



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	MOUNTAIN HOME, Idaho	Accident Number:	SEA94FA034
Date & Time:	November 22, 1993, 01:11 Local	Registration:	N84PM
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-46-310P	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE PILOT HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH 'LEWD AND LASCIVIOUS CONDUCT WITH A MINOR.' HE WAS JAILED ON FRIDAY & RELEASED ON BOND ON SATURDAY. DURING A MEETING WITH A FRIEND IN THE PILOT'S CAR ON SUNDAY EVENING, HE WAS DRINKING BEER. THE FRIEND SAID THE PILOT MADE COMMENTS REFERRING TO INTENTIONALLY CRASHING THE AIRCRAFT & THAT 'HE DIDN'T WANT TO DIE, BUT DIDN'T KNOW OF ANY OTHER WAY.' HE HAD A GUN IN THE CAR & TOLD THE FRIEND 'DON'T CALL THE POLICE OR I'LL KILL MYSELF SOONER.' THE PILOT DEPARTED TWIN FALLS AT ABOUT 2230 ON SUNDAY NIGHT IN HIS PA-46. HE FLEW TO BOISE, ID (VIA ELY, NV) BEFORE TURNING BACK TOWARD TWIN FALLS. AFTER PASSING OVER BOISE, INTERMITTENT RADIO CONTACT WAS MADE BETWEEN THE AIRPLANE & APPROACH CONTROL. RADAR VECTORS & DESCENT WERE ISSUED. RADAR CONTACT WAS LOST DURING DESCENT & PILOT ANNOUNCED DESCENDING THRU 11,000'; 38 SEC LATER, HE REPORTED AT 6000'. GROUND IMPACT WAS AT 4650'. TOXICOLOGY TESTS OF THE PILOT'S LUNG & MUSCLE TISSUE SHOWED AN ALCOHOL LEVEL OF 175 & 117 MG/DL (0.175% & 0.117%). NO PREIMPACT FAILURE OF THE AIRCRAFT WAS FOUND.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S INTENTIONAL SUICIDE AND IMPAIRMENT FROM CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT

Findings

1. LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. DESCENT - INITIATED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) SUICIDE - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) IMPAIRMENT(ALCOHOL) - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. ANXIETY/APPREHENSION - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On November 22, 1993, at 0111 mountain standard time, a Piper PA-46-310P, N84PM, registered to and being flown by Phillip G. Aslett, a certificated private, instrument-rated pilot, was destroyed when the aircraft collided with terrain during an uncontrolled descent ten nautical miles north of Mountain Home, Idaho. The pilot was fatally injured. Variable dark night meteorological conditions prevailed in southwestern Idaho at the time of the accident, and no flight plan had been filed. The personal flight was to have been operated in accordance with the requirements set forth in 14CFR91.

Mr. Dick Reeder, owner of Reeder Flying Services, a fixed based operator at the Twin Falls Airport, was interviewed by telephone on the evening of November 23, 1994. Mr. Reeder reported that on the evening of November 21st, he was at home sitting outdoors, located approximately two miles northeast of the Twin Falls Airport. He stated that he heard a sound similar to an abrupt and rapid power application for a departing aircraft. He reported observing white strobe lights from a departing aircraft heading initially westbound, then turning north and circling over the airport. The lights then proceeded south away from Twin Falls. Mr. Reeder's estimate of the time of this event was 2230 hours.

The Salt Lake Air Route Traffic Control Center's (ARTCC) first radar target associated with the aircraft was at 2240:22, and showed the aircraft climbing through 16,700 feet mean sea level (msl) at a location approximately 24 nautical miles (nm) south-southeast of the Twin Falls Airport.

The aircraft's radar target was observed to climb to an altitude of approximately 25,000 feet MSL, and proceed directly toward the Ely airport VOR/DME at Ely, Nevada. At approximately 2345, the target was observed to make a course change approximately 13 nm north of Ely and proceed toward Boise, Idaho.

At 0026:01 (November 22, 1993), Salt Lake ARTCC received a radio transmission on frequency 121.5 MHz consisting of only "Hello." Nineteen seconds later, a second transmission was received consisting of "Salt Lake Center" followed 23 seconds later by a transmission consisting of "Salt Lake Center Malibu-." Two final unintelligible transmissions were received by the center at 0049:24 and 0049:28 hours. Attempts by the Salt Lake ARTCC facility to contact the aircraft were unanswered.

At 0050:05, Salt Lake ARTCC contacted Boise Approach Control via landline and requested they attempt to contact the target aircraft on 121.5 MHz as the aircraft was approaching Boise. The radar target was tracked proceeding north-northwesterly until passing overhead

the Boise VORTAC at approximately 0100 hours, at which time a 130 degree right turn was accomplished, placing the target on a track direct to the Twin Falls Airport (refer to FAA produced Flight Path Charts I & II).

Coordination continued between the two facilities. At 0100:38, Boise approach requested the aircraft, whose transponder code was 1200, to "ident" and at 0100:54, Salt Lake ARTCC observed an ident from the aircraft. At 0101:56, Boise approach requested the aircraft change its squawk (transponder code) to 0306 and ident. At 0102:37, Salt Lake ARTCC advised Boise approach that the aircraft's altitude was 23,100 feet and at 0103:04, an ident on the 0306 code was received.

The altitude readout on the radar data indicated the aircraft was at 16,800 feet MSL at 0105:05 hours. At 0106:35, Boise approach inquired "-if you're IFR qualified and would like vectors inbound ident." An ident was received shortly thereafter and a right turn to 280 degrees and descent to 8,000 feet was issued by the Boise controller.

Radar data indicates that the aircraft continued to track toward Twin Falls. Repeated instructions to turn and descend were issued by Boise approach. At 0108:21, the first radio transmission to Boise was received, when the pilot radioed "two eight zero, eight thousand, Malibu eight four papa mike." The aircraft's radar altitude readout was approximately 16,400 feet MSL at this time.

The altitude readout of 16,400 feet msl continued until the 0109:21 target, where the altitude readout was dropped. Immediately thereafter the Salt Lake ARTCC reported that the aircraft target "went into coast mode" (refer to Attachment RD- I).

At 0109:54, after a query from the Boise approach controller, the pilot of 84PM responded, "Malibu eight four papa mike, I read you loud and clear, eleven thousand feet and descending."

The last radio transmission from the pilot of 84PM was received at 0110:32 and consisted of the statement "-papa mike, we're six thousand feet" (1,350 feet above the ground impact site). Refer to Attachments CT-I and CT-II.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Three days prior to the accident, on Friday, November 19, 1993, at approximately 1715, Phillip Aslett, (a member of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints), was arrested by Detective Sergeant K. C. Dudley, of the Twin Falls Police Department, on a charge of "lewd and lascivious conduct with a minor." The charges stemmed from an interview between Detective Sergeant K. C. Dudley, of the Twin Falls Police department, and the victim, a 17 year old male who reported that "he had been sexually molested by Phil Aslett at least 30 times over the previous three to four years."

Pilot Aslett was married and the father of four children, the eldest of whom was acquainted

with the victim. He was transported to the Twin Falls jail and remained there overnight. The following day, pilot Aslett was released on \$25,000 bond (refer to Twin Falls Police Department Case number 93-05588). According to pilot Aslett's sister, he spent the night (November 20th) at his parents' residence, rather than at his residence with his wife, as "he couldn't be around his kids."

On Sunday morning (November 21st), pilot Aslett met, by pre- arrangement, with Todd Coates, a personal friend. Todd Coates was interviewed by Sheriff Rick Layher, and reported that "during the conversation (Sunday morning) Phillip told him that if things got to(o) rough he would choose his family over himself" and that "even if he got off (won the case) he would lose."

On Sunday (November 21st), Mr. Aslett met with Gloria Johnson, a personal friend, at his office. Ms. Johnson reported to Sheriff Layher that "Phillip talked about the charges that had been filed against him and was very upset about it" and that they both left in the early afternoon.

Later on the same day, pilot Aslett met with Andy Lyda, another personal friend. Andy Lyda reported to Sheriff Layher that "they went driving around" and that during this time "Phillip was crying and talking about the charges" and that "Phillip was upset because he didn't want to go to jail." He also reported that "Phillip was making comments like 'I might take my airplane towards Boise and crash in the mountains'" and that pilot Aslett was consuming beer during their meeting.

Additionally, he reported that "Phillip told him he hadn't drank for a long time but he was drinking tonight because he had to go through with this" and that "Phillip told him that he wanted to live, he didn't want to die but that he didn't know of any other way."

Mr. Lyda reported that while driving around with pilot Aslett, there was a .22 caliber pistol out on the seat or on the dash and that when they parted "Phillip told him "Don't call the police or I'll kill myself sooner".

Mr. Lyda also reported that "Phillip had a notebook with him" and that the notebook contained "individual letters to his wife and each of his children." He stated that "Phillip made it sound like it was for his family if he went to jail but it was if he committed suicide." Mr. Lyda further reported that "it wouldn't look like a suicide" and that "he wanted (it) to look like an accident" (refer to attached Elmore County Sheriff's Office report).

Mr. Jay Wilcox, the father of the victim, was interviewed by Sheriff Layher and reported that pilot Aslett called his residence three time between approximately 2230 and 2315 hours on Sunday night (November 21st) asking to speak with his son. Pilot Aslett spoke to Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox, but was not allowed to talk to their son. Mr. Wilcox reported that "Phillip sounded drunk and his speech was slurred."

Pilot Aslett's wife reported to Sheriff Layher that her husband was "getting ready for his business meeting in Boise Monday" and that "he would be back in Twin Falls at noon for his arraignment."

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Piper PA-46-310P "Malibu", serial number 46-8408004, was manufactured in 1984 and purchased by pilot Aslett in October of 1990. The aircraft was equipped with an autopilot. Aircraft records showed that N84PM had accrued a total of 1223.7 hours at the time of the last annual/100 hour inspection on November 9, 1993. The last record of the aircraft being fueled for November 11, 1994, with 44.5 gallons of 100 low lead aviation fuel.

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The ground impact site was determined by a Trimble hand-held global positioning system to be 43 degrees 17.24 minutes north latitude and 115 degrees 35.26 minutes west longitude, at an elevation of approximately 4,650 feet msl (refer to Long Tom Reservoir 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle, CHART I). The terrain at the accident site was characteristic of gently rolling, sage-covered hills. Several inches of fresh, dry snow had fallen on the crash site during the time following the accident, but prior to the on-site examination.

The first evidence of impact was a shallow trough, oriented along a 056/236 degree magnetic bearing. At the southwest end of this trough, small fragments of red glass were found mixed with the soil. A large, shallow impact crater containing small fragments of clear plexiglass was observed approximately 24 feet northeast of the glass fragments (refer to photograph 01). A single propeller blade was observed lying on the ground approximately 40 feet northeast of the glass fragments (refer to photograph 02). The remaining propeller blade was observed approximately 95 feet northeast of the glass fragments (refer to photograph 03). The aircraft was fragmented and broken into small, lightweight pieces, and the wreckage was scattered over a distance of approximately 360 feet, beginning with the previously described red glass fragments and concluding with the remains of the engine (refer to DIAGRAM I). The largest piece of wreckage was a section of the aft right rear fuselage located slightly southeast of the wreckage distribution track (refer to photograph 04).

The left horizontal stabilizer, left elevator and the entire elevator trim tab were located slightly northwest of the ground track (refer to photographs 05/06). Major portions of both the left and right wings were located slightly further northeast and to the northwest of the ground track. The left wing displayed compressive deformation and upward bending from root to tip (refer to photographs 07/08). The right wing displayed lesser damage (refer to photographs 09/10). Numerous sections of left and right flaps were observed scattered throughout the wreckage distribution track.

The vertical stabilizer and rudder panel, along with the aft pressure bulkhead, was observed along the 056 degree magnetic bearing line and approximately 260 feet northeast of the red

glass fragments. The right horizontal stabilizer was partially attached to the remains of the tailcone assembly (refer to photographs 11 through 13). The remaining elevator control surface was located nearby (refer to photograph 14).

Approximately 360 feet northeast of the red glass fragments, the remains of the engine were located against a sage bush (refer to photograph 15). The engine assembly was observed to have been stripped of virtually all of its cylinders and one of the six pistons was absent (refer to photograph 16). The remaining piston was found lying in the snow a short distance from the main engine assembly (refer to photograph 17).

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Post mortem examination of pilot Aslett was conducted by Frank A. Roberts, M.D., Pathology Services, P.A., St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Boise, Idaho, on November 23, 1993.

Toxicological evaluation of specimens received from the accident site was conducted by the FAA's Toxicology and Accident Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The evaluation revealed 0.175% and 0.117% ethanol detected in lung and muscle tissue respectively (refer to attached report).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On site examination of the aircraft was conducted on November 23, 1994. The wreckage was verbally released to Mr. Craig Karel of Snake River Aircraft for the purposes of recovery on the same date. The wreckage was formally released to Mr. Tracy Barrus, Rosemurgy & Company, on November 29, 1993 (refer to attached NTSB Form 6120.15).

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	45, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
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 3 Expired	Last FAA Medical Exam:	April 22, 1988
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1915 hours (Total, all aircraft), 457 hours (Total, this make and model), 1800 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N84PM
Model/Series:	PA-46-310P PA-46-310P	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	46-8408004
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	November 9, 1993 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4100 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	CONTINENTAL
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TSIO-520-BE
Registered Owner:	ASLETT, PHILLIP, G.	Rated Power:	310 Horsepower
Operator:	ASLETT, PHILLIP, G.	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:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MUO ,2996 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	18 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	00:55 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	205°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	30 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 12000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/ None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	6°C / -11°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	TWIN FALLS (TWF)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	22:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/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:	43.359577,-115.519927(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): McCreary, Steven

Additional Participating Persons: ROBERT NIELD; BOISE , ID

Original Publish Date: January 11, 1995

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=41788>

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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](#).