

State of West Virginia
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Detachment File Number CA-12682	REPORT OF INVESTIGATION	Headquarters File Number
DATE OF REPORT 03/06/97	STATION ELKINS DETACHMENT	COUNTY RANDOLPH
INITIAL OR SUPPLEMENTARY INITIAL	REPORT MADE BY SENIOR TROOPER C. M. ALTON	STATUS OF INVESTIGATION COMPLETE

VICTIMS: WAYNE DAVID CLARK

White/Male

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Age: 44

[REDACTED]

FREDERICK DANIEL WOLFE

White/Male

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Age: 29

[REDACTED]

DATE OF TIME: Thursday, March 6, 1997, between 0020 hours and 0035 hours, Eastern Standard Time (EST).

LOCATION: Randolph County, Cheat District, rural area. The scene of the incident is located in a very rural, wooded area, near Coalton and Mabie, in western Randolph County. Said area is located approximately 3.5 miles west of the Cassity-Mabie Road at a point located approximately 2 miles south of the community of Mabie at the intersection of the Rich Mountain Road. The within incident occurred at an elevation of approximately 2500 feet above mean sea level.

WEATHER: Nighttime, with extremely high winds, rain and snow mixture falling at ground level and temperatures in the 20's to low 30's.

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TYPE OF AIRCRAFT: A 1955 BEECH craft, E 185, manufactured fixed wing, twin engine aircraft, bearing registration number N54BT and serial number NR:BA-56, owned by Ronald W. Smith of [REDACTED] FL 33193.

CAUSE: Unknown.

FLIGHT: The aforementioned aircraft departed Sanford, NC at approximately 2220 hours EST enroute to the Detroit, Michigan area, transporting auto parts.

ESTIMATED DAMAGE: The aforementioned aircraft was a total **loss**, with an estimated value of \$60,000.00.

MEMBERS ASSIGNED: First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie and Senior Trooper C. M. Alton, Jr., all assigned to the Elkins Detachment of the West Virginia State Police.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: The following organizations rendered assistance during the investigation of the within incident:

1. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), officer in charge, Carry Johnson, Washington, D. C., public service number 703-771-3470.
2. Elkins Fire Department, Elkins, WV, 26241, public service number: 304-636-2000.
3. Coalton Volunteer Fire Department, Coalton, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.
4. Junior Volunteer Fire Department, Junior, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.
5. Beverly Volunteer Fire Department, Beverly, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.
6. Ellamore Volunteer Fire Department, Ellamore, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.
7. Buckhannon Volunteer Fire Department, Buckhannon, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: 8. Belington Volunteer Fire Department, Belington, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.

9. Randolph County Emergency Squad, Elkins, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.

10. Randolph County Coroner's Officer, Brenda Dailey, Elkins, WV, public service number: 304-636-2000.

11. West Virginia Medical Examiner's Officer, Jefferson Road, South Charleston, WV, 25309, Dr. Sopher, public service number: 304-558-3920.

12. Polaris Aviation, 3010 Airport Road, Sanford, NC, 27330, Airport Manger - Dan Swanson, public service number: 919-708-5549.

13. Federal Aviation Administration (**FAA**), officer in charge, Flight Standards Investigator- Jim Poole, Charleston, WV, 253091, public service number: 304-347-5199.

ACTION TAKEN:

On Thursday, March 06, 1997, at approximately 0035 hours, State Police Communications Dispatcher, Joe Swick, received a telephone call from Carry Johnson of the Federal Aviation Administration of Washington, D.C., advising a twin engine Beech model E-185 airplane went down approximately seven miles west of Elkins.

She advised that at approximately 0020 hours, she received a distress call from the aircraft and the aircraft dropped from 10,000 feet to 6,400 feet sharply and at that time contact was lost with the aircraft. Weather at the time of the crash was extremely high winds with snow and rain mixture at ground level and temperatures in the 20's to low 30's.

At approximately 0036 hours, the undersigned telephoned the Elkins Fire Department to advise them of the downed aircraft. They advised they were getting units together from their department as well as other local volunteer fire departments to look for the aircraft. The undersigned also advised dispatcher Joseph Swick to contact First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie of the incident. The undersigned then

ACTION TAKEN: traveled to the Norton-Mabie area of Randolph County to drive around and look for the downed aircraft.

At approximately 0117 hours, Carry Johnson advised via telephone to Dispatcher Joseph Swick that the aircraft was headed to Detroit, Michigan from North Carolina and there was no ELT signal at this time and the estimated coordinates are 3852N and 08003W.

At approximately 0125 hours, the undersigned met with First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie at the Elkins Detachment. The undersigned, along with Jerry Bradshaw, left in the State Police Ram Charger 4x4 and First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie left in his cruiser to scout western Randolph County in the Coalton, Mabie and Cassity area for the downed aircraft. Local fire departments were actively driving the area and canvassing roadways to attempt to locate the downed aircraft.

At approximately 0239 hours, Carry Johnson, from the Washington, D. C. **FAA** called with new coordinates of 38.51.44 north and 80.01.46 west at 6400 feet on the downed aircraft.

At approximately 0245 hours, Ernie George, a fire fighter with the Coalton Fire Department advised he had spoken with an area resident in the Mabie area of Randolph County. The resident's name was later given to the undersigned to be Jim Bodkins.

Mr. Bodkins' advised Mr. George he had heard what believed to be an airplane having engine problems and the time was in the same proximity of the aircraft going down. Mr. George also advised he could see a glowing in the sky in a remote area on Westvaco property from a high ridge line he was situated on.

At approximately 0310 hours, the search had been moved approximately two miles south of the Mabie community and approximately 3.5 miles onto a Westvaco access road into a very remote wooded area.

The undersigned, along with Jerry Bradshaw, was traveling in the Ramcharger 4x4 when the undersigned spotted a small flame located approximately 500 yards into the woods from a gas well location. The undersigned parked the 4x4 and walked into the woods towards the flames.

ACTION TAKEN: At approximately 0319 hours, the undersigned radioed Elkins Dispatcher Joseph Swick and advised that the debris and fire was the downed aircraft.

At approximately 0326 hours, the undersigned found the charred remains of two individuals in the cockpit region of the aircraft. The aircraft had been totally consumed by fire. The fire had burned out with the exception of a couple of small fires burning around different areas of the wreckage. The aircraft had apparently struck the ground after falling from the sky at a steep descent. The remains of the aircraft lay on the ground in tact except for the impact to the ground and the fire. The undersigned advised First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie of the two confirmed fatalities.

At approximately 0335 hours, fire department crews along with First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie arrived on scene. The scene had been secured by the undersigned and the fire crews attempted to put out the small fires on scene. The undersigned photographed the scene and had the area roped off with crime scene tape. The undersigned, along with Jerry Bradshaw, remained on scene after the fire crews left to secure the scene until the Civil Air Patrol could arrive to hold the scene for the FAA to investigate.

At approximately 0601 hours, Lt. Martin from the Civil Air Patrol from Bridgeport, WV arrived on scene. The scene was released by the undersigned into his custody to hold until the FAA arrived. The undersigned departed the scene.

At approximately 0635 hours, Randolph County Coroner Brenda Dailey, along with an ambulance crew arrived on scene and removed the remains of the aircraft crew. The remains were sent to the medical examiner, Dr. Sopher, in Charleston, WV, for identification.

At approximately 0825 hours, Brenda Dailey and the ambulance crew departed the scene with the deceased.

On Friday, 3/7/97 at approximately 1145 hours, Dr. Sopher from the State Medical Examiner's office completed identification on the two individuals removed from the aircraft. The pilot was identified as Wayne David Clark, age 44, and the passenger was identified as Frederick Daniel Wolfe, age 29. Both were from Sanford, NC.

ACTION TAKEN: At approximately 1150 hours, Jim Poole, from the FAA out of Charleston, WV, telephone and spoke with First Sergeant R. D. Gillespie, advising he was the investigator and would like to have a copy of this report upon completion.

On Saturday, 3/8/97, at approximately 1130 hours, the undersigned sent the film of the aircraft and crash scene to the lab for development, via U.S. mail.

On Wednesday, 3/12/97 at approximately 1550 hours, Bill Painter with the Elkins FAA office located at the Elkins Airport, dropped off two burned key rings from the victims which were found at the crash scene. The undersigned filled out a property disposition report form and mailed the key chains to the father of the pilot, Clement P. Clark. The undersigned also took a Polaroid photograph of the keys prior to mailing them. This photograph is with the file copy of this report and the PDR form will be kept with the file copy of this report upon receipt back from Mr. Clark. A photo copy was made prior to mailing the PDR form.

On Thursday, 3/13/97, at approximately 1300 hours, the undersigned received the photographs of the crash scene back from the lab. The photographs will be filed with the file copy of this report. The second copy will be sent to Jim Poole in Charleston, WV.

On Wednesday, 3/26/97 at approximately 1600 hours, the undersigned received the Property Disposition Report form back from Clement Clark. The PDR form will be with the file copy of this report.

The status of this report is complete.

WITNESSES: CARRY JOHNSON
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Washington, D. C.

Can testify to tracking the aircraft on radar and watching its descent and receiving the distress, May Day call, and to notifying Elkins Dispatcher Joe Swick.

WITNESSES: ELKINS FIRE DEPARTMENT
Elkins, WV 26241
Telephone: 304-636-2000

Can testify to assisting in the search for the downed aircraft and to the condition of the scene and the deceased.

ERNIE GEORGE
Coalton Volunteer Fire Department
Coalton, WV
Telephone: 304-636-2000

Can testify to assisting in the search for the downed aircraft, to speaking with the witness, Jim Bodkins, to seeing flames or glowing in the area of the downed aircraft and to the condition of the scene and the deceased.

JERRY BRADSHAW

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Can testify to assisting in locating the downed aircraft and to the condition of the scene and the deceased.

BRENDA DAILEY
Randolph County Coroner
Davis Memorial Hospital
Gorman Avenue
Elkins, WV 26241
Telephone: 304-636-2000

Can testify to pronouncing the deaths of the deceased and to the removal from the crash sight.

DR. IRVIN SOPHER
West Virginia State Medical Examiner's Office
Jefferson Road
South Charleston, WV 25305
Telephone: 304-558-3290

WITNESSES: Can testify to performing the autopsy on the deceased and identifying the deceased.

JIM BODKINS
Elkins Municipal Building
Elkins, WV 26241
[REDACTED]

Can testify to hearing the aircraft fly over his residence just prior to crashing.

FIRST SERGEANT R. D. GILLESPIE
West Virginia State Police
1300 Harrison Avenue
Elkins, WV 26241
Telephone: 304-637-0200

Can testify to assisting in this investigation and the facts set forth in this report and to taking daytime photographs of the crash.

SENIOR TROOPER C. M. ALTON, JR.
West Virginia State Police
1300 Harrison Avenue
Elkins, WV 26241
Telephone: 304-637-0200

Can testify to locating the crash sight, to being the officer in charge of the within investigation, to photographing the scene and to the facts set forth in this report.

LT. MARTIN
Civil Air Patrol
Bridgeport, WV 26301

Can testify to taking charge of the scene from Senior Trooper C. M. Alton and holding the scene until the FAA arrived.

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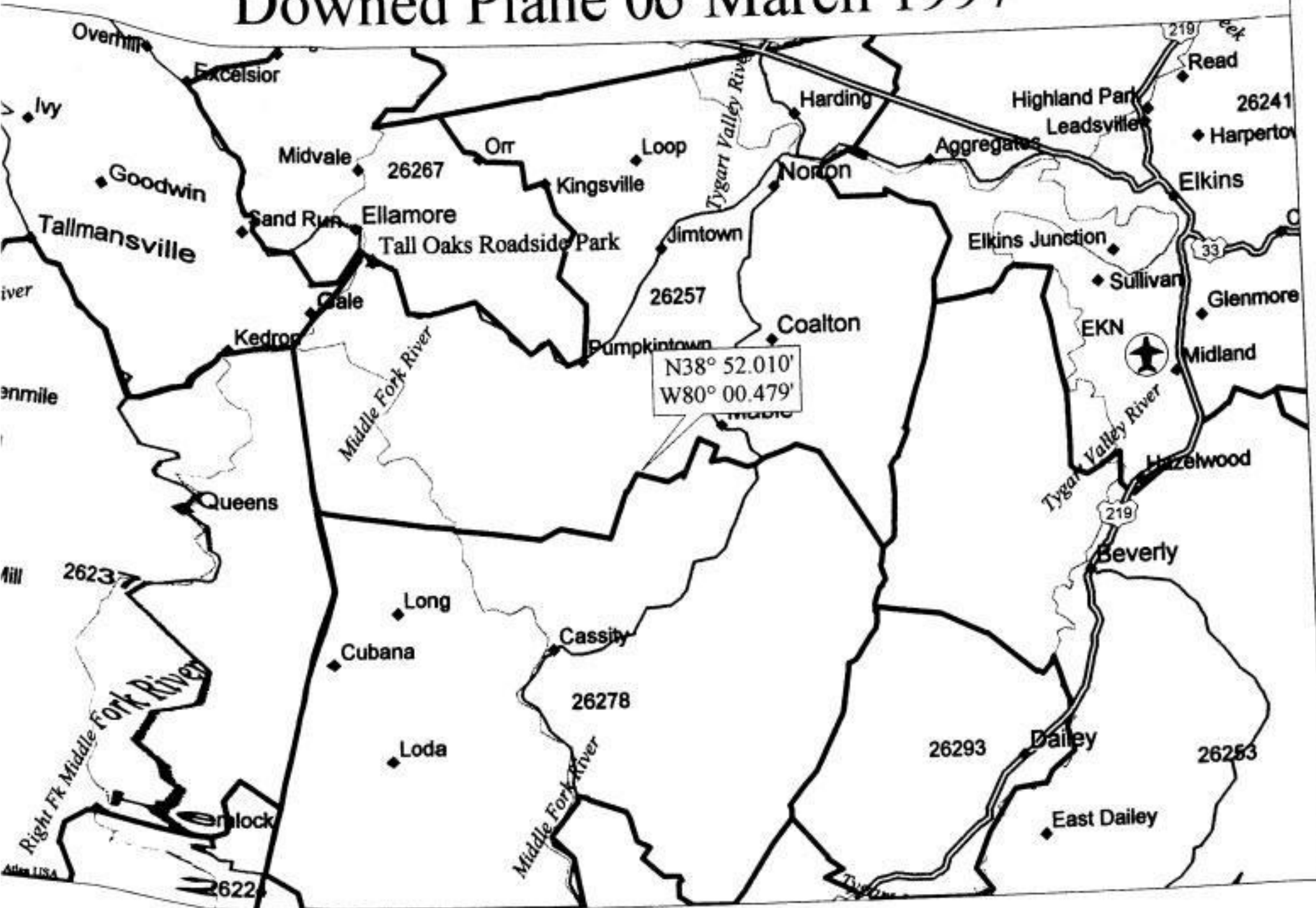
MILES TRAVELED: 30 miles
HOURS SPENT: 30 hours



SENIOR TROOPER, COMPANY "C"

COPY TO: Mr. Jim Poole
FAA

Downed Plane 05 March 1997



Downed Plane 06 March 1997

