

## WRITER'S WORKSHOP

# DISASTER AT DEL AMO

BY LAURA GOLDMAN

The scene then switches to the Acme Inc. offices on the twelfth floor of the Union Bank building. An executive is on the phone, complaining about stocks and bonds as he gazes out the window at the layers of smog. Suddenly he sees the plane coming towards the building. He screams, dropping the phone.

Conveniently the scene switches to the mall where thousands of last minute Christmas shoppers are pushing, shoving, screaming and swearing. Suddenly the ground begins to shake and sway and shoppers are thrown to and fro. The giant Christmas tree topples over, crushing a dozen or so people, and Santa Claus (Charlie Callas) falls off his throne.

Back to the plane. Barbra Streisand, as the nun, attempts to cheer the sick boy by singing a medley of her hit songs. But the boy becomes delirious and breaks out in a cold sweat. The pilot announces the upcoming crash, but the passengers can't hear him because they've all got their earplugs in.

BOOM!! There is a shot of the plane as it hits the building. The plane looks like cardboard (probably because it is as it crumbles to the ground. It would be impossible to shoot some of the scenes on location, e.g., the mall collapsing or the Union Bank building going up in flames, so Mr. Allen recreated the structures inside his studios. Of special merit is the replica perfect; the facsimile is made of plastic, just like the real thing.

Returning to the movie, the bank structure is now engulfed in flames and the earth continues to sway as Bill Haley and the Comets sing "Shake, Rattle and Roll" inside Nero's Supper Club atop the nearby Holiday Inn. (Totally unrelated to the plot, the number was stuck in to appeal to nostalgia buffs.)

Meanwhile, back at the mall, people are flying right and left, north and south (Mary Poppins makes a cameo appearance). Stores begin to crumble like smashed cookies. There is much blood and gore as people are crushed and trampled and decapitated. Undoubtedly the film will be given a G rating.

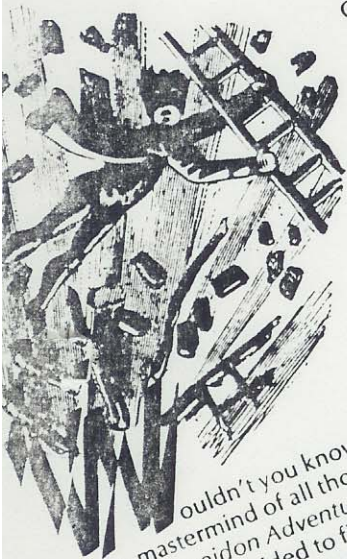
By now there are dozens of fire trucks and police cars and helicopters surrounding Union Bank. The fire is on the third story; a 747 has crashed into and destroyed the twelfth story; and the people in between are panicking. Bodies crash through windows, people inside kick and scratch and bite, and Frank Sinatra, as a helicopter pilot, sings "My Way."

Finally the earth stops shaking. The mall has been turned upside down; the people on the second floor must escape through the basement.

In the meantime, the firefighters have extinguished the Union Bank blaze and all the name stars have been rescued. Suddenly it occurs to the police chief (Groucho Marx) that the mall is topsy-turvy and everyone rushes over to save any survivors. Just as they reach the structure, the people who were on the second floor discover a basement door. They open it, coming face to face with the police and firemen. Everybody rejoices as Perry Como sings the title tune, "It's Impossible."

Sure it's impossible for a plane to crash into the top of a tall building to turn upside down, and an earthquake to occur all in two hours and twenty minutes. But it's not impossible for millions of movie-goers to believe it. **lc**

• "The current disaster movie mania inspired me to write the disaster to end all disasters," says Scholastic Awards winner Laura Goldman. "I wrote two rough drafts. I made a mental outline of all the disasters to be included in the story, but basically it developed as I went along." Laura wrote this informal article as a student of Renee Farrington at West High School, Torrance, California.



Wouldn't you know that Irwin Allen, mastermind of all those disaster movies (Poseidon Adventure, Towering Inferno), has decided to film his latest epic right here in good ol' Torrance?! That's right, the motion picture will be appropriately titled Disaster at Del Amo.

The plot is simple yet thrilling; a 747 jetliner crashes into the twelfth floor of the Union Bank building, creating an explosion that causes a fire on the third story. Meanwhile there is an earthquake measuring 7.10 on the Richter scale which causes the Fashion Square mall to cave in.

The film features an all star cast: Robert Redford, Liz Taylor, Steve McQueen, Sonny Bono, Woody Allen, Joanne Woodward, Dustin Hoffman, Skip and Woof, Elton John, Jane Wyatt, Donny Osmond, Johnny Cash, Dick Clark, Benji, and Rodney Allen Rippy.

The movie's opening sequence was shot in the actual interior of a TWA 747. There is so much smog in the L.A. basin that the pilot (Ronald Reagan) cannot see the ground. Passengers on the flight include a movie has-been (Bette Davis), a singing nun (Barbra Streisand), and a little boy who needs a brain transplant (George Burns).