NEWS RELEASE

Miracle on the Hudson aircraft on display in Charlotte

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By now, we've all heard the story, or seen the movie Sully, about US Airways Flight 1549 and the heroic acts of the crew — Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, First Officer Jeff Skiles and flight attendants Sheila Dail, Donna Dent and Doreen Welsh — to land and evacuate all 155 passengers and crew safely on to New York's Hudson River in 2009. But what became of the aircraft after it was pulled from the river? That story involves heroes of a different sort: Aircraft Maintenance Technicians, or AMTs, as they're known in the aviation industry.

One of the aircraft's engines is removed from the Hudson River eight days after Flight 1549 makes the emergency landing.

In June 2011, the Airbus A320 was transported from New York City to Charlotte, North Carolina.

CLT-based AMTs Paul O'Sullivan, Brett Ebert, Chris Cote, Bob Securest, Paul Citriniti and Don Omer (Not pictured: Steve Organski)

The NTSB numbered each fan blade, which has its own weight and serial number.

First Officer Jeff Skiles paid a visit while the engine was being repaired.

O'Sullivan and Citriniti volunteered time, effort and talent to help reassemble engine No. 2.

The aircraft was transported from New York City to the Carolinas Aviation Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, in June 2011, shortly after the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) completed its investigation. In the years that followed, dozens of employees have dedicated hundreds of personal man-hours to restoring the fuselage, wings and tail of aircraft N106US (Flight 1549). The plane is on public view as part of the Miracle on the Hudson exhibit in Charlotte — the intended original destination of that fateful flight and American's second-largest hub city.

Last summer, a handful of CLT-based mechanics took on the task of repairing the aircraft's engines. Brett Ebert, a CLT-based AMT, led the special project to reassemble engine No. 1. He coordinated the volunteer labor needed to reassemble the airframe and engines. “I had already read most of the reports and thought I had an understanding of the event as a whole, but to see the damage up close is astounding,” Ebert says. “We normally don’t tear down these engines to this level at American and certainly nowhere near this level locally. For us to see the internal damage at this level is amazing.”

The engines arrived in October 2012, and when the crates were opened, inventoried and photographed, it soon became apparent that the vast majority of the nuts and bolts holding the major modules together were not included in the shipment.

Fortunately, General Electric/CFM International stepped in to generously supply the final missing engine pieces, other hardware needed to do the reassembly and even DVD copies of the engine manuals to support identification of parts. Once all of the parts were gathered, the work could begin to restore the engines. The team consisted of Ebert, Paul Citriniti, Chris Cote, Don Omer, Steve Organski, Paul O’Sullivan and Bob Sechrist. And they had a lot of work ahead of them.

“On top of the missing pieces, a lot of the ones we had were corroded,” Ebert says. “We didn’t want to put new pieces on a damaged engine. We wanted it to be optically correct, so we had to find used parts. In our business, you don’t really reuse used parts so that was a task, too,” Ebert says.

Actual reassembly work on the No. 1 engine started in late July 2016 and was completed on Nov. 4, 2016, with hundreds of man-hours expended. The No. 2 engine is still a work in progress and is on track to be completed and ready for display within the next couple of months.

All that painstaking, hard work has finally paid off. “We all remember working on this aircraft when it was serviceable,” says Ebert. “We are used to seeing these planes every day, and to be able to say that you helped resemble an aircraft engine that was part of a historically significant event is unheard of. We wanted to make sure it didn’t get cut up into scrap metal, and that it isn’t forgotten.”