

GREY TORNADO

Nine o'clock on a June morning that promised to be a topcoat day for Bill and Vera Hargreaves busying themselves for a visit to the Metro Centre where they had recently graduated from tea to grande latte's for which both felt embarrassed at not knowing whether to use the long A or abrupt T when ordering.

Bill had been retired for six months during which time he had decorated their Dunston house end to end. Afternoon television was now a feature in his life and, 'House Guest' essential viewing, making a three o'clock return essential; a programme that would lure them to their death later that day.

Tornados' were a rare sight over Gateshead, they normally visited Otterburn from Coltishall in Norfolk using the North Sea corridor and pilot, Paul Miles left the Northumberland Range for home and dinner.

It was the flight control computer and its backup that failed causing the plane to veer to the West in steady decent as it travelled a hundred feet and falling over Tynemouth. Paul didn't panic, his brain worked out a logical path to avoid disaster but the controls locked sending the multi million pound killing machine on a relentless path of its own.

Like the captain of a stricken ship Paul waited until the last moment pressing the eject button to be blown into the air and safety

Bill dozed in the dull afternoon light, his hands signature to a lifetime of hard work. An empty coronation mug stood on a small table, tea drips staining the surface. Vera stood at the kitchen sink scrubbing new potatoes for their, lamb-chop dinner. She did look up and she did see the evil grey monster for a split second before being swept away with husband and house in a cataclysmic fireball reeking of aviation fuel.

John Frostick.