

Saturday, April 26, 2003. □

Stripped of anything that might be useful to the rapidly aging fleet, □
the hulk of the 1974 vintage Lockheed L1011 is hauled away from □
the fence for its final encounter with destiny. Note that the #3 □
engine is counted among the doomed hardware, along with landing □
gear, flight control surfaces, windshields, flight control PCUs, and a □
bunch of wiring, interior components, and ECS ducting.





To make the turn to the salvage zone, the aircraft is hauled around tight enough to make the left hand main landing gear truck scrub and hop over the ramp. Once positioned in the salvage area, the tire valve stems are pulled to flatten the tires and decrease ariplane movement during the salvage operation.

The first bite always tastes the best.





The CAT operator systematically chewed up the wing from the tip. What is nearly impossible to show in still photos is how much the airplane is being tossed around as the CAT crunches on the wing. The vertical fin was swaying back and forth 20 feet. Also difficult to describe is the sound. It's not at all like a large beer can. It's much more brittle. It's more like an old cedar fence crunching when your buddies tackle you into it during the annual Thanksgiving touch football game in the back yard, with a bit of a metallic clang as the parts drop to the ramp. The CAT operator manipulated the jaws to 'chew' up the structure into relatively small pieces, maybe 5 feet long max.



What the \$#@@*!?

You seen my digital protractor anywhere?

The CAT bites into enough structure that the hydraulics stall out. The combination of heavier spar structure and engine pylon attachments proved too heavy for the CAT to crunch from this angle. In addition, the operator was trying to drop the engine 'gently' to minimize the danger posed by heavy objects falling.





Approaching from a different angle, the operator finally drops the pylon.



Time for lunch. The crew awaits a dump truck to take the loads of scrap wing pieces. With the silence of noon break settling over the field, we have a chance to look around. The fractured aluminum pieces flew all over. During the demolition, we could see stringers flying 50 feet in the air over the airplane. Laying at our feet is a spar web pad over half an inch thick and three inches square. When it fractured, it must have flown and bounced here. I didn't hear them coming, but I am sure glad it missed me.



While in service, a structural repair mistake of .030 inches could result in hours and hours of engineering and shop time to make sure that there would be no impact to service life and safety. It all seems a little surreal now.



Lifting the dead engine, the CAT is on the edge of tipping forward. The operator placed it on a flat bed truck, strapped it down, and drove away. Notice the yellow door spreader tool left in place during removal of the #2 (tail mounted) engine. The shop assured me they would be able to retrieve the tool soon.



LH shown.
RH opposite.



The operator had apparently been briefed on the structure of airplanes, or he had done this stuff before. Here he is making room in the side of body to remove the wing center section structure.



The noise is like an hour-long crash - without the sirens.



With the left hand side of the wing center section removed, the operator repositions the CAT to take out the right-hand side. Notice he intentionally left some stringers in the crown intact, as well as the keel beam. Most of the center section beams are wiped out.

A few well placed snips of the CAT jaws and the L1011 falls. Did he intend for the nose to roll away from him, or was he just lucky? The fall of the tail section was actually a bit anti-climactic, as it just settled straight down with a thud.





Tearing away wire bundles in the crown. □
The interior pieces were crunched and □
mixed with all the aluminum structure. □
The aft fuselage is still supported on the □
main landing gear. Later in the afternoon, □
they are torn away and thrown into a □
dumpster in one piece.

The CAT is tearing away at the innards of the forward fuselage like a hyena on a widebeast carcass. Notice the light between the fuselage and the ramp. The difference in weight is striking as the smaller sized CAT lifts and thumps the forward fuselage with impunity. The hollow tube echoed with very loud and deep 'booms,' especially as the nose gear banged sideways against the ramp.

By Monday morning, April 28, 2003, there was not a trace of the L1011 left, except the huge dark black marks left by the flattened tires as they were dragged back and forth across the ramp.

