



The photo is of a Lockheed Lodestar similar to what Mike Todd's plane looked like.

Mike Todd crash site SW of Grants, NM

DATE March 22, 1958

AIRCRAFT Lockheed Lodestar, "Lucky Liz"

GENERAL LOCATION SW of Grants, NM in the Zuni Mountains

PEOPLE ABOARD Pilot, Co-Pilot, Mike Todd & biographer Art Cohn

REFERENCES *Albuquerque Journal* newspaper articles, various Internet stories & personal communications with the crash site landowner and the newspaper photographer at the crash site

HISTORY

This is probably the most well-known "Celebrity Crash" in New Mexico. The most concise description of the event I have found is as follows:

"March 22, 1958: Mike Todd, his biographer Art Cohn, the pilot, and co-pilot were killed when his Lockheed Lodestar private plane, 'The Lucky Liz,' named after Todd's wife, Elizabeth Taylor, crashed in bad weather in the Zuni Mountains of New Mexico. During their flight, ice had developed on their wings. The ice put too heavy a load on the engines, thus causing the crash. Todd had been on his way from Burbank to New York City to attend a Friars Club award meeting to receive the Showman of the Year award."



The event happened in the early morning hours. The following day, the landowner rushed to the site where police and on-lookers had torn down his fences and were all over his land. It was quite awhile before he got the curious people out of there and order was restored. Meanwhile, the photographer, a stringer for the *Gallup Independent*, was taking pictures. Three of the bodies had been found and he turned over a piece of wreckage and found the fourth. Although some people said he found Mike Todd's body, he denied that to me. In a later newspaper article he identified the body he found as that of the co-pilot.

The landowner eventually buried the wreckage, but when he showed me the site in 2005, there were pieces on the surface. Apparently people visited the site without his knowledge and dug up some of the wreckage. Three years after the event, the photographer was in a Las Vegas, Nevada, hotel. He won a jackpot and was running to his room with the coins in his possession when he turned a corner and ran into Elizabeth Taylor. Coins flew everywhere and he quickly apologized to the lady. She indicated there was no problem, and they both went on their way. Considering his presence at the site where her husband died, their meeting seems a fateful event.

Elizabeth Taylor Collapses at News

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., March 22 (AP)—Actress Elizabeth Taylor collapsed today and was placed under sedation when informed of the plane crash involving her husband, Mike Todd.

The beautiful 28-year-old actress had planned to accompany Todd on the weekend trip to New York in his private plane but he refused to let her because she had a cold.

The news of the New Mexico crash was brought to her by Dick Hanley, Todd's private secretary. Hanley brought the actress' personal physician, Dr. Rexford Kennamer, with him when he broke the news.

Up With Children

It was early morning but she was up with her three young children when Hanley and Dr. Kennamer arrived at the large, Spanish-style house the Todds were renting while she made a motion picture in Hollywood. Hanley said she was stunned at first, then collapsed and started babbling hysterically. The thought of her three children, Miles 4, and Christopher, 3, sons by her previous husband, Michael Wilding, and Lisa, 8 months, Todd's daughter, quitted her.

"What about the kids?" she asked Hanley.

And a few minutes later when her close friend, actress Debbie Reynolds, arrived to comfort her, she greeted her with the same question.

"What about the kids?" Miss Reynolds, who is married to singer Eddie Fisher, promised to take care of them and shortly afterward the three children were sent to Miss Reynolds' home with a maid.

Dr. Kennamer then put Miss Taylor to bed, gave her a sedative, and kept all visitors away.



The Albuquerque Tribune

LOCAL FORECAST: Cloudy and cooler today and tonight with occasional showers. Partly cloudy and warmer tomorrow.

Vol. 33, No. 297 Albuquerque, New Mexico, Saturday, March 22, 1958 15 Pages in Two Sections PRICE: SEVEN CENTS

MIKE TODD DIES IN NM PLANE CRASH

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

Today's Smiles Good Morning

78th Year Sunday Morning, March 22, 1958 15 Pages in Seven Sections Price 15c

Air Crash Near Grants Kills Mike Todd

Producer, Three Others Perish In Zuni Peaks

Private Plane Burns; Showmen on Way To New York Dinner

By Jim Lavin

GRANTS—A small plane carrying film producer Mike Todd, his wife, Elizabeth Taylor, and two other men crashed and burned in a mountainous area near Grants today. The wreckage, scattered all over the rugged terrain, was seen by a search party from the Zuni Peaks. One of the men who died was a search writer, Art Cohen, who was working on the story.

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The first plane crash of this kind in the Zuni Peaks was reported in 1947. Other in the plane with Todd and Cohen were Bill Verter, search writer, and Bill Verter, who was working on the story.

SEARCH FOR BODIES: Civil Aeronautics Administration men in the Zuni Mountains, a small distance from the mountainous area where search party officers found the wreckage. Officers had to search deep into the rugged terrain to find wreckage of plane. It is feared it is Mike Todd's.



2 or 3 Other Men Are Killed

(Related News on Page 9)

GRANTS, March 22 (AP) — A small plane carrying famous film producer Mike Todd and two or three others crashed and burned in mountain country near here today. There were no survivors.

Portions of what was believed to be three bodies were recovered.

Todd's wife, actress Elizabeth Taylor, was to have gone on the trip but stayed home with a cold. She collapsed on hearing the news.

The 50-year-old Todd, famous for "Around the World in 80 Days," was reported accompanied by screen writer Art Cohen, 42, pilot Bill Verter, 45, and co-pilot Tom Barkley.

Left: Durbank Todd's secretary, Dick Hanley, said in Los Angeles that Todd and the others had left Burbank, Calif., at 10:45 last night in the twin-engine Lockheed 10 for New York.

CAA investigator Gene Hughes reported that the plane appeared to have plowed into the ground nose down, exploding planes over a quarter of an acre. The largest piece of wreckage remaining was a wing tip. Traces of clothing and strands of the smashed plane were found together.

The crash site was a mountain clearing beside an arroyo, running with three inches of water from melting snow. Portions of the fused plane were scattered.

Todd Visited Here Last Wednesday To Promote 'Around the World'

Shows To Continue

Must air meeting in front of the Pacific Southwest Airlines office in Grants.

