

## The Linacre Quarterly

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Volume 7 | Number 2

Article 4

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April 1939

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### Recommended Citation

Nix, James T. (1939) "The Invisible Hand: A Narrative of the Experience and Marvelous Escape of Dr. James T. Nix, President of the New Orleans Guild of Catholic Physicians," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 7 : No. 2 , Article 4.  
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol7/iss2/4>

## THE INVISIBLE HAND

A NARRATIVE OF THE EXPERIENCE AND MARVELOUS ESCAPE  
OF DR. JAMES T. NIX, PRESIDENT OF THE NEW ORLEANS GUILD  
OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS

It was Tuesday, October 18, 1938, the second day of the Eighth National Eucharistic Congress. Joseph V. Connolly, General Manager of the Hearst Newspapers, had flown from New York to give an address at the Congress; he was flying back to New York. Dr. James T. Nix of New Orleans likewise had addressed a Congress group that evening. He was flying to New York, intending to return for the grand procession on Thursday. On the same plane were nine other passengers, besides Pilot Dave Hisson, Copilot C. R. Russell, and Steward Frank Gibbs.

A perfect start! The ship soared into the air. (Swell plane and fade.) It stopped first at Mobile, then at Montgomery, after which it suddenly caught fire. Flames quickly enveloped the entire right wing and its gasoline tanks. Automatic fire extinguishers were applied to no avail.

For five long minutes the plane was burning as it sped in the sky. Ignited gasoline devoured part of the right wing and caused one of the motors to fall; the aluminum wing adjoining the cabin was consumed like parchment before the terrific blast, not unlike a huge oxygen furnace in a foundry.

The brave pilot was endeavor-

ing to fly back to port in Montgomery. But after the motor fell, the plane, controlled only by an experienced hand, careened, almost catapulted, nose-dived, rocketted, rapidly falling for 1,500 feet.

In the swift descent of semisomersaults the plane struck a small tree and the partly burned right wing was torn off. All passengers and crew escaped safely in the brief interval of time between the burning out of the ton of gasoline in the right wing and the ignition of the ton in the left—twenty seconds or less. The pilot alone was slightly burned on his right hand and the right side of his face, next to the burning wing.

*Time, Life*, the Associated Press, and thousands of newspapers proclaimed this phenomenon a miracle of the air. The members of the crew have been acclaimed heroes and at a public reception were awarded medals by the Hearst Newspapers. Hundreds of letters, telegrams, and messages of prayerful thanks, coming in as if by collusion, heralded this salvation a miracle of the Congress.

The following poem has been penned by Dr. Nix as his humble expression of thanks to Almighty God: