



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	BENTON, Tennessee	<b>Accident Number:</b>	MIA97LA101
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	March 20, 1997, 14:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N33WP
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Schweizer                      SGS 1-26E	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

While soaring along a ridge the pilot descended the glider to about 20 feet above the trees. As he made a turn away from the ridge the glider encountered heavy sink and descended. A wing tip caught a tree and the glider spun around and nosed into the trees where it came to rest.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The failure of the pilot to maintain altitude and clearance from the trees on a ridge line.

## Findings

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

### Findings

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

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Occurrence #2: MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

## Factual Information

On March 20, 1997, about 1430 eastern standard time, a Schweizer SGS 1-26E, N33WP, registered to a private person, crashed while gliding near Benton, Tennessee, while on a Title 14 CFR Part 91 personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and no flight plan was filed. The aircraft received substantial damage and the private-rated pilot was not injured. The flight originated from Benton, Tennessee, the same day, about 1345.

The pilot stated he received a tow to 3,000 feet. After he released, he made passes back and forth along a ridge line for about 40 minutes. The wind on the ridge decreased during this time and he elected to head north back toward the valley and the gliderport. He was about 20 feet above the ridge and as he turned toward the valley he encountered sinking air. The glider descended and the a wing tip caught a tree. The glider spun around and nosed down into the trees. The glider came to rest nose down in the trees, about 20 feet off the ground. The pilot climbed down and was rescued.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	61, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Front
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Glider	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Unknown Unknown	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	397 hours (Total, all aircraft), 95 hours (Total, this make and model), 360 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Schweizer	<b>Registration:</b>	N33WP
<b>Model/Series:</b>	SGS 1-26E SGS 1-26E	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Glider
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	638
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Ski/wheel	<b>Seats:</b>	1
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	August 21, 1996 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	800 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	50 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	Unknown
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	611 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	
<b>ELT:</b>	Not installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	FRANK R. TROWBRIDGE III	<b>Rated Power:</b>	
<b>Operator:</b>	WENDYLENE, INC.	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>	CHILHOWEE GLIDER PORT	<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	CHA ,682 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	40 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	14:53 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	200°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Clear	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	/	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	0°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	29 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	17°C / 6°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	(92A )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	13:50 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	0	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	35.170814,-84.650833(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Kennedy, Jeffrey
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	BRIAN SWORD; NASHVILLE , TN
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	August 25, 1997
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=38231">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=38231</a>

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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](#).