



The Miracle Landing: The True Story of How the NBA's Minneapolis Lakers Almost Perished in an Iowa Cornfield During a January Blizzard

Harold Gifford

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It was a rough couple of years for the NBA's Minneapolis Lakers. But at least the 1959-60 season had a promising start. Team owner Bob Short had drafted college standout Elgin Baylor the year before and was rebuilding his team around this future superstar. Adding a new coach in the form of Jim Pollard along with a dose of hometown enthusiasm had fans looking up. The team even bought an airplane so they could play teams further away in the newly expanding NBA. Then something happened, completely out of anyone's control, that almost changed everything. On January 17, 1960 after a game in St. Louis, the Lakers boarded their DC-3 for the flight home. Perhaps the memory of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper perishing in an Iowa cornfield only 11 months earlier had faded. In any case, this flight would be like no other. For the first time in print, the co-pilot of that flight, Harold Gifford, tells the real, full story of what happened that almost wiped out the Lakers before that NBA dynasty even had a chance to really get started.

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