



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location: Jerome, Arizona Accident Number: LAX03LA175

Date & Time: May 31, 2003, 07:20 Local Registration: N111BM

Aircraft: Gray Jerry Kitfox Aircraft Damage: Destroyed

Defining Event: 2 Fatal

Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General aviation - Personal

Analysis

The amateur-built, experimental single-engine airplane collided with terrain following a loss of control while maneuvering. According to a witness, the airplane was flying low and slow, about 200 to 300 feet above ground level below a canyon ridge line. It flew up the canyon, and as it approached rising terrain, engine power was increased. The airplane attempted to climb above the canyon, then "winged over" and dived, nose first, into the mountainside. A post accident examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of pre-impact anomalies to the airframe or engine.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain adequate clearance/altitude from rising terrain, and his failure to maintain control of the airplane while maneuvering, which resulted in an uncontrolled descent and in-flight collision with terrain.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. TERRAIN CONDITION - RISING

2. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

3. LOW ALTITUDE FLIGHT/MANEUVER - PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND

4. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

5. TERRAIN CONDITION - RISING

6. TERRAIN CONDITION - BLIND/BOX CANYON

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Factual Information

On May 31, 2003, at 0720 mountain standard time, an amateur-built experimental Gray Kitfox 5 single-engine airplane, N111BM, collided with terrain while maneuvering in the vicinity of Jerome, Arizona. The airplane was owned and operated by the pilot under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. The private pilot and passenger were fatally injured; the airplane was destroyed. The local personal flight departed Cottonwood Airport (P52), Cottonwood, Arizona about 0715. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and a visual flight plan had not been filed.

An acquaintance of both the pilot and passenger, reported to a Yavapai County detective that he had introduced them earlier that morning. The purpose of the flight was to take the passenger for a short, approximately 30-minute, local area flight. He stated that the men met at the airport about 0700. He watched the plane takeoff with the pilot in the right seat. He noted that the engine sounded normal during takeoff.

Officers from the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office interviewed witnesses. One witness, a local firefighter, reported that he saw the airplane flying below a ridgeline. The airplane was flying low and slow at about 200 to 300 feet above ground level (agl). It flew up a canyon, and as it approached a hill, it attempted to increase power. The airplane attempted to climb out, above the canyon, "winged over", and dived, nose first, into the mountainside. He did not hear any abnormalities with the engine. Another witness, the local Mayor, reported hearing the airplane crash. He was the first person on-scene and when he arrived the airplane was engulfed in flames.

A Deputy reported the accident location as: 34 degrees 45.30 minutes north latitude and 112 degrees 06.37 minutes west longitude.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

A review of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) airman records revealed the pilot held a private pilot certificate with an airplane single-engine land rating. He was issued a third-class medical certificate on September 25, 2002, with no limitations. According to the last medical certificate application, the pilot reported having accumulated a total of 1000 hours of flight time. The pilot's logbook was not recovered during the investigation.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

The Yavapai County Office of the Medical Examiner completed an autopsy and reported cause of death blunt force trauma of the torso. The FAA Toxicology and Accident Research Laboratory performed toxicological testing of specimens of the pilot. The results of the analysis were negative for carbon monoxide, cyanide, volatiles, and tested drugs.

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TESTS AND RESEARCH

The wreckage was transported to Air Transport, Phoenix, Arizona. The wreckage was examined by an Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector and an engine manufacturer's representative on October 21, 2003. He reported that a post accident fire had consumed the airframe structure and most engine accessories. The engine manufacturers technical representative examined the engine under the supervision of the FAA. The inspector reported that there was no evidence found of mechanical failure or malfunction of the engine. Engine and airframe logbooks were not located.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	63,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medicalno waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 25, 2002
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1000 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

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Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Gray Jerry	Registration:	N111BM
Model/Series:	Kitfox	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	S97120130
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Continuous airworthiness	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1550 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	0-235-L2C
Registered Owner:	William I Mosley	Rated Power:	115 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PRC,5045 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	17 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	06:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	248°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 10000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	210°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.12 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	18°C / 9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipit	ation	
Departure Point:	Cottonwood, AZ (P52)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Jerome, AZ	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

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Airport Information

Airport:	Cottonwood P52	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	3550 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	34.758335,-112.110275

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Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): McKenny, Van

Additional Participating George Bean; Federal Aviation Administration; Scottsdale, AZ Mark Platt; Lycoming; Van Nuys, CA

Original Publish Date: December 28, 2004

Last Revision Date:
Investigation Class: Class

Note:
Investigation Docket: https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=57115

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.

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