Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	ROMULUS, Michigan	**Accident Number:**	CHI98LA129
Date & Time:	April 19, 1998, 18:09 Local	**Registration:**	N234Q
Aircraft:	Good VELOCITY	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation		

Analysis

The U.S. Customs Service Air Interdiction Coordination center (DAICC), received notification from a park ranger at Big Bend National Park, TX, of an unidentified airplane entering the United States from Mexico. This airplane did not notify U.S. authorities of its arrival. A U.S. Customs Service aircraft was dispatched, and it intercepted the airplane near Alpine, TX. The U.S. Customs Service aircraft followed the airplane on a northeasterly heading for over 8 hours, until arriving in the Detroit, MI, area. The airplane was observed overflying the Detroit Metropolitan Airport and circling over the downtown area, until it descended and crashed into an athletic field. Examination of the wreckage revealed that the airplane was void of fuel. No other anomaly was found. Approximately 408 pounds of marijuana was recovered from the wreckage.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: improper planning/decision by the pilot, by using the airplane in an illegal activity and allowing the fuel to be exhausted before landing. Factors relating to this accident were: the pilot being under pressure to reach his destination with his illegal cargo, and trees in the forced landing area.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings
1. (C) PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) STOLEN AIRCRAFT/UNAUTHORIZED USE - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) PRESSURE INDUCED BY CONDITIONS/EVENTS - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings
5. (F) OBJECT - TREE(S)

Occurrence #4: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Factual Information

On April 19, 1998, at 1809 eastern daylight time (edt), a Good Velocity, N234Q, operated by a commercial pilot, was destroyed when during cruise flight, the airplane's engine lost power. During the subsequent forced landing, the airplane struck some trees and impacted the terrain. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The illegal smuggling flight was being conducted under 14 CFR Part 91. No flight plan was on file. The pilot was fatally injured. The origin of the illegal flight was unknown; however, the airplane crossed the United States-Mexico border near Big Bend National Park, Texas, at approximately 0830 edt.

A U. S. Customs Service official said that at approximately 0830 central daylight time (cdt), the U. S. Customs Service Air Interdiction Coordination center (DAICC), at Riverside, California, received notification from a park ranger at Big Bend National Park, Texas, of an unidentified airplane entering the United States from Mexico. This airplane did not notify U. S. authorities of its arrival.

At 0840 cdt, a U. S. Customs Service aircraft was dispatched from its home base and intercepted the airplane near Alpine, Texas. U. S. Customs Service aircraft followed the airplane on a northeasterly heading for over 8 hours, until arriving in the Detroit, Michigan area. The flight covered a distance of more than 1,200 miles. The airplane was observed overflying the Detroit Metropolitan Airport and circling over the downtown area, until it descended and crashed into an athletic field.

A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector examined the wreckage at the accident site. The accident site was located in a park area approximately 10 miles northeast of the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Trees on the south-southeast side of the park showed shear impact damage to trunks and branches approximately 50 feet up from their bases. The airplane was found resting inverted in a nearby baseball field, oriented on a 360 degree heading. The airplane's forward fuselage and cockpit area were crushed down and inward. The windscreen was broken out. The wings were broken downward and aft. Both vertical stabilizers and rudders were broken aft. The airplane's engine was broken off and found resting 200 feet north of the airplane. Examination of the airplane's engine and fuel system revealed that the airplane was void of fuel. Flight control continuity was confirmed. Examination of the airplane's other systems revealed no anomalies. Approximately 408 pounds of marijuana were recovered from the wreckage.

The results of FAA toxicology testing of specimens from the pilot revealed the following volatile concentrations: 44 micrograms per milliliter(ug/ml, ug/g) of Acetaminophen was detected in urine. 30 (ug/ml, ug/g) Salicylate was detected in urine.

The Director of Quality Control for the FAA Toxicology and Accident Research Laboratory

stated that acetaminophen is taken for reducing fever or headaches. Volatile concentrations of 10 to 20 (ug/ml, ug/g) of acetaminophen detected in body fluids is considered normal. Toxicity occurs at 150 (ug/ml, ug/g). Acetaminophen can be purchased over-the-counter without a doctor's prescription. Salicylate is a by-product of aspirin. When aspirin breaks down in the body, salicylate is produced. Volatile concentrations of 30 (ug/ml, ug/g) of salicylate detected in body fluids is considered normal. Medications which break down into salicylate can also be purchased over-the-counter without a prescription.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	**Age:**	66,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	December 14, 1982
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	21000 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Good	**Registration:**	N234Q
Model/Series:	VELOCITY VELOCITY	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	**Serial Number:**	DMO 82
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	2300 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		**Engine Manufacturer:**	Lycoming
ELT:		**Engine Model/Series:**	IO-360
Registered Owner:	MARVIN F. GOOD	**Rated Power:**	200 Horsepower
Operator:	DOUGLAS C. DUFRENSE	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	None
Operator Does Business As:		**Operator Designator Code:**	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	DTW ,640 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	10 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	17:56 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	225°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	**Visibility**	7 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 2800 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	19 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	20°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	8°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Light - None - Rain		
Departure Point:	UNKNOWN	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:		**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	00:00 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class B

Airport Information

Airport:		**Runway Surface Type:**	
Airport Elevation:		**Runway Surface Condition:**	
Runway Used:	0	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:		**VFR Approach/Landing:**	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	42.229064,-83.389877(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Bowling, David
Additional Participating Persons:	MARVIN V SOLVBERG; BELLEVILLE , MI
Original Publish Date:	October 30, 1998
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=10856