



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	BELZONI, Mississippi	Accident Number:	ATL96FA027
Date & Time:	December 26, 1995, 15:30 Local	Registration:	N3615K
Aircraft:	Piper J-3-C65	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

A witness saw the airplane as it was maneuvering in the vicinity of the accident site. The airplane was then observed to enter a spin and disappear behind trees, where it impacted in a plowed field. Examination of the airplane failed to disclose a mechanical problem. There was evidence that the airplane impacted the ground in a stalled attitude. Both wing assemblies sustained aft crushing damage to the leading edges. The student pilot's medical certificate was dated 8/11/93. No pilot flight logs were recovered for examination.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: failure of the student pilot to maintain adequate airspeed, while maneuvering, which resulted in a stall/spin and subsequent collision with the ground.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. MANEUVER - PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 2. (C) AIRSPEED - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (C) STALL/SPIN - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On December 26, 1995, at approximately 1530 central standard time, a Piper J-3-C65, N3615K, collided with the ground while maneuvering near Belzoni, Mississippi. The personal flight operated under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91 with no flight plan filed. Visual weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The aircraft sustained substantial damage; the two student pilots were fatally injured. The flight departed a private airstrip in Belzoni, at approximately 1400 hours.

Reportedly, an eyewitness observed the airplane as it maneuvered above the trees, and as it subsequently entered a spin. After the airplane completed two turns, it disappeared below the tree tops. Several minutes later, the property owner located the aircraft wreckage in a freshly plowed field.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Information on the pilot is included in this report on page 3 of the factual report under the data field labeled "First Pilot Information". A review of the student pilot's medical records disclosed that, on August 11, 1993, he had been issued a student pilot's certificate with the restriction, "valid for student pilot purposes only". According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the student pilot will not be allowed to solo until he has completed a medical flight test with a Flight Standard District Office. There was no record of the student pilot accomplishing a medical flight test for the lack of depth perception described in the medical restriction. The medical record also disclosed that the student pilot's last medical certificate was issued on August 11, 1993 (see attached student pilot's medical information).

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Information on the airplane is included in this report on page 2 of the factual report under the data field labeled "Aircraft Information". The aircraft maintenance records were not recovered for examination. According to the previous owner, N3615K was sold to Mr.T.A.Tharp in 1987. FAA records still reflect the previous owner.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

Visual weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. Weather information is contained in this report on page 3 of the factual report under the data field labeled "Weather Information".

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

Examination of the accident site revealed that the airplane rested with the engine and propeller assemblies buried several inches into the ground. All wreckage debris was located in the immediate vicinity of the ground impact. Both wings sustained ground impact damage along the leading edges. All flight controls were attached to the airframe, and all control cables were attached to the respective control surfaces.

The propeller assembly was attached to the engine at the accident site. The propeller blade tips sustained chordwise damage along the leading edges. Ignition sparks were generated when the engine magnetos were rotated during the engine examination. Powertrain continuity was also established during the engine examination.

Examination of the airframe disclosed that the cockpit and passenger areas were buckled and displaced aft from their normally installed positions. Both seat assemblies were also displaced aft and were dislodged from their respective attach points. The airframe and engine examinations failed to disclose a mechanical malfunction or a component failure.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

On December 26, 1995, the postmortem examination on the pilot was conducted by Dr. Steve Haynes at the Rankin County Morgue in Pearl Mississippi. The toxicological examination was negative for drugs and alcohol.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The wreckage was released to Mr. Rick Stevens, of Isola, Mississippi.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Student	Age:	21, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Expired	Last FAA Medical Exam:	August 11, 1993
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	200 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N3615K
Model/Series:	J-3-C65 J-3-C65	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	22305
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1220 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	C-85-12
Registered Owner:	A. D. THARP	Rated Power:	85 Horsepower
Operator:	THOMAS A. THARP	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:	GWO ,155 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	30 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:51 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	40°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	20000 ft AGL	Visibility	7 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	240°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	5°C / -2°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	ISOLA , MS (NONE)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	14:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

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:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	33.25922,-90.590927(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Powell, Phillip
Additional Participating Persons:	CHARLES WHITTINGTON; JACKSON , MS
Original Publish Date:	October 4, 1996
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=3640

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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](#).