

Butte Airplane Crash on March 22, 2009

I live at [REDACTED] in Butte, Montana, and my back yard (facing south) abuts Elizabeth Warren Ave. which borders the north runway of the Bert Mooney Airport in Butte. On March 22, 2009, I was watching golf on my TV which is situated in my living room and is in a nearly direct line with a large south-facing window from which the airspace over the Bert Mooney Airport can be seen.

My eyes were attracted to what at first appeared to be a wing of a white glider moving northward and that wing appeared to be near perpendicular to the ground. I could only see that one object from my chair and as I moved to the window I noted that the object was trapezoidal (wing-shaped) and falling to the ground with the large axis perpendicular to the ground. The long axis appeared to be about 5 or 6 times the length of the shorter axis (see sketch attached). The object appeared to be in a free fall with a falling-only acceleration rather than an accelerating object moving toward the ground with a propelled or greater accelerating speed. There was a slight back and forth rotation to the object as it fell and upon impact with the ground a cloud of dust and light-colored smoke followed the impact. I concluded that it was probably a small Cessna type aircraft that had crashed.

I immediately went to the phone as I noted the time to be 2:32 P.M. and dialed 911 to report what I had seen and let the phone ring 12 or 13 times before I hung up and tried again. On the second attempt I let the phone ring 6 times and assumed a large number of calls were being made and my call would be redundant so I made no further attempt at calling. I got my film camera and went to the back deck of my house and took 8 pictures of the fire resulting from the crash and in the course of taking pictures noted an explosion and flames which spewed thick black smoke into the air.

I made a couple of phone calls to friends in Butte and a relative in Helena reporting what I had seen and assumed (evidently in error) that all phone call attempts to the 911 number were automatically recorded as caller identification and assumed I would get a return call from whomever receives those calls.

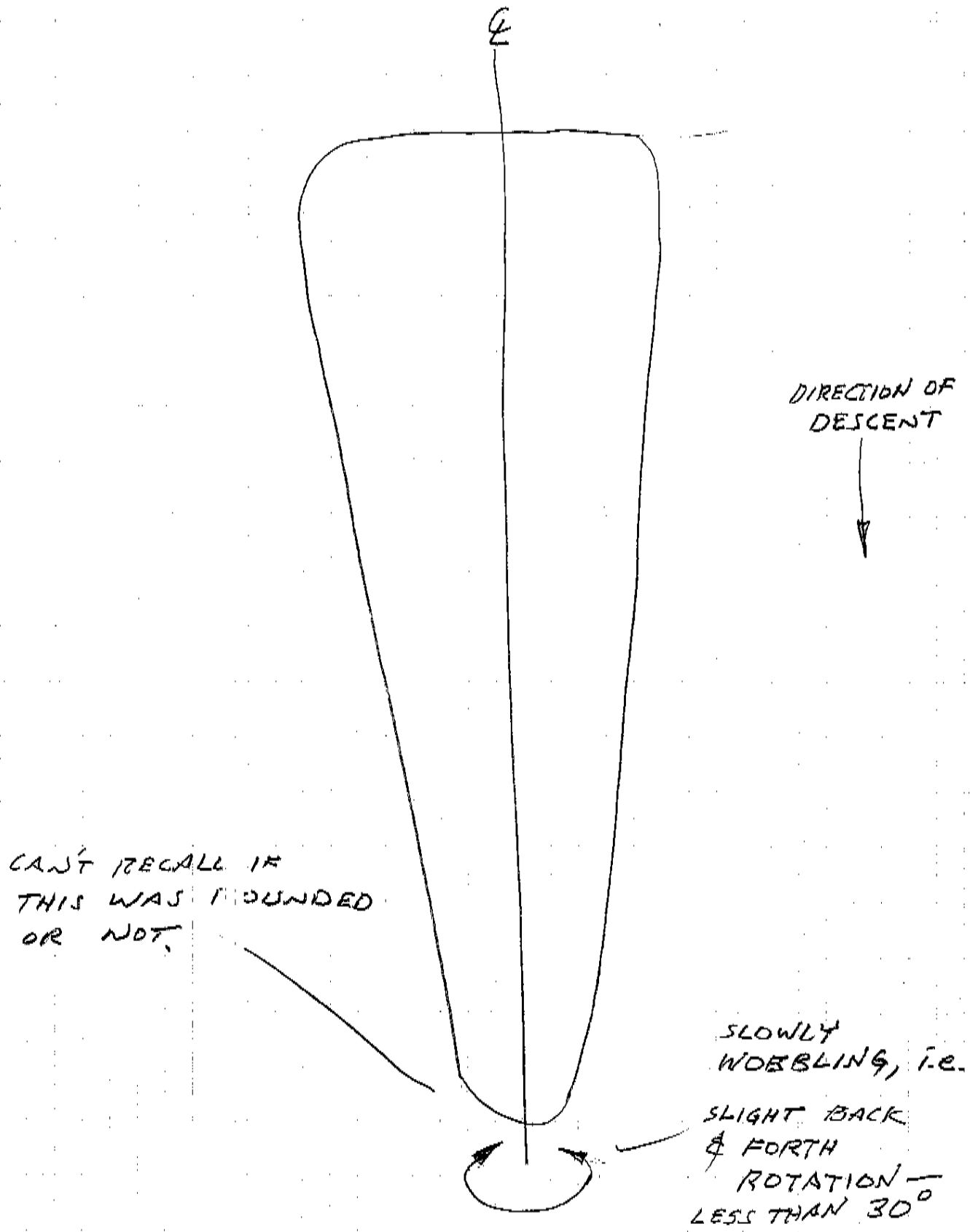
I was informed that a CNN news report solicited calls from witnesses so I called the Butte-Silver Bow dispatch number on the day following the crash and reported my name and gave them a contact number and was told that someone would get back to me. I mentioned my calling on the day of the crash and was told that it was a mad house in the dispatch office due to the high volume of calls on that day.

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[REDACTED]
Butte, Montana

NOTES: LATER DETERMINED THAT CRASH SITE
IS APPROX 1.4 MILES FROM POINT OF OBSERVATION.

SKETCH
FALLING OBJECT OVER BERT MOONEY AIRCRAFT
MAR 22, 2009



CAN'T RECALL IF THIS WAS FOUNDED OR NOT

DIRECTION OF DESCENT
↓

SLOWLY WOBLING, i.e. SLIGHT BACK & FORTH ROTATION - LESS THAN 30°