



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Location: | AVALON, California | Accident Number: | LAX97FAMS2 |
| Date & Time: | February 11, 1997, 15:20 Local | Registration: | N8436X |
| Aircraft: | Piper PA-28-161 | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 1 Fatal |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

According to a friend, the owner/pilot went on a whale watching/spotting flight, and when the aircraft failed to return by a scheduled time, a search was initiated. The aircraft was determined to have landed at Santa Catalina Island. Radar data was obtained for the approximate time of departure. A VFR transponder code, assumed to be the accident aircraft, was tracked after departure from the island. At 1519:19 radar contact was lost over the water. A search by the Coast Guard was unsuccessful. The aircraft was presumed to have crashed in ocean waters near Avalon, CA; pilot injury was presumed to have been fatal.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: undetermined.

Findings

Occurrence #1: MISSING AIRCRAFT
Phase of Operation: UNKNOWN

Findings

1. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Factual Information

On February 11, 1997, about 1520 hours Pacific standard time, a Piper PA-28-161, N8436X, is presumed to have crashed into the Pacific Ocean while on a whale watching excursion. The pilot is presumed to have been fatally injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the personal flight and no flight plan was filed. When the aircraft failed to return to the home base by 1500, a concerned party notified authorities. After determining that the aircraft had landed at Catalina Airport, Avalon, California, radar data was obtained. The approximate departure time was obtained from the unicom radio operator at Avalon. A transponder code of 1200 was tracked after departure from Avalon. The last recorded radar contact was at 1519:19 in the area of the Oceanside VOR on the 263 degree radial about 24.8 miles.

A search of the area between Avalon and the coastline by the U.S. Coast Guard had negative results.

Pilot Information

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 51,U |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Single-engine land | Seat Occupied: | Unknown |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | None | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | None | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | None | Toxicology Performed: | No |
| Medical Certification: | Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim | Last FAA Medical Exam: | February 20, 1996 |
| Occupational Pilot: | UNK | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 100 hours (Total, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Piper | Registration: | N8436X |
| Model/Series: | PA-28-161 PA-28-161 | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 28-8116322 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Tricycle | Seats: | 4 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | Unknown | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 2325 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | Lycoming |
| ELT: | | Engine Model/Series: | O-320 |
| Registered Owner: | RONALD B. TRENTON | Rated Power: | 160 Horsepower |
| Operator: | | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Does Business As: | | Operator Designator Code: | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | KMY ,423 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 55 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 15:48 Local | Direction from Accident Site: | 120° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Clear | Visibility | 10 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 11 knots / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 260° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | 30 inches Hg | Temperature/Dew Point: | 16°C / 8°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | , CA (AVX) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | SAN DIEGO , CA (MYF) | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 15:15 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Airport Information

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

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | | Aircraft Fire: | Unknown |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | Unknown |
| Total Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Latitude, Longitude: | 33.380031,-118.450065(est) |

Administrative Information

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|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Petterson, George |
| Additional Participating Persons: | TYRONE PARK; SAN DIEGO , CA |
| Original Publish Date: | October 31, 1997 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class |
| Note: | |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29637 |

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