marker, M. Marker, M. J. Marker, Marker, M. J. Marker, M. M



The crash occurred about 7.45 p. m. lags than a mile west of Tri-State Airport. Weather conditions were poor and light rain wist failing.

"The Herald-Adventiser's Jack Handon, the first reporter at the scene some 250 yands east of W. Va. 75 south of Kenova, said:

"There's nothing here but charred bodies. It's temble."

Bodies and wreckage were scattered over a wide area.

Cov. Anch A. Moore Jr. and Dr. Donald N. Dedmon, Marshall's acting president, rushed to the scene.

Haddin reported a piece of the plane was found on a hillside about a half-mile from the principal crash site. He said sections of bodies also were combing the hillside early this morning with the aid of flares.

At 12:10 a. m., the first bodies were site to the singular time to the National Guard trucks. They were a time as increased on National Guard trucks. They were sent the single time to the National Guard Amony at the singular time to the National Guard houses were naming short of flares.

At 12:10 a. m., the first bodies were substituted. Handin said receivery crews were naming short of bags to hold the bodies.

Southern Airmany at Artanta said in did not have a passenger list, and refused to identify the crewmen pending notification of next of kin.

The tragedy was "the worst domestic air crash this year," a Federal Aviation Agency sockerman in Washington said, and it was described as one of the worst in history involving an artificial team.

The crash also was the worst in New Vinginia air havel history.

Charles Dodnill, president of Tri-State Airport Authority, said if the plane were in its normal approach pattern coming into the airport, it would have had its note slightly up, traveling at a speed of about 160 miles an hour at the point where it crashed.

A nearby resident, Mn. Larry Sailey of 1926 Coal Branch Road, sild Hardin she saw the jet coming down. Site said she heard an explosion and "the plane seemed to come down flat."

The Herald-Adventiser's Cavid A. Psyton

...Of Chartered Airline

The heast from the wrockage was hampering occorry efforts. The scene was described as chaotic. Great numbers of people awarened fineragh thack underbrough to reach the scene facing the furit two hours. State police were described as chaotic, from the area by 10 p. m.

A Tri-State Airpoint employe returning from the scene said, "Bodies are stacked in a big heap, all of mem charmed. There can't be severe allow."

Police said every ambulance within a 10-mile radius was alented. Cabell - Huntington logistal asked visitors to lipse, and sealed of its entrances in gearing for the emergency, but it soon became apparent there would be to survivors.

Handin and Phyton described the scene as conflying. "These are charmed pieces of bodies, but that he saw pieces of bodies, but that he saw

At the time of the crash, a

low pressure system was centered over southwest WV causing cloudiness and precipitation. Flight precautions were advised for the area due to lowering cloud ceilings.

"Visibility was remarkably good when I took my local (the 1945 observation), but about 10 or 15 minutes after that the fog formed very rapidly, and that's when the visibility came down...it was right over the field."

- NWS specialist, Huntington WV.

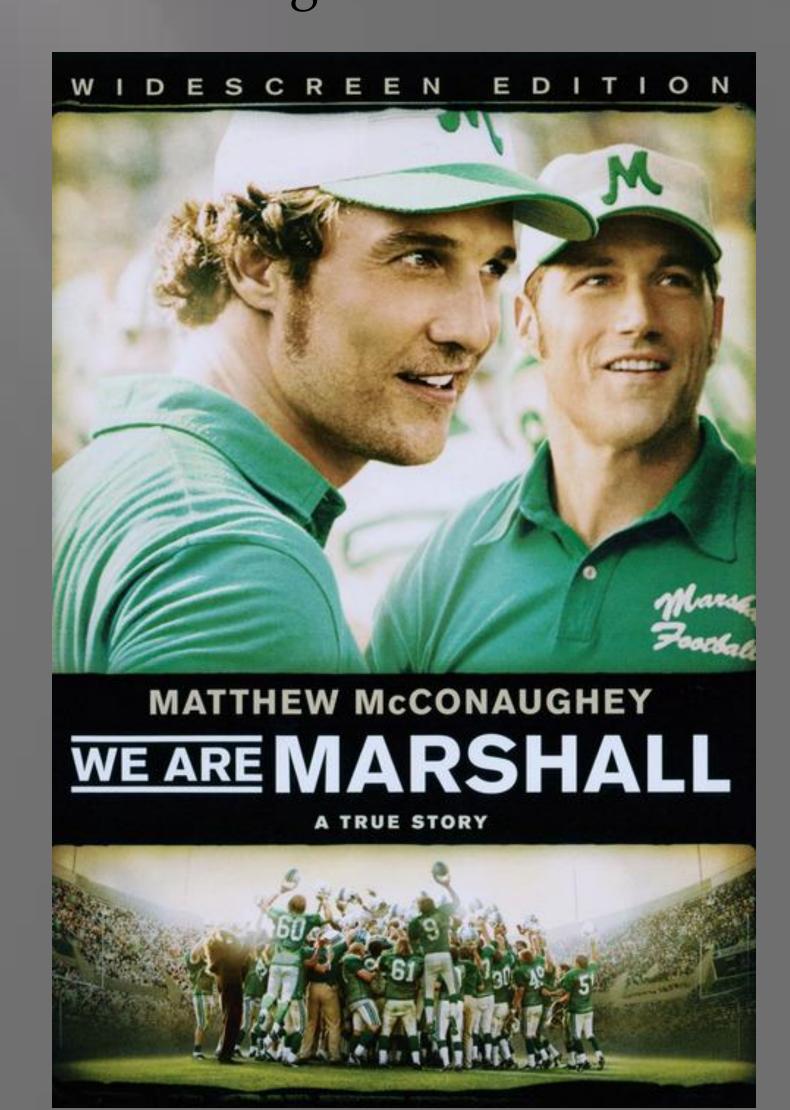


Image courtesy of Warner Brothers

## **Tribute to the 1970 Team**

- As a tribute to the 1970 team, the university erected this fountain.
- The 2006 film We Are Marshall tells the story of the entire crash and aftermath.
- The 1971 season was a time to get back to some normalcy. The team went 2-8 under first year coach Jack Lengyel.
- Each year on November 12, the university holds a memorial service.

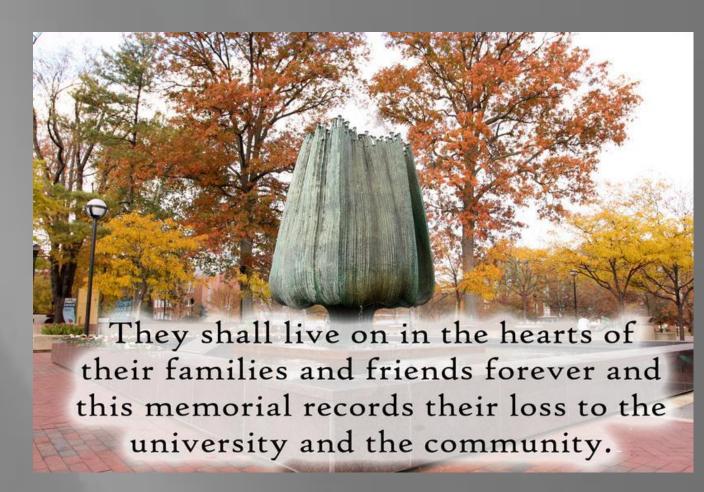


Image courtesy of Marshall.edu