



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	CLAREMORE, Oklahoma	Accident Number:	FTW91FA085
Date & Time:	May 25, 1991, 11:15 Local	Registration:	N3609K
Aircraft:	PIPER J3C-65	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

THE INSTRUCTOR PILOT AND DUAL STUDENT WERE PRACTICING TOUCH AND GO LANDINGS FOR THE SPANISH FOREIGN NATIONAL'S TAIL-DRAGGER TRANSITION PRIOR TO STARTING AGRICULTURAL SPRAY SCHOOL. THEY DEPARTED THE AIRPORT AND WERE OBSERVED TO BE MANEUVERING AT LOW LEVEL APPROXIMATELY THREE STATUTE MILES TO THE SOUTHEAST. THE AIRCRAFT'S RIGHT WING LEADING EDGE STRUCK THE UPPER BRANCHES OF A 35 FOOT HIGH PECAN TREE. PORTIONS OF THE RIGHT WING AND TREE BRANCHES WERE LOCATED BELOW THE TREE AND ALONG THE FLIGHT PATH. THE FUEL TANK RUPTURED UPON GROUND IMPACT AND A POST-IMPACT FIRE CONSUMED THE AIRCRAFT. NO PRE-IMPACT MECHANICAL FAILURES OR MALFUNCTIONS TO THE AIRFRAME OR THE POWERPLANT WERE FOUND.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE INSTRUCTOR PILOT (PIC) DID NOT MAINTAIN CLEARANCE FROM OBSTACLES DURING THE MANEUVER.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. OBJECT - TREE(S)
2. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND(CFI)

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Occurrence #3: FIRE/EXPLOSION
Phase of Operation: OTHER

Findings

3. FUEL SYSTEM, TANK - RUPTURED

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	24, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 28, 1991
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1750 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N3609K
Model/Series:	J3C-65 J3C-65	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:		Serial Number:	22299
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 23, 1991 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1220 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	5 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3446 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	CONTINENTAL
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	A-65-8
Registered Owner:	SAM RIGGS	Rated Power:	65 Horsepower
Operator:	SAM RIGGS	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	SAM RIGGS FLYING SERVICE, INC.	Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2000 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 25000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	190°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	25°C / 19°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:		Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	11:05 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

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

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	On-ground
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	36.310543,-95.610359(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Wall, O.

Additional Participating Persons: B. MCCLUNE; OKLAHOMA CITY , OK

Original Publish Date: February 8, 1993

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=23263>

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).