

RUSHING TO EASTERN AIRLINE JETLINER CRASH

BY SAM JACOBS

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At home late on the Friday night between Christmas and New Year's in 1972, I had no idea that I was about to help cover one of the major stories in the history of Miami.

Then I got a phone call from the Herald city desk. An Eastern Airlines L1011 jetliner had crashed in the Everglades and everyone who could be reached in those days

long before cellphones was being called in.

I quickly drove to the office and a few of us helped put together a short story containing the few details we knew for the late edition of Saturday's paper. I remained in the office all night listening to police radios while other staff members rushed to the scene.

As soon as the sun came up the next morning, a Herald photographer and I boarded a helicopter



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We found out later what had happened. When Flight 401 from New York was about to land at MIA, the light indicating that the

on Watson Island and flew out to the Everglades. By that time, the survivors had been taken out and all that was left were pieces of the plane.

landing gear was down didn't come on. Not certain whether the problem was with the landing gear or the light, the crew was given permission to make a loop over the Everglades. Somehow, in the confusion, the auto pilot got turned off and, without anyone realizing it, the plane gradually flew into the ground.

A total of 101 people died in the crash, but miraculously 75 survived.