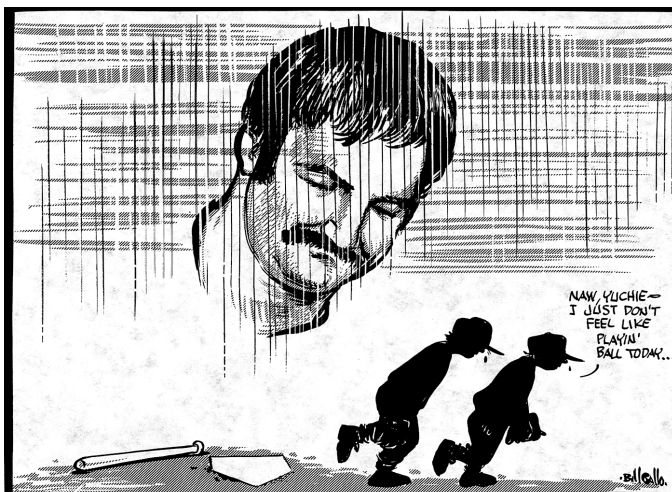


KEITH TORRIE DAILY NEWS

Yankee manager Billy Martin (above, second from r.) can't control his emotions at Munson's funeral. Left, Bill Gallo's classic tribute to the Yankee captain.



Graig Nettles lowers head during moment of silence honoring Munson at Stadium.



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thrust and goes up for a fourth pass.

From the tower, Ackley advises N15NY to change course this time and follow a right pattern for Runway 19. There is other traffic in the area. It means Munson must make right turns instead of left, a slightly more demanding approach because the pilot must look across the cockpit and visibility is not as good.

Two nights earlier, Thurman is in Chicago, staying at Bobby and Kay Murcer's place. After the kids are in bed, Diana watches "A Star Is Born" on TV. When Kris Kristofferson's character dies in the end, Diana, a woman who lives life with her feelings out front, finds herself sobbing. She begins to think about what life would be like if anything ever happened to Thurman. She cries some more. When they speak on the phone that night, she is still upset and she tells him how scared she is. Thurman tells Diana she is his best friend and always will be, how privileged he is to share his life with her.

"I love you very much," he says. He assures her everything will be fine, that they will always have each other. His words are a great comfort.

**3:59 p.m.** Circling back toward the end of 19, Munson is at 3,500 feet and flying at 200 KIAS. He throttles back to lower the speed and altitude, pulling back so far

that the landing-gear horn sounds. The horn alerts the pilot if the aircraft doesn't have sufficient speed for landing and if the gear is not down and locked. Munson manually flicks the horn off. Ackley, who is a minute away from the end of his shift, tells N15NY to fly another mile downwind — parallel to the runway, away from the airport — because of traffic. At 3:59:55, the controller advises N15NY to begin its base turn, beginning the loop back to the runway "anytime now."

Munson turns the aircraft to the right immediately, with about a 30-degree bank and the nose slightly low. He has neither extended the flaps nor put the landing gear down.

Diana and the kids — Tracy, 9, Kelly, 7, and Michael, 4 — have just returned home from the store. They were going out to eat that night but decided to stay home and let their dad barbecue some chicken instead. They bought about seven pounds of chocolate, too. Thurman Munson loved his chocolate, dunking his chocolate cookies in milk. Munson — irascible, cantankerous Thurman Munson — was a complete mushball with his kids. Discipline and punishment were Diana's departments.

Time and again, she thinks about how happy they are in their home. Earlier that summer, as dusk began to fall and

she was cleaning up the kitchen after dinner, Diana looked out the window to see Thurman on the patio, sitting in a chair, smoking a cigar, a look of softness and contentment on his face. She asked him what he was thinking about. He lifted his arm and surveyed their home, their abundant life, and asked Diana, "Can you believe we've done it?"

**4:01 p.m.** A pre-landing checklist — a way to make sure everything is properly configured for the approach — is standard operating procedure for all pilots; Munson does not use the checklist. "I don't think you want to land this airplane with the gear up," Hall tells Munson on their final approach. Munson puts the gear down. The plane has slipped below the glide slope — an electronic display that is basically a banister down to the runway. Follow the glide slope and you are fine. N15NY is at about 1,700 feet — 500 feet over the ground — when the gear goes down, but now the increased drag from the gear steepens the descent.

"We're sinking," Hall tells Munson. He warns Munson about possible down-drafts on the approach to Runway 19. Munson inches the throttle forward. Anderson feels the left wing dip. Nobody is talking much. Propeller planes respond almost instantaneously when they are powered up; jet engines are more power-

ful, but they take three to four seconds to spool up. Airplanes get their lift from air rushing over the wings. If you are going too slow, the plane "stalls" and loses its lift and begins to sink. This is what happens to N15NY. The plane keeps sinking. Munson never puts the flaps down, which would give the plane additional lift. The NTSB report would state that Munson was flying an estimated 20 knots too slow for a no-flaps-down landing (about 93 KIAS), creating an excessive sink rate. "The added drag of the gear, the reduced power and the reduced lift available without flaps extended placed the aircraft in a dangerous situation," the report would state. The pilot failed "to recognize the need for, and to take action to maintain, sufficient air speed to prevent a stall during an attempted landing."

Munson digs, seat all the way forward, determined to arrest the descent. He thrusts the throttles all the way forward to try to pull his jet out of it.

"I could sense from his face that something was wrong and the airplane was out of control," Anderson says.

Says Bill Crocker, Munson's friend: "Knowing his personality, he was going to fly that thing himself. He was going to do everything himself."

The plane is maybe 300 feet off

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#### FROM THE NTSB AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT

The passenger in the cabin said . . . "I could see in his face (the pilot's) that he felt there was something wrong of course. . . I sensed the airplane sinking and I could sense through the expression on Thurman's face that the aircraft was out of control."