



David CRONIN

March 23, 1929 - October 3, 2010

Article printed in Carson City - Nevada Appeal on October 7, 2010.

Written by Gregg K. Kakesako - Honolulu Star-Advertiser

HONOLULU — David Cronin, the hero pilot who successfully landed a crippled United Airlines Boeing 747 in Honolulu 21 years ago, died Monday at his home in Minden. He was 81.

Funeral services will be held at Hilltop Community Church in Carson City on Monday.

Cronin was the captain on United Flight 811, which left Honolulu bound for Auckland, New Zealand, on Feb. 24, 1989. The 747 was 22,000 feet over the Pacific when a forward cargo door blew out, creating a gaping hole in the side of the aircraft.

The explosion knocked out two of the plane's four engines. Nine passengers seated in business class died when their seats were sucked out of the plane.

Despite the damage, Cronin and his crew was able to reduce altitude and land the 747 safely in Honolulu about 22 minutes later. There were 336 passengers and 18 crewmembers on the flight.

“He not only brought the plane back safely, but he invented many of the safety procedures used today,” said Ben Mohide, a passenger on the flight, during a phone interview Wednesday. “He was a remarkable man.”

He and his wife, Barbara, also a passenger, learned of Cronin's death from a woman who was a purser on Flight 811.

Cronin, who joined United Airlines as a pilot in 1954, was 59 and on his second-to-last flight before mandatory retirement when he captained Flight 811.

Cronin's ability to land the plane safely prompted a discussion over raising the mandatory retirement age. The Federal Aviation Administration raised the age to 65 in 2007.

Mohide, who kept in touch with Cronin over the past two decades, once asked him how he handled the situation with so many emergencies taking place at the same time.

“I just prayed,” Mohide said was Cronin's reply. “I just prayed and got on with it.”

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that a mechanical failure caused the cargo door to separate from the aircraft.

In 1993, Mohide consulted with Cronin before writing the book “Hawaiian Nightmares” about the air disaster.

“He helped me get the terminology and details correctly,” he said.

Tribute Wall

GE

“ Gregory Ewesit lit a candle in memory of David CRONIN



Gregory Ewesit - May 25 at 09:22 AM

GE

“ May the soul of the Hero David Edward Cronin rest in eternity 🕊️🕊️ you will be remember forever.you have taught me something big in my life

Gregory Ewesit - May 25 at 09:20 AM

HW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Helga Wiench - May 07 at 02:14 PM



“ I just saw the doc about the flight. Forever a hero!

Shasta James - October 24, 2025 at 08:59 PM

AM

“ *Ava Marie lit a candle in memory of David CRONIN*



ava marie - May 26, 2025 at 09:25 PM

MH

“ *Marcos Hernández lit a candle in memory of David CRONIN*



Marcos Hernández - April 17, 2025 at 06:56 PM

PB

“ *Punky Brewster lit a candle in memory of David CRONIN*



Punky Brewster - January 05, 2025 at 07:31 AM



“ *David CRONIN*

November 04, 2023 at 08:25 PM



“ *David CRONIN*

November 01, 2023 at 12:58 PM

RH

“ Stories like Mr Cronin’s need shared far and wide for everyone. Every story I have read about Mr Cronin made light of him being a very humble man. Mr. Cronin you have earned your eternal wings, may you forever fly the skies of glory.

Rodney Hoover - November 11, 2022 at 04:35 PM



“ I too was a passenger on that flight with my mom and brother. Capt. Cronin gave me the last 31 years and I would love to visit his burial place. Does anyone know where that is? Thanks!

Stuart McClure - May 20, 2020 at 07:00 PM

TC

CPT David “Dave” Cronin
BIRTH
23 Mar 1929
Connecticut, USA
DEATH
3 Oct 2010 (aged 81)
Minden, Douglas County, Nevada, USA
BURIAL
Gardnerville Cemetery
Gardnerville, Douglas County, Nevada, USA
🕯️ ...our hero.

Tara Celeste - March 24, 2024 at 10:57 PM

CT

“ Thank you David, thank you for leading the team that saved our lives. All our family know about you. You became part of our family. We were deeply saddened to hear of your passing. Rest in peace David.

Chris Turner - May 22, 2016 at 12:00 AM