



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	HOBART, Indiana	Accident Number:	CHI93FAMS4
Date & Time:	June 25, 1993, 12:30 Local	Registration:	N5655M
Aircraft:	MOONEY M20K	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE AIRPLANE WAS OBSERVED DEPARTING IN LIGHT MIST BY THE AIRPORT MANAGER AND THREE OTHER PERSONS. THE AIRPLANE WAS OVERDUE AND A SEARCH WAS CONDUCTED BY THE CIVIL AIR PATROL AND THE U.S. COAST GUARD. THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF LAKE MICHIGAN AND SURROUNDING LAND MASS WAS SEARCHED WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS. APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE MISSING AIRPLANE'S DEPARTURE AN EMPLOYEE OF THE PILOT WAS DIRECTED BY THE PILOT TO CHANGE THE VACUUM PUMP. THE MECHANIC WAS NOT ABLE TO DO SO. THE MECHANIC STATED THE PILOT TOLD HIM HE HAD REMOVED THE PUMP LATER IN THE WEEK. NO EVIDENCE OF SUCH MAINTENANCE WAS FOUND DURING THE INVESTIGATION. PIECES OF AN AIRPLANE HAVE BEEN FOUND ALONG THE MICHIGAN LAKESHORE WHICH MATCH THE AIRPLANE'S INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR COLORS. THE PILOT IS PRESUMED DEAD.

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. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER
2. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Factual Information

On June 25, 1993, a Mooney M20K, N5655M, registered to Ronald E. Venema of Crown Point, Indiana, and piloted by an instrument rated private pilot, disappeared during a flight over Lake Michigan. The airplane departed in what a witness described as a light mist which had followed a heavy rain shower. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of departure. The 14 CFR Part 91 flight was not operating under a flight plan. The pilot is presumed to have received fatal injuries. The flight originated from Hobart, Indiana, at 1215 central daylight time.

Witnesses who observed N5655M depart stated that fog was approaching the airport from the Lake Michigan shoreline which is approximately five miles north. Both witnesses stated the airplane departed to the south after takeoff. One of the witnesses stated a thunderstorm had passed over the airport shortly before the departure. He said the thunderstorm had been moving southeast and was still visible when N5655M departed.

The Federal Aviation Administration Flight Service Station (FSS) located at Terre Haute, Indiana, stated that no weather briefing service was provided to N5655M. The FSS checked with other FSS facilities in states bordering Indiana regarding a possible weather briefing by the pilot of N5655M. The other FSS's responded negatively.

The Civil Air Patrol, a United States Air Force Auxiliary, conducted an air and ground search for the missing airplane with negative results. The search included the southern section of Lake Michigan. The U.S. Coast Guard conducted a search of the southern section of Lake Michigan with negative results.

The flight instructor who had flown with the missing pilot stated he had done so at the pilot's request for insurance purposes. The instructor was asked to appraise the pilot's flying habits and ability. He stated the pilot lacked discipline to do the appropriate pre-flight planning. He stated it was his opinion the pilot knew how to do it, but did not want to do it because it would take too much time. He said the pilot's basic flying skills were above average.

A family member stated the pilot had been talking of having a GPS radio navigation aid installed. She stated he may have been going to do that. A check of the avionics shops located within a 100 NM radius of Hobart, Indiana, revealed the pilot had not made arrangements with any of the shops for radio work on N5655M.

An interview with the pilot's son-in-law revealed he had flown with the pilot approximately one week prior to the missing flight's takeoff. He stated that the vacuum pump had failed during the flight that was conducted under night instrument meteorological conditions. According to the person contacted by the missing pilot regarding the failed vacuum pump the pilot told him

the airplane was a "...handful when flying without the gyros."

It has not been determined if a new pump had been installed on N5655M prior to June 25, 1993, departure. An interview was conducted with an Airframe and Powerplant mechanic who had been employed by the pilot's business. He stated he had been asked by the pilot to change the pump on the airplane because his instruments were not working. The mechanic stated the pump had approximately 30 hours on it at the time of failure. He stated he was told by the Hobart Airport manager that he could not do maintenance on the airplane. The mechanic stated he did not remove the pump; he replaced the cowl and left the airport after talking with the manager.

According to the mechanic, the pilot removed the pump at some point in time after his experience with the airport manager. He stated the pilot had told him that the person who sold him the airplane advised him to take the pump to a facility located near Hobart, Indiana. This facility was to give the pilot a new pump according to the mechanic. He stated he could not recall the facility's name or location. The mechanic confirmed the son-in-law's statement regarding the night flight in instrument meteorological conditions when the vacuum pump had failed.

Components of an airplane, believed to be N5655M have been found along the Lake Michigan shoreline between Michigan City, Indiana, and New Buffalo, Michigan. These components are: An oxygen bottle with the airplane's registration number hand printed on its exterior, a front seat with fabric matching that of N5655M's interior, sheet metal colored as N5655M that was identified as a portion of a Mooney aileron main spar, a section of the wing rib assembly, and a portion of the right hand aileron's top skin. The wing rib section and aileron skin were identified as Mooney airplane components. A briefcase containing the missing pilot's personal affects was found north of Michigan City, Indiana, along Lake Michigan's shore.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	55,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Unknown Unknown	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	MOONEY	Registration:	N5655M
Model/Series:	M20K M20K	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	25-0758
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2740 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	CONTINENTAL
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	TSIO-360-GB
Registered Owner:	RONALD E. VENEMA	Rated Power:	210 Horsepower
Operator:	RONALD E. VENEMA	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:	3HO ,644 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	12:15 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown / 900 ft AGL	Visibility	2 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 900 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	180°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	(3HO)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	UNKNOWN	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	12:15 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:	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	Unknown
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	41.53067,-87.260673(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Gattolin, Frank

Additional Participating Persons: WM. RENKEN; SOUTH BEND , IN

Original Publish Date: August 17, 1994

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=9186>

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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](#).