



SULLY is a Third Second Quarter 2018 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Here's Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.

5 of a possible 20 points

*** of a possible *******

**United States 2016 color 96 minutes live action feature drama
Warner Bros. Pictures / Village Road Show Pictures / Flashlight Films /
Kennedy Marshall Company / Malpasco Producers: Frank Marshall,
Allyn Stewart, Tim Moore, Jessica Meier, Kristina Rivera**

Key: *indicates outstanding performance or technical achievement

Points:

- 1 Direction: Clint Eastwood**
- 0 Editing: Blu Murray**
- 1 Cinematography: Tom Stern Aerial Photography: Hans Bjerno*
Stills Photography: Keith Bernstein**
- 0 Lighting: David Skutch, Steve Zigler, Eric Leigh, Jesse Hildreth,
Buzzy Burwell**
- Special Visual Effects: Mark Curtis, Emma Gorbey, others**
- 1 Written by: Todd Komarnicki, based on the book *Highest Duty* by
Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger and Jeffrey Zaslow**
- Script Supervision: Susan Malerstein-Watkins**
- Music Recording: Tom Hardisty**

- 1 Music: Christian Jacob, Clint Eastwood (theme music), Kevin Axt**
Orchestrations: Christian Jacob
- 1 Production Design: James Murakami**
Art Direction: Kevin Ishioka, Ryan Heck
Set Design: Julien Pougner (lead), Mark Hitchler,
Mayumi Konishi-Valentine
Set Decoration: Gary Fettis, Chryss Hionis
Set Dressing: Elaine Benavides, Michael Bruno, Patrice Canfield Longo,
Deborah Canfield, Reis Douglas, Robert Dressel,
Marcus Epps, Matthew Flory, Michael Gregan,
Damon Hahn, Chris Heaps, Tyler Kettenburg, Stacy Poitras,
Edward Protiva, Rahmon Rose, Sam Rosedietcher,
Eric Sherlin, Susan Tanner
Costume Design: Deborah Hopper
Makeup: Luisa Abel (head), Kimberly Felix (key), Carrie Angland,
Elena Arroy, Todd Kleitsch, Donna Martin, Ashley McGuire,
Ren Rohling, Marsha Shearill, Matthew Silva, Nico Sohn
- 0 Sound Design: Tom Ozanich**
Sound Editing Supervision: Bub Asman, Alan Robert Murray
Sound Effects: Blake Collins, Jack Cucci, John Cucci, Michael Dressel,
Richard Duarte, Jason King, Dan O’Connell,
Willard Overstreet
Dialogue Editing: Hugo Weng
Sound Mixing: Bradford Bell, John Fasal, Josè Antonio Garcia,
Sean Madsen, Unsun Song, Brian Tarlecki
Casting: Geoffrey Miclat, Melissa Braun, Rich King, Shay Griffin,
Tammy Smith, Eve Streger, Alex Cody, Barbara Harris
(Voices casting), Grant Wilfley
- 0 Acting**
0 Creativity
5 total points

Cast: Tom Hanks (Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger), Laura Linney (Lorrie Sullenberger, his wife), Aaron Eckhart* (Copilot Jeff Skiles), Ann Cusack (Donna Dent, air hostess), Vince Lombardi (Ferry Captain),

Valerie Mahaffey (Diane Higgins), Delphi Harrington (Lucille Palmer), Mike O'Malley (Charles Porter), Jamey Sheridan (Ben Edwards), Anna Gunn (Elizabeth Davis), Holt McCallany (Mike Cleary), Ahmed Lucan (Egyptian Cab Driver), Laura Lundy Wheale, Onira Tares, Gary Weeks, Katie Couric (Reporters), Jeff Kober (L. T. Cook, cropduster), Blake Jones (Sully at age 16), Molly Bernard (Alison), Chris Bauer (Larry Rooney), Jane Gabbert (Sheila Dahl), Molly Hagan (Air Hostess Doreen Walsh), Purva Bedi (Gursimran), Max Adler (Jimmy Stefanik), Sam Huntington (Jeff Kolodjay), Christopher Curry (Rob Kolodjay), Ashley Austin Morris (Gate Attendant Emily), Cooper Thornton (Jim Whitaker), Autumn Reeser (Passenger with Baby), Jeff Nordling (Barry Leonard), Patch Darragh* (Patrick Harten, air controller), Robert Treveilen (Air Traffic Control Supervisor), Michael Rapaport (Bartender)

Director Clint Eastwood's adrenaline-fueled replay of Captain Chesley Sullenberger's heroic emergency landing in New York's Hudson River would seem to have all necessary ingredients for an inspirational masterwork. Something is lacking, however. The pilot of U.S. Airways Flight 1549 is too publicly cool to bond with audiences emotionally. This in spite of Tom Hanks' best efforts to reproduce speech and mannerisms of a true American hero.

The screenplay is content with addressing inevitable second thoughts later in the movie, divorcing them from the immediacy of a developing crisis. It isn't clear if they are inspired by reservations expressed verbally in encounters with air safety investigators or simply post-traumatic stress flashbacks to decisive moments. Even in personal nightmares Captain Sullenberger's course of action is justified by inevitable flaming crashes. It appears quite unlikely he ever seriously contemplated reversing his preference for an aquatic landing over the riskier gambit of clearing skyline obstacles on shore, regardless of what computer models and hypothetical simulations indicated as outcomes.

A major flaw in story flow is leading off with the climax and then repeating it. Aside from temporarily disorienting audiences, such sequencing also tilts the movie towards diminishing returns over time. For any viewer of nightly news would already know the eventual conclusion of both landing approach and subsequent investigation. That awareness kills off a great portion of vital suspense. Leaving mainly verbal debates to carry the remaining dramatic heft.

Tom Hanks is no wizard in conveying wit through words, causing his own character's utterances to be overshadowed by First Officer Jeff Skiles' more pronounced skill at repartee. Even if granting that actions speak louder than words, veteran airman Sullenberger's aphoristic taciturnity works against viewer identification with him.

Virtually everyone knows Sullenberger was right about how to land the plane and his accusers literally dead wrong.

Doubt puts in occasional appearances. It's rapidly laid to rest whenever it arises by countering affirmations from adoring passengers, relieved city officials, and urban residents whose own lives might have been fatally jeopardized by an alternative response to birds disabling plane engines by flying directly into them.

Some might cavil over employment of the term miracle to describe what happened. A stronger criticism can be directed at numerous hypothetical alightings. If the writer's argument is fallibility of electronic calculations, as opposed to human reckonings, that issue is a separate story. It shouldn't be permitted to intrude upon this one.

Trying to position Chesley Sullenberger as a man of extraordinary acumen and foresight while simultaneously proposing he's merely another Joe American is a losing effort. What makes him a hero is willingness to bypass the traditional and expected, to countenance and enact the unconventional when required. That is what the movie should be celebrating.

It doesn't, content with efforts to achieve popular acclaim. This coming at the expense of wasted opportunity to show mental processes by which a brilliantly divergent thinker operates. For "Sully" is a champion of taking the less-traveled road, a relatively unattractive one generally neglected. This lesson is kept in obscurity by director and scripter, who prefer to make their protagonist just another adult Boy Scout who came properly prepared to overcome unforeseen complications.

The problem is that scouting readies members for expected difficulties. Not those undetected in ordinary life encounters. When something unprecedented transpires that menaces human survival, more than practice and experience are called upon to deal effectively with it. Beyond courage to act, courage to think abnormally is the prime path to salvation. Chesley realized that. Most of his fellow aviators would not.

About one-fourth of the movie details passenger airline evacuation procedures in aquatic environments. Half the remainder pits crew and media scanners against scandalmongers and relentlessly critical researchers spurred on, perhaps, by defensive insurers. The final quarter reveals anticipated exoneration of the lifesaver through physical evidence tardily recovered from the Hudson River.

Not the North River, as a ferry captain avers in a moment of temporary confusion.

Formidable individual acting might have made this movie significantly better. Only Patch Darragh's defeated, despairing air traffic controller and Aaron Eckhart's energetically counterattacking first officer enliven dully objective treatment of one man's crusade for vindication by authorities. Overacting bartender and people playing themselves without training in performance hurt production quality considerably. Just because someone was really present at a scene doesn't qualify that person automatically to be capable of reenacting it persuasively under makeup.

Lighting bathes locations in mostly cool, neutral colors. These reinforce realism, as if that were being questioned by those watching. Everything looks very modern and civilized, nothing being visible, regrettably, to suggest the principal character marches to a different beat than others.

Taking great pains to see the protagonist blends in rather than stands out, SULLY's art department does great disservice to this drama and its subject.

Injecting period "hit" music undercuts desirable epic foundations of SULLY's story. Forgettable melodies interact poorly with unforgettable actions without generating any additional ambience.

Editing runs heavily to cyclical patterns, leaving no room for creative approaches to dialogue or cinematography, though aerial shots are impressive. Overemphasis on keeping down costs results here in a quickly prepared commercial product earning money largely through star power and familiarity with what is being observed.

Clint Eastwood doesn't come to the rescue with his cast, either. Selected for looks, they could just as easily have been interchanged with random acquisitions obtained through spur-of-the-moment sidewalk interviews in Manhattan. Without prolonged rehearsal or adequate prior film knowledge, most of these actors and actresses, including even a few veterans like Laura

Linney, move in and out of settings unable to find anything deeper than physical attachment to them. Bland dialogue predominates.

Only useful as a primer for individuals unacquainted with Captain Sullenberger's daring feat and its aftermath, SULLY is not a movie to treasure or enter into repertory rotation. It's passable entertainment for those easily impressed by flashy special visual effects, a protracted burden to seekers of valuable thematic content.

Preteen viewers will find the story line obscure from midpoint on, with action in SULLY's second half insufficiently concrete to keep their attention. Too much talking and not enough showing is another huge liability filmmakers impose on those looking for original drama that raises questions as frequently as answering them.

DVD bonuses are a modestly informative twenty-minute featurette titled "Sully Sullenberger: The Man Behind the Miracle," a fifteen-minute re-spool of the plane's filmed landing called "Moment by Moment: Averting Disaster on the Hudson," and a twenty-minute featurette disclosing how certain scenes were shot. This last item, "Neck Deep in the Hudson: Shooting SULLY," is the pick of the pack. It removes a degree of mystery about how key moments of intense drama were manufactured.

Definitely no classic, SULLY plays it safe and sticks to well-trod avenues, relying on verbose technical explanations when it should be ramming visual metaphors into memory instead.