



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	ROBINSON, IL	<b>Accident Number:</b>	CHI98LA029
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	11/02/1997, 1730 CST	<b>Registration:</b>	N7890P
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-24-250	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

A witness observed the airplane in flight just before the accident occurred. He said that he saw the airplane fly south to north at a very low altitude before it disappeared. A minute later, the witness saw the airplane heading westbound. He watched the airplane until it disappeared behind some trees. The witness said that the weather was very rainy and windy, with very bad visibility. There were no witnesses to the airplane accident. The pilot was not instrument rated, and had logged no flight time in actual instrument weather conditions. The weather observation reported by the Flight Service Station at Terre Haute, Indiana (38 miles north-northeast of the accident site), on 11/2/97, at 1745 est (1645 cst), was few clouds at 2,400 feet above ground level (agl), a broken ceiling at 3,300 feet agl, an overcast ceiling at 5,000 feet agl, and rain showers.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's improper decision to continue flight into adverse weather conditions. The low ceiling and the heavy rain were factors.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - RAIN
3. (C) FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER - CONTINUED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. OBJECT - TREE(S)

## Factual Information

On November 2, 1997, at 1730 central standard time (cst), a Piper PA-24-250, N7890P, operated by a private pilot, was destroyed when while maneuvering close to the ground, the airplane's left wing struck a tree. The airplane subsequently rolled inverted and impacted the terrain, 10 miles north of Robinson, Illinois. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The personal flight was being conducted under 14 CFR Part 91. There was no flight plan on file. The pilot was fatally injured. The cross-country flight originated at Roanoke, Virginia, at 1520 eastern standard time (est), and was en route to Hannibal, Missouri.

At approximately 1720 cst, a witness heard the airplane approach at a very low altitude, traveling south to north. The witness observed the airplane continue to the north until it disappeared.

Approximately a minute later, the witness saw the airplane again, heading west. The witness observed the airplane until it disappeared behind some trees. The witness said that he did not hear the airplane crash or observe any fire. The witness described the weather at the time he saw the airplane as rainy and windy with very bad visibility.

There were no witnesses to the airplane accident.

The pilot's wife reported the airplane overdue on November 3, 1997. The wreckage was discovered by an individual who was taking soil samples in the field, on November 4, 1997, at 1450 cst.

The pilot was not instrument rated. The pilot's logbook indicated that as of October 31, 1997, he had logged a total flight time of 267.2 hours, all in single engine land airplanes. No flight time was logged in actual weather conditions.

The weather observation reported by the Flight Service Station at Terre Haute, Indiana (38 miles north-northeast of the accident site), on November 2, 1997, at 1745 est (1645 cst), was few clouds at 2,400 feet above ground level (agl), a broken ceiling at 3,300 feet agl, an overcast ceiling at 5,000 feet agl, and rain showers.

A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector examined the airplane wreckage at the accident site, on November 5, 1997. The main wreckage rested inverted on the edge of a corn field, approximately 200 yards from a tree line which lined the opposite edge of the field. One of the trees had broken limbs and branches approximately 50 feet up from the base of the trunk. A ground scar was observed in the corn field approximately 50 yards from the tree line. A five-foot long section of the left wing, the left aileron and the wingtip was located just before the ground scar. It was crushed inward at the leading edge. Pieces of the windscreen, top of the fuselage, engine cowling and one propeller blade were found in and around the ground scar. The propeller blade had broken off at the base. It showed torsional bending. Approximately 45 feet from the ground scar was the top half of the vertical stabilizer and rudder. It was bent aft and broken. Proceeding across the field and tracking to the main wreckage, were pieces of the instrument panel, flight instruments, the left outboard one-half of the left horizontal stabilizer and elevator, part of the engine cowling, the right horizontal stabilizer and elevator, and the inboard section of the left wing. Beginning 50 yards back from the main wreckage were scattered personal effects, the right horizontal stabilizer and elevator, and the tailcone. The main wreckage rested at the remains of a sheared tree trunk on the edge

of the corn field. Debris from the tree was inter-mixed with the wreckage. The main wreckage consisted of the right wing, the fuselage, the engine and remaining propeller blade. The fuselage was broken open and bent aft. The propeller blade showed torsional bending and tip curling. Flight control continuity was confirmed. No anomalies were revealed from the examination of the engine, engine controls or other airplane systems.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	43, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	Yes
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	07/30/1997
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	267 hours (Total, all aircraft), 33 hours (Total, this make and model), 227 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 64 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 26 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N7890P
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-24-250 PA-24-250	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	No
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	24-3119
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Retractable - Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	4
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	09/22/1997, Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	2900 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	33 Hours	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	3132 Hours	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-540-A1D5
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	GARY L. MAHSMAN	<b>Rated Power:</b>	250 lbs
<b>Operator:</b>	GARY L. MAHSMAN	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	HUF, 585 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	38 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	2245 CST	Direction from Accident Site:	55°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown / 0 ft agl	Visibility	3 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 3300 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	16 knots / 22 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	230°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	7°C / 3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	ROANOKE, VA (ROA)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	HANNIBAL, MO (HAE)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1520 EST	Type of Airspace:	Class E

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	DAVID C BOWLING	Report Date:	04/24/1998
Additional Participating Persons:	RUSS ATKINS; SPRING FIELD, IL		
Publish Date:			
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at <a href="mailto:pubinquiry@ntsb.gov">pubinquiry@ntsb.gov</a> , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <a href="http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/">http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/</a> .		

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The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).