

3/28/17 9:53 AM- v6 <https://close1d2.org/> History of some of the plane crashes at and related to 1d2 Canton-Plymouth Mettetal Airport. This has been going for years and the public doesn't realize how frequent and how fatal. See 1d2 [timeline / history](#) of events for more details.

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Clues sought in crash

■ The NTSB investigation of Saturday's plane crash in a Canton subdivision is under way as a student pilot and his flight instructor recover at University of Michigan Hospital.

Little is known about why a Cessna 150 sputtered out of control and crash landed in a Canton neighborhood early Saturday evening.

According to a pilot at Canton-Plymouth Mettetal Airport, flight instructor Philip Kahler, 26, and his student pilot Malcom Stinson, 41, were practicing takeoffs and landings for about 30 minutes prior to the crash about one mile south of the airport.

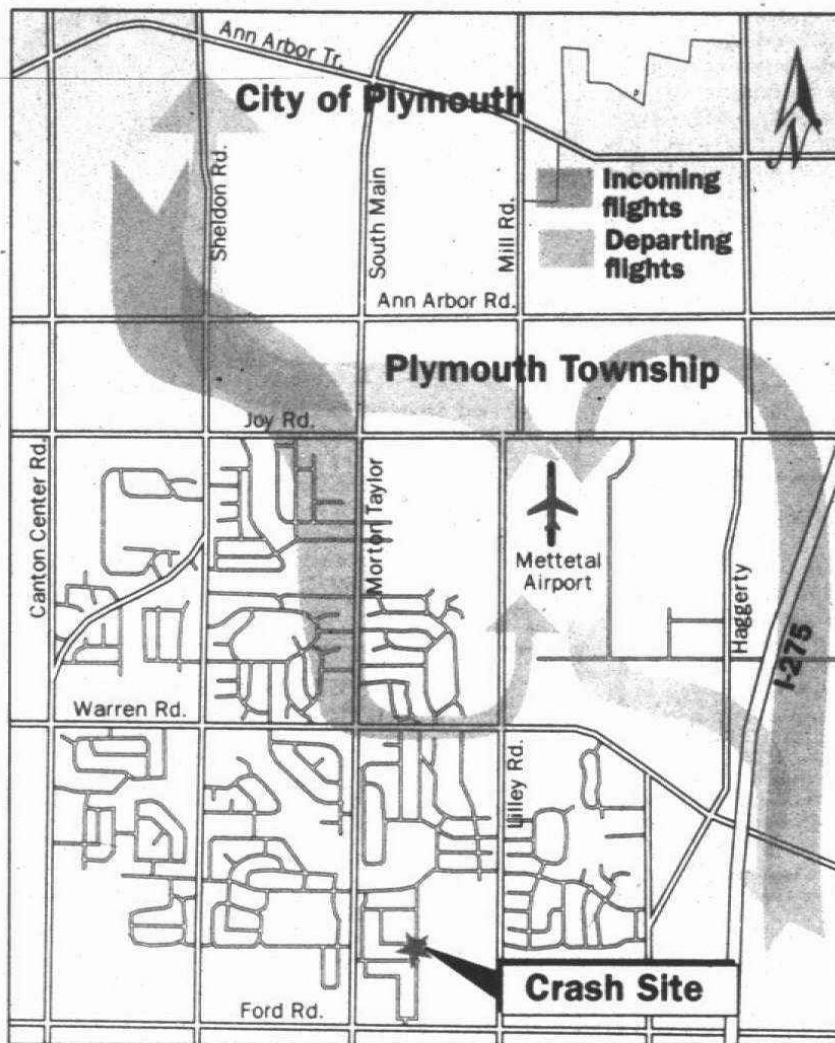
Residents unnerved, A3

"Eyewitnesses said it was going north to south, but I don't know why it would be," said one Mettetal pilot, who declined to be named. "I assume it was headed back to Willow Run, then had engine trouble and decided to come back here."

Kahler, of Belleville, was listed in good condition Wednesday at the University of Michigan Hospital after being trapped in the passenger seat of the Cessna's cockpit. He suffered from various burns, a severe leg injury and head injury.

The student pilot, Stinson, was listed in serious condition after suffering from burns and internal injuries. It is believed Stinson did have prior flying experience as a helicopter pilot in the military, said Steve Wilson of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

A spokesman at A Different Approach Flight School at Willow Run Airport said Stinson was a private helicopter pilot. Kahler has



HELEN FURCKAN / STAFF ARTIST

Flight patterns at Mettetal Airport

The neighborhood where the Cessna 150 crashed Saturday evening is nearly one mile south of where the airplane was to turn east to line up with the runway at Canton-Plymouth Mettetal Airport. The troubled Cessna reportedly was heading north to south. Speculation is that the Cessna was returning to its home base at Willow Run Airport, experienced engine trouble and doubled back toward Mettetal. Mettetal is a "left hand traffic" airport with one runway. Flight patterns are recommended, but not regulated by the FAA because the airport doesn't have a control tower. Suggested flight patterns avoid most



Aftermath: Neighbors and public safety officers take in the damage after a Cessna 150 crash landed in front of a home on Avon Street Saturday. Residents played a key role in rescuing the pilot and passenger.

Plane crash *from page A1*

been a flight training instructor for three years.)

Investigators from the FAA sifted through the wreckage this week to determine a cause for the crash. The findings will be turned over to the NTSB, which is expected to release a preliminary report in one week. It could take more than six months before a final report is made public, said Wilson.

Too populated?

Some residents and local officials have questioned whether Canton has become too populated to house the state-owned Canton-Plymouth Mettetal Airport. The issue first became controversial in 1992 when the state bought it, rescuing the airport from financial trouble.

At the time, residents were concerned about a future expansion at Mettetal, with state and federal money backing it. A citizens advisory committee was formed to oversee the airport operations and has met monthly ever since. Chairman Mark Merlanti declined comment regarding the crash.

"When the state bought it, I always said there was something else there. Still to this day I don't know what that is... Obviously, this is a sore subject for me," said Canton Township Supervisor Tom Yack.

A week before Saturday's airplane crash, Yack fired off a letter to Gov. John Engler, several state legislators and the state aeronautics board with a news clipping regarding a small Troy airport being sold to a private developer for an industrial site.

Yack said the state claimed it

bought Mettetal, and planned to buy others like it, because small recreational airports were becoming extinct. Why hadn't it saved the Troy airport? he asked in the letter.

"I'm sending another letter, but this time it will have a clipping (about the crash) from the front page of the Observer."

Randy Collier of the state Bureau of Aeronautics, a division under the Michigan Department of Transportation, did not return phone calls from the Observer. Collier is also liaison to Mettetal Airport.

Canton attorney Bryan Amann, a former Wayne County commissioner, sat on a committee in 1990 to redesign airspace for Detroit Metro and Willow Run airports. The FAA Technical Working Group looked at airspace around Mettetal, but only to ensure flight patterns didn't interfere with Metro's, he said.

Since Mettetal doesn't have a control tower, its flight patterns aren't regulated by the FAA. However, the airport suggests traffic patterns to pilots.

Ground radio operator

Pilots radio to Mettetal's Unicom desk for landing instructions. The ground radio operator gives information on the runway opening and weather conditions, said a pilot at Mettetal.

According to Mettetal pilots, there are suggested flight patterns that run north and south along I-275 and to the west of Morton-Taylor. To the east and west the traffic runs along an area south of Warren Road and the other side of the city of Ply-

mouth due to a "noise abatement."

"There's no legal basis for any municipality to have any binding regulation over (noise and flight patterns). If the city of Plymouth is being avoided, it shouldn't be receiving anything different than any other area," said Amann.

In 1997, Mettetal recorded 72,000 flight operations, according to the 1998 Michigan Airport Directory. Metro Airport had 496,000 operations and Willow Run had 153,590. More comparable to Mettetal, Grosse Ile Municipal Airport had 63,000 operations in 1997.

"There's always been safety issues with residents living around Mettetal. You can watch the planes coming in over Joy Road ... It's almost in a kamikaze-type fashion. If a truck comes through, it looks questionable as to whether its going to clear it," said Amann.

Ironically, Larry and Ronnie Sebeck looked at buying a new home east of Lilley Road, near Mettetal Airport, about 24 years ago.

"We walked out of the first model and saw a plane bunk to the left. Then, we walked out of the second model and saw the same thing. We decided we didn't want to live there," said Larry.

They decided to buy about one mile down the road on Avon Street where there was less air traffic.

On Saturday, the Sebecks' worst fear became reality when a Cessna 150 dropped from the sky on their front lawn. The propeller was 25 feet from their front door.

Witness: 'I'm sure they (kids) heard his screams'

The only sign that a Cessna 150 crashed on the front lawn of an Avon Street home in the Ford Road and Lilley area is a slightly tornup lawn, a burn mark on a driveway and a missing mailbox and post.

However, the tragedy is etched in many people's memories and likely won't be forgotten for some time.

"The thing that most concerns me is how the neighbors are going to handle the images that they saw," said resident Bob Loveland.

"As things calm down, people are going to realize some of things they saw are real hard to deal with. I'm concerned some of them with have problems down the road."

Canton Public Safety Director John Santomauro said police and firefighters will meet with residents 7 p.m. Friday at Miller Elementary School to review the events of the night and answer questions.

"I think its therapeutic to have the police come out and talk about what happened," he said.

Of course, police are not trained health professionals, Santomauro said. He suggested residents seek help through their health care provider if they are having difficulty sleeping or coping.

Most neighbors agreed that no one slept the night of the crash with the vivid events of the tragedy fresh on their mind.

■ Canton police and firefighters will meet with residents 7 p.m. Friday at Miller School to review events surrounding the crash and answer questions.

"Just knowing everyone went through the same thing, helps," said Michelle Loveland. "If someone sees a neighbor outside, others go out to talk about what happened. I think that helps a lot."

Residents rushed to the burning plane with garden hoses and fire extinguishers to douse the flames. Several of the residents with the help of police Officer Andy Kurry, who was the first officer to arrive at the scene, pulled flight instructor Philip Kahler, 26, from the passenger seat of the cockpit.

The student pilot, Malcom Stinson, 41, was trapped inside the cockpit and had to be rescued by Canton firefighters using the Jaws of Life. Firefighters Mike Caruso and Greg Kowalski worked on Stinson for several minutes to stabilize his condition while the pilot lay on the front lawn of Larry and Ronnie Sebuck's Avon Street home.

"He was literally burned in the cockpit. There were 5- to 10-year-old kids standing just feet away. I'm sure they saw this. I'm

sure they heard his screams," said Bob Loveland.

"I know every time I lay down I replay the course of events: Those people were severely injured. Some people brought kids down there. I'm worried about some of the kids. When you're a kid you think, 'cool' or 'wow,' then, later it wakes you up in the middle of the night. I'm sure a lot of them will be having nightmares."

The Sebucks said it's the "ifs" that keep them thinking about the tragedy.

"It was odd that we were both home at that time on a Saturday night and even more odd that we were both in the front of the house. I was upstairs in the bedroom ... (Larry) was in the front room, right over here, using the computer."

The two-seat single-engine airplane not only was stopped, but spun by its wing to the left by the Sebuck's mail post. The plane missed two parked cars in their driveway and came to a stop between a row of hedges on the front lawn and a tree on the other side of the sidewalk. The propeller was 25 feet away from their front door, said Larry.

"I'd like to see some recognition given to that pilot. I firmly believe that when he saw he was headed straight for our house, he nosed down," said Ronnie Sebuck.

"Thank you, God. That's all I got to say," she added.

Another plane crashes following Mettetal takeoff

By Teri Bonas
staff writer

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials are investigating the second case within a month of a plane crashing almost immediately after leaving Mettetal Airport.

A 27-year-old Westland man was uninjured when the single-engine two-seater plane he was piloting came down about 6 p.m. Monday.

In both crashes, pilots blamed engine

malfunction.

Scott Hebron attributed the crash Monday to a power failure in the plane's engine.

ACCORDING to Michigan State Police, the TailWing W&L came down about 400 feet from the airport's sole runway in a vacant field northeast of the airport. The Canton Township airport is near Lilley and Joy roads.

Damage was minor and limited pri-

marily to the plane's landing gear and propeller. Hebron estimated damage as under \$500.

He said the 17-year-old plane, owned by his father, was last flown two days before the crash.

Hebron, a quality control supervisor for Aero Marine Inc., a family-owned business, did not seek medical attention. He had X-rays taken a few hours later and they showed no sign of injury, he said.

The Westland man said he planned to

fly west from the airport on a pleasure trip when he took off.

HE SAID HE noticed the first sign of trouble as he was about three-quarters of the way down the runway.

The "engine quit" as he was about 100 feet off the ground, said state police. The engine briefly started up again as he circled back to the airport and landed in a nearby open field.

"I was planning to fly west and then come back when I realized the power

loss within seconds," Hebron said. "I tried to select the most desirable spot to land, one that wouldn't endanger life or property."

"I didn't have enough altitude to fly back to the airport," he added.

STATE POLICE said Monday's crash was less severe than the crash June 19 of a single-engine Cessna just north of the airport in the Gould Industrial Park.

Two persons of the four-member family riding in the plane were injured.

Pilot Stephen Jakabowski, an airplane broker from Lighthouse Pointe, Fla., suffered facial cuts. His wife was hospitalized for three days with a broken nose, a broken arm and cuts. Two Jakabowski children were not injured.

Jakabowski told FAA officials a failure in the plane's propeller forced the plane down about a half mile north of Mettetal.

The FAA is continuing to investigate that crash.

Interesting note that businesses are deterred from establishing development in the area due to the 1d2! This has been going on for years! Businesses do NOT want to be NEAR 1d2!

Roller rink plans dropped after crash

A local developer has scrapped plans to build a roller rink in Plymouth Township — near the site of a plane crash Monday night.

Woody Lynch, Plymouth developer and owner of A&J Construction Co., said feared "bad publicity" over his business venture and a presumed public "fear of flying" have caused him to build his rink elsewhere.

Lynch was to appear before the Plymouth Township Planning Commission Wednesday for conditional use approval for the site near Mettetal Airport. He said Wednesday he had taken

his "name off the agenda" following Monday's crash. (Related story on Page 1A).

He said he planned to build a 28,500-foot single-level roller rink on a five-acre site off Joy Road until "that damn thing came down at 5:55 p.m. Monday."

Lynch says he now plans to put the rink on another site in Canton Township, which he owns, even though he got Federal Aviation Administration approval for the Plymouth Township project.

"We found no problem with the application," said Bob DeRoeck, an airport engineer. "He had moved the location of the building so it wouldn't interfere with the air space."

The building plans were altered so that the proposed development would rest to the rear of the five-acre site rather than on its south-side, facing the airport.

"I've never tried to do anything that wasn't up to snuff," said Lynch, somewhat embittered. "I'm a gambler. And I don't want to gamble against the possibility of adverse conditions."

Plymouth car plates available

License plates reading "Plymouth Michigan" are available from the

Pilot avoids kids, dies in crash

5 die in state-connected plane crashes

By The Associated Press

At least five people with Michigan connections have died in small-plane accidents this week, including one man killed when he apparently maneuvered his falling plane away from a group of children, officials said.

In Jackson County's Summit Township, the single-engine plane crashed in a side yard between two houses about 6 p.m. Thursday, killing the pilot, a Jackson County dispatcher said.

The victim was identified as Samuel E. Gorzen, 57, of Jackson.

"There were kids playing in the yard, in a side street and across the street. I kind of think he knew and was trying to find a safer place to get it down. He went where there were no kids," said Leonard Coleman, who lives across the street from where the plane crashed.

The wreckage of another small plane and the bodies of the three people aboard were discovered Thursday in a wooded, swampy area near the airport in Grayling after a 20-hour search.

Pilot Bob Shirley, 68, of Livonia was taking passengers Tamara Behiry,

30, and her son, Brenton, 2 1-2, of Plymouth to visit relatives in Manistique on Saturday night, said Maj. Kay McLaughlin of the Civil Air Patrol's Lansing office.

The pilot left from Mettetal Airport in Plymouth and planned to refuel in Pellston, but the Cessna 172 never reached that stop, she said.

When the trio didn't return as scheduled Wednesday, relatives reported them missing.

The plane crashed in an area inaccessible by foot, McLaughlin said.

Near Oxley, Ark., on Wednesday, a Michigan pilot was killed when his single-engine plane crashed and burned in heavy fog Wednesday.

Dustin Ordway, 69, had residences in Old Mission, Mich., and in Conway, Ark., officials said. His body was discovered Thursday.

The crash happened at Brunner Mountain near Oxley in Searcy County.

In Oakland County about 2 p.m. Thursday near Pontiac, 32-year-old Phillip Wadsworth of Oakland County's Waterford Township flew his twin-engine eight-seater into the middle of Pontiac Lake.

A few hundred yards away,

schoolchildren were swimming and sunbathing on the lake's beach.

The Beechcraft King Air developed engine problems on its way to Oakland-Pontiac Airport.

"He did a great job putting the plane in the lake," said White Lake Township Police Chief Ronald Stephens. "Think what could have happened if he had crashed on the shore."

After crashing into the lake, Wadsworth, the sole occupant, climbed onto the plane's wing. Boaters pulled the plane within 30 feet of the beach, and Wadsworth jumped from the wing and swam ashore.

Near Lansing Thursday, a Toledo man trying to make an emergency landing at Davis Airport skidded past the sod runway, hit an embankment, flipped over Chandler Road, landed on a guard rail and then slid upside down into a ditch.

The 67-year-old pilot walked to the road and waited for help. The man, whose identity was not immediately released, suffered cuts and bruises in the mishap.

"This was a very fortunate man," DeWitt Township Police Officer Mark Lott said. "He went for quite a ride."

The Argus-Press, Owosso, Michigan, December 5, 1973

Wayne Man Injured in Plane Crash

WAYNE, Mich. (AP) — A Wayne County man was injured today when the twin-engine cargo plane he was piloting crashed in an open field west of nearby Mettetal Airport.

Wayne County sheriff's deputies said Dale Karnes, 27, of Van Buren Township, was in fair condition after officers removed him from his plane, where he was pinned in for nearly 20 minutes.

Officials said the plane apparently ran out of gas.

7 Injured When Plane Crashes Into Supermarket

Observer Staff Roundup

Seven persons were injured, but miraculously none was killed, when a twin engine plane crashed into the roof of the Farmer Jack supermarket Tuesday night in downtown Farmington.

A possible disaster was averted when police worked quickly to prevent the possibility of a fire from starting which could have set off a series of explosions and damaged surrounding buildings and persons.

Fortunately, few were in the supermarket when the plane crashed into the bread department near the front of the store located on Farmington Road just south of Grand Rier.

Injured were: a customer, two teenaged employes, and four passengers in the plane.

Those injured were: Mike Markovich, 30, of 29285 Point of Woods, Southfield; Bernard

Sloane, 24, of 10127 Eckles, Plymouth; Donald J. Vassel, of 32956 St. Martins, Livonia; David Delpina, of 36632 Richland, Livonia; Carl Roberts, 29, of 22508 Longacre, Farmington; Frank Staron, 16, of 28492 Shady Lane, Farmington; and Mark Yegerlawer, 17, of 34012 Moore Drive, Farmington.

Riding in the plane were: Markovich, Sloane, Vassel and Delpina. Roberts was shopping in the store and Staron and Yegerlawer are Farmer Jack employes, believed to be stock boys.

Four persons taken to emergency at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington included two passengers, one employe and Roberts.

THE OTHER three injured were taken to emergency at St. Mary Hospital in Livonia.

Lieut. Daniel Byrnes, acting public safety director, City of Farmington, described the injuries two hours after the incident as being limited and apparently not critical.

It was anticipated all the victims would live.

"The danger of fire and explosion was a real one," adds Byrnes, "because aviation fuel had spilled all over the store floor."

Ambulances evacuated the injured and firefighters from the city, and Farmington Township, moved quickly to keep the fuel from igniting.

The biggest immediate problem, after removal of victims, was handling the large crowd that assembled and in controlling traffic.

The area surrounding the store was roped off.

THE CRASH occurred at 7:22 p.m. and was witnessed by Sgt. Richard Miller, director of the city's traffic safety division. Miller said he saw the plane coming down and heard its engines sputtering on and off.

"The plane went into a tailspin and crashed nose first," Miller stated, adding that "it was flying from the southwest."

Another witness reports having seen the twin-engine Beech-Craft Baron flying at a low altitude over Novi, leading to speculation that the aircraft had departed from Mettetal airport at Lilly and Joy Roads in Plymouth.

Don McGregor, a resident in Bel-Aire subdivision in the city, about a mile from the supermarket, reports seeing the plane flying low and dropping.

A strange sidelight to the incident was that employes in the Farmington Public Library, which is immediately south of the supermarket, failed to hear any noise from the crash and were unaware of what happened next door until another library employe phoned in the news.

The impact of the crash broke all the glass windows in the building. There was glass and debris seen near the store but nothing had been thrown onto Farmington Road.

Farmington police called Motor Crane at Eight Mile and Lahser in Southfield to furnish a crane to remove the wrecked plane from the store.

AT PRESS TIME, Byrnes said he was sure there was no one lodged underneath the plane.

The city had sent all its police cars to the scene and Farmington Township dispatched five squad cars. Also present were State Police and about four fire trucks from city and township departments.

An hour after the crash, police were still digging through debris to make certain there were no persons remaining inside and were still trying to keep in hand the leaking gasoline.

By 9:30 p.m. the threat of fire or explosions had ended, and police were assured all injured persons had been found.

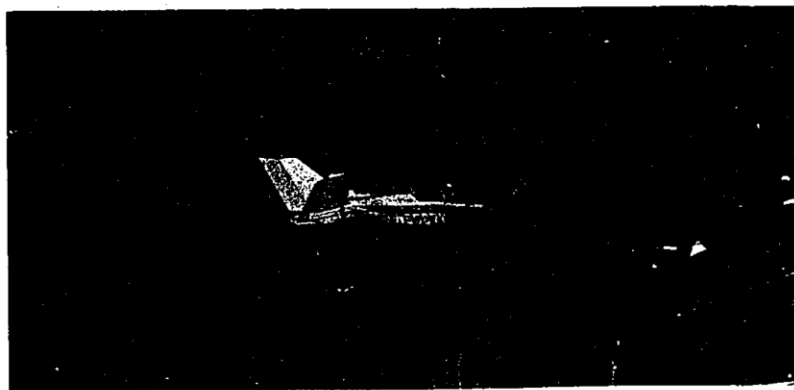
Description of the injuries and cause of the crash were unknown at press time. It is known the plane had gasoline and so it suspected an engine failure caused the crash.

One report was heard that the plane had been last inspected in March.



PHOTOGRAPHER NICK MERRICK climbed atop the roof to take this picture of firemen checking the wrecked plane for gasoline

leaks. This shows how the twin-engine plane dove into the supermarket but was still some four feet above the store floor.



PHOTOGRAPHER RALPH EVERT was on the spot in the right place when a huge crane

from a Southfield firm arrived to pull the plane out of the supermarket.

Investigation continues into fatal mid-air crash

By Kevin Brown
staff writer

The M-14 freeway is a more likely place to die.

That's because every day at 60-70 mph, drivers pass and switch lanes just yards from one another between Beck and Ridge roads.

But Monday, just a few hundred yards south of M-14, the only two aircraft on the horizon collided in the sky, killing three men.

"Big sky — little airplanes," said National Transportation Safety Board investigator Gene Doub.

The victims were Daniel Starr, 34, of Cedar Springs; Robert Gunn, 65, of Livonia; and Charles Nix, 55, of Detroit.

THE COLLISION occurred at 9:35 a.m. just south of M-14 and west of Beck. While the main wreckage of each airplane was separated by several hundred yards, debris from the crash was scattered over a two-mile area from Hilltop Golf Course at Powell and Beck roads to Gottfredson Road in Salem Township, said Plymouth Township Officer David Hayes.

Deputy Chief Chip Snider said no one on the ground was injured from falling debris.

Officials investigating the crash declined to speculate on the altitude of the two aircraft when the collision occurred. Ashley Heimbaugh, Mettetal Airport operations manager, said Gunn and Nix weren't flying "at a

set altitude. It could have been anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 feet."

Hayes said township police spoke to several witnesses who saw at least one aircraft trailing smoke after the collision. Neither aircraft was on fire when township police arrived about three minutes after the crash, Snider said.

"Two bodies were found in the wooded area in the field south of M-14," Hayes said. The bodies were identified as Gunn, an instructor on a training flight, and Nix, an experienced pilot taking instruction. Their aircraft, a single engine Piper Cherokee, had taken off from Mettetal Airport in Canton.

Doub said the two men were thrown from the aircraft after the impact.

Master mechanic took to the skies

By Marie Chestnay
staff writer

Robert Gunn was as well known to local car owners seeking an honest, competent repairman as he was to fellow pilots and other lovers of flying.

Besides his family, the retired Livonia and Redford Township businessman who died in an air crash Monday had two loves in his life — auto repair and flying.

"All he talked about was those two," said Nancy Soper, manager of King Bros. Collision Inc., 37115 West Seven Mile, Redford Township.

For years Soper worked across the street from Gunn and got to know him well. Before retiring, the 45-year-old Livonia resident owned an auto repair business at Seven Mile and Poiticians in Redford.

"He was an outgoing, friendly person, always laughing. Our phones rang here all day long Monday, because people knew we knew Bob. He was one of the most honest men in the business."

GUNN WAS the instructor on a flight from Canton Township's Mettetal Airport Monday when his single-engine Piper Cherokee apparently was struck by another aircraft.

Gunn, along with pilots Charles Nix of Detroit and Daniel Starr of Cedar Springs, were killed in the mid-air collision near M-14 and Beck Road in Plymouth Township.

Services for the veteran pilot will be held at 1 p.m. today in the Harry

J. Will Funeral Home, 37000 Six Mile, Livonia. Burial will be at Parkview Memorial Cemetery in Livonia. The family has asked that memorial contributions be made to the American Diabetes Association.

Before launching his car repair business in Redford Township, Gunn operated a similar business near Five Mile and Harrison in Livonia. One of his best customers was the Livonia Police Department.

"He serviced police vehicles and the cars of police officers, even after he moved to Redford," said Lt. Michael Murray.

REDFORD RESIDENTS and township officials also discovered the master mechanic after he moved his business to Redford.

"It was a real pleasure doing business with him," said Leo Snage, the township's director of public services. "He was the most competent, most honest, most helpful auto mechanic I've known. He wouldn't nickel-and-dime you to death. He was a credit to his profession."

After selling his business in the early 1980s, Gunn became more involved in his second love of flying. As a flight instructor, he trained pilots in the art of flying, a job he was doing Monday before the plane crash.

Gunn is survived by: wife, Mazella; daughter, Janice Pomorski; son, George; sister, Carol Falle; five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

STARR, PILOTING a Federal Armory Air Service plane, died inside his twin-engine Piper Aerostar.

"All three were classified as multiple injury accidental. Whether it (death) occurred while they were in the air or when they hit the ground, I can't differentiate," said a spokesman for the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office on Tuesday.

Plymouth City Commissioner and Realtor Jerry Vorva was dropping off some papers at the Perlono farmhouse on North Territorial when he saw the planes go down.

"I hate to use the word spectacular, but that's what it was," said Vorva.

Vorva was leaving the house when his attention was drawn upward by the sound of the "loud, strained noise. I looked southeast and saw a small plane out of the corner of my eye. It sounded as if it was laboring or climbing with a full load."

Not thinking much of it, Vorva looked back down, took a step and "thud. There was a loud, blunt, crunchy sound; you might have thought there was a car accident."

The single engine plane "fell in three main parts" a couple hundred yards from where Vorva was standing. "Small pieces were falling around us, too. The debris that fell into the bushes turned out to be bodies."

VORVA, A former police officer, told Edie Perlono to call 9-1-1 and saw the second plane struggling to stay aloft. The twin-engine plane banked to the right and the nose came up.

"I thought, 'This plane is going to pull out of this,'" said Vorva. The pilot did a "traditional barrel roll" before nose-diving into the ground.

Please turn to Page 4

Probe continues into mid-air crash

Continued from Page 3

about eight seconds after the first plane crashed. "I thought it hit the freeway," he said.

What looked like white smoke surrounding the twin-engine plane turned out to be more than 300,000 federal reserve checks; a "big white stream of them," said Vorva, adding that he can't imagine how the pilots couldn't have seen each other.

Police said some checks were scattered as far as Ann Arbor Road east of Sheldon.

Vorva ran to the crash site to see if he could be of help. "But I knew no one would be alive; it was all over except for the screaming and howling."

THE COCKPIT of the single engine plane was empty. Officers found the mangled bodies of Gunn and Nix about 40 yards apart, about 200 yards from their plane.

Vorva then went to the site of the second plane, which was "virtually disintegrated, except for the heaviest parts. I could see the wheel assembly, and I knew that was where the pilot would be. There was just a pile of flesh."

"I've seen some nasty car and train accidents, but this was one of the worst things I've ever seen."

On the day after the crash, Doub — his blue coveralls stained with mud after spending hours searching the alfalfa fields for debris — said, "A mid-air collision is a rare occurrence anytime."

"In a mid-air collision, you always have to explain why the pilot of the striking airplane struck the other airplane," he said — adding

this wouldn't be known until the investigation is finished — possibly as early as Friday.

The skies over rural Plymouth Township were "as clear as a bell" when the two small planes collided, said Heimbaugh.

"They were exactly where they were supposed to be," he said of Gunn and Nix, flying in the single engine Piper Cherokee. Nix was training to earn an advanced license for foul-weather and instrument flying.

"Both of them were professional pilots, very experienced pilots," Heimbaugh said.

LARRY MCCARTNEY, a Federal Aviation Administration operations supervisor in Detroit, declined to speculate on why the crash could have occurred at a time when conditions were clear.

"I don't know of a good reason to give for that happening," he said.

By the FAA's preliminary investigation into the crash, McCartney said, "We think the Aerostar left Detroit City (Airport) at approximately 9:30 (a.m.) The Cherokee left at about the same time," he said, from Mettetal Airport in Canton.

He described the twin engine Piper Aerostar, piloted by Starr, as "twice as fast" as the Piper Cherokee.

DOUB SAID the remains of the two aircraft were to be moved to a hangar at Mettetal Airport by late Tuesday, to examine evidence.

To help determine how the planes collided, "We're looking at the men, the machines and the environment," he said.

Airplane crash investigation could be up in air for months

BY M.B. DILLON
STAFF WRITER

National Transportation Safety Board representatives investigating the airplane crash in northern Michigan that killed Livonia pilot Robert Lee Shirley, Tamara Behiry, 36, of Plymouth Township, and her 2-year-old son Brandon Perry say it will take six to nine months to determine the cause of the crash.

An autopsy on Shirley, 67, was incomplete, and NTSB air safety investigator Bob Vallaster could not say whether the pilot may have suffered a heart attack.

It also wasn't known whether a mechanical malfunction may have occurred. But Vallaster said evidence at the site revealed "no mechanical discrepancies, other than considerable plane damage."

Pilots who flew with Shirley out of Canton's Mettetal Airport said the Cessna 172 he was flying was in good working order.

The four-seater was one of several planes owned by the Mettetal-based Safety Flying Club to which Shirley belonged, said Livonia pilot Tom Ranta.

"The club's plane had nothing mechanically wrong. They were in A-1 shape, as far as I know," said Ranta.

Pilot in good health

Shirley had no known health problems, Ranta added.

"He was in good health. I understand he was a jogger. He was slim; there was no fat on that man. He had medical clearance to fly."

Problems with the weather and/or fuel may have played a role in the accident. Vallaster, who pegged the flight's departure time from Mettetal at about 9 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1, and the crash two hours later at 11 p.m., said residents reported heavy rainfall at the time the aircraft was heard overhead. Wind speeds were minimal at 10 knots.

"Two witnesses who heard the plane both recounted that the engine sounded loud and that the aircraft sounded low as it overflowed their houses. Both had the apprehension it might strike their houses," said Vallaster.

The witnesses have cabins on the Manistee River, about half a mile from the crash site in a heavily wooded area used by nearby Camp

Grayling for military training.

No fuel smell

Major Jerry Foehl, public affairs officer at Camp Grayling, said rescuers who reached the site five days after the crash did not notice any strong odor of fuel surrounding the wreckage, distributed over 400 feet of jackpines.

"Not noticing fuel is probably normal. It would have evaporated, or maybe there wasn't much. If I were to speculate, I think it (low fuel) may have played a part in the whole thing," said Foehl.

Vallaster said plane damage was so severe it was impossible to determine how much fuel remained in the tanks. No radio communication or distress calls were received from the Cessna.

"Both tanks were substantially opened up. Fuel lines all over the aircraft were wrenched apart as the aircraft broke up," said Vallaster. Shirley and Behiry, who were flying to Manistique in the Upper Peninsula to surprise Behiry's father, planned to refuel in Pellston, but perhaps changed their minds and decided to refuel sooner in Grayling, Foehl said. That may have been the case, as the plane was headed south when it crashed under power.

Vallaster also heard accounts that Manistique was the ultimate destination. "I also heard Pellston was the intended refueling stop. But they never got as far as what might have been an intermediate stop."

2 died on impact

Foehl said it appears both adults — found still strapped into the front seats in a what little remained of the cabin — died upon impact.

It's thought that Behiry's son survived the impact. "It's real speculative, but implications would indicate to me the boy was loose from the aircraft and probably did not die on impact. He had no visible injuries, with the exception of an indentation on one side to his thigh, which might have indicated a broken bone."

The boy, who was dead when the wreckage was found Saturday, could have died of dehydration, exposure or internal injuries.

Foehl said he'd learned of no problems concerning Shirley's

health or flying abilities. "For a person in good condition, 67 is not old."

The wreckage indicated the plane hit hard, under power. "There's no doubt about that," said Foehl. "It didn't cruise to a stop. The engine and battery were propelled about 50 yards. By this time, the aircraft had come apart, hitting the first tree. Then from there, the rest of the aircraft hunched up or rolled up."

The crash location was first observed by a civilian pilot who radioed Camp Grayling after flying over the remote area, said Foehl. "He was still airborne when he called our operations people. We had an aircraft that led the rescuers into the site by helicopter."

Noth Flight Ambulance workers, DNR officials and Crawford County sheriff's deputies were able to drive to within 300 yards of the site in Frederic Township on two-track roads.

Final word on the cause of the crash will come from the Washington-based NTSB board, said Vallaster. "Technically, they are the only ones empowered to determine probable cause."

Somber mood

The mood at Mettetal is somber this week, said Ranta, who chatted with Shirley at the airport the Tuesday before he died.

"It kind of hurts. You hear something like that, and you just don't feel like flying. You kind of think about it for a few days."

Shirley was well-liked and volunteered his time with scouts interested in flying, said Ranta, adding that he enjoyed many a conversation with Shirley over the airport picnic table.

"He was friendly, helpful and always talked about flying. He could sit down for hours and talk about flying. He was retired and did a lot of recreational flying. He had a lot of friends; he always said hi to everyone and everyone knew him. I talked to him that Tuesday — he said he was probably going to go flying later that day."

A traffic analyst, Shirley was a member of the Safety Flying Club. He was an Indiana native. Funeral services were held in Charles R. Step Funeral Home in Redford with burial at Parkview Memorial Cemetery, Livonia.

CESSNA 182H*accident during initial climb**Plymouth, Michigan***Weather:** VMC, daylight**Pilot certificates:** private**Instrument-rated:** no**Total time:** 680 hours

The commercial-pilot-rated passenger said the takeoff was uneventful until the airplane reached an altitude of a few hundred feet. He stated that he heard a loud noise that sounded like a backfire and the engine lost power. A forced landing approach was made to a small field located in a congested industrial park. During the approach, the left wing of the airplane impacted a tree. The airplane then yawed, the left wing dropped, and the airplane impacted the terrain. Investigation revealed no evidence of a preimpact mechanical failure. The temperature and dew point were 53° and 52°, respectively. According to icing probability charts, conditions were conducive for serious carburetor icing. The carburetor heat was found in the "off" position.

Aircraft damage: destroyed**Injuries:** pilot—fatal; passengers—one serious, two minor/none**Probable cause:** Carburetor ice, and improper use of (or failure to use) the carburetor heat. Factors related to the accident were: carburetor icing (weather) conditions, and the lack of suitable terrain for a forced landing.

CHI94FA310 (above): **Fatal** September 03, 1994 **1d2** Crash in Industrial Park Next to **1d2**
https://www.nts.gov/layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20001206X02191&key=1

CHI90FA190A: **Fatal** July 23, 1990 **1d2 - MID-AIR COLLISION**
https://www.nts.gov/layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20001212X23626&key=1

CHI90FA190B: **Fatal** July 23, 1990 **1d2 - MID_AR_COLLISION**
https://www.nts.gov/layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20001212X23626&key=2

CHI93FA234: **Fatal** June 28, 1993 **1d2**

https://www.nts.gov/ layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20001211X12552&key=1

CEN10CA317: **Helicopter MRO** June 13, 2010, 'Post-Maintenance' Flight **1d2**, total loss of engine power about 2 miles northeast of **1d2**, the departure airport

https://www.nts.gov/ layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20100614X12040&key=1

CEN11FA431: **2 Fatal** June 29, 2011 **Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** (Thorp T-18) **1d2**

https://www.nts.gov/ layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20110629X23512&key=1

2 die as **Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** plane crashes into house in SE Michigan

http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2011/06/2_die_as_plane_crashes_into_ho.html



Canton Man Who Flew **Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** Remembered by Fellow Pilots

<http://patch.com/michigan/plymouth-mi/canton-man-remembered-by-fellow-pilots>

UPDATED: Names of **Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** Plane Crash Victims Released

<http://patch.com/michigan/plymouth-mi/plane-crash-kills-two>

Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB) Thorp T-18 Mutual Aid Society - N18AL Accident Report

http://thorp18.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=6698

Canton Observer, MONDAY. NOVEMBER 23, 1992

\$1.44 million awarded in lawsuit



BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER

A lawsuit sparked by a small plane collision in 1990 over Plymouth Township has resulted in a \$1.44 million jury award for the family of one crash victim.

A Wayne county circuit court jury on Nov. 12 ruled in favor of the family of Robert Gunn.

A settlement has been reached in a lawsuit filed in the wake of a two-plane collision over Plymouth Township that killed three persons. One of the planes had taken off from Mettetal Airport in Canton.

The suit followed the July 23 collision of the plane occupied by Gunn, 65, and Charles Nix, 55, of Detroit, with a second airplane piloted by Daniel Starr of Cedar Springs. All three men died in the crash.

Roger Wolcott, who represented Gunn's family, said the jury agreed with a National Transportation Safety Board finding that the Federal

Armed Services Inc. airplane piloted by Starr violated federal regulations by overtaking the aircraft occupied by Gunn and Nix.

In the suit, Wolcott claimed negligence on the part of Federal Armed Services.

Scott Torpey, attorney for Federal Armed Services, said he would file an appeal before the state Court of Appeals "within the next month or two."

"The jury deliberated for four days, it was obviously a close decision," he said.

The collision happened at 9:30 a.m. on a cloudless day just south of M-14

and west of Beck.

While the main wreckage of each airplane was separated by several hundred yards, debris was scattered over a two-mile area.

According to the NTSB, the crash happened when Starr, in a twin-engine Piper Aerostar, tried to overtake the single-engine Piper Cherokee flown by Nix.

Starr was flying the aircraft from Detroit City Airport to Benton Harbor, transporting a load of canceled checks.

Nix and Gunn, a flight instructor, were on a training flight that took off from Mettetal Airport in Canton.

Dangerous, Embarrassing, and Costly **Helicopter MRO** Debacle

McMAHON HELICOPTER SERVICES, INC. v. U.S. (E.D.Mich. 5-29-2007), Case No. 04-74133. (E.D. Mich. May. 29, 2007) | Casetext [**Helicopter MRO** Sikorsky S-58JT, registration: N598S]

<https://casetext.com/case/mcmahon-helicopter-services-2>

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN SOUTHERN DIVISION,
McMAHON HELICOPTER SERVICES, INC. v. U.S. (E.D.Mich. 5-29-2007), Case No. 04-74133. (E.D. Mich. May. 29, 2007) (complete pdf) [**Helicopter MRO** Sikorsky S-58JT, registration: N598S]

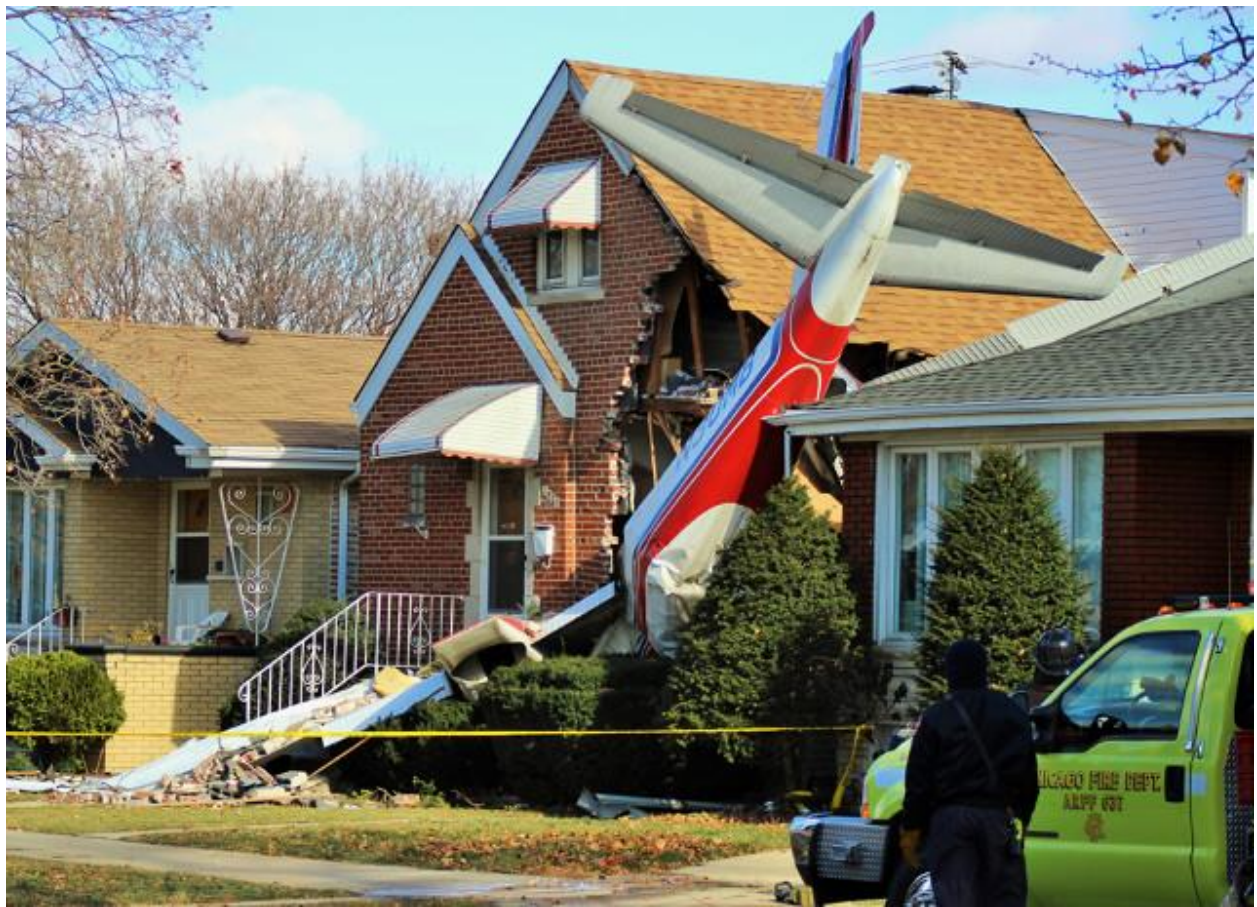
<https://www.mied.uscourts.gov/PDFFiles/04-74133.pdf>

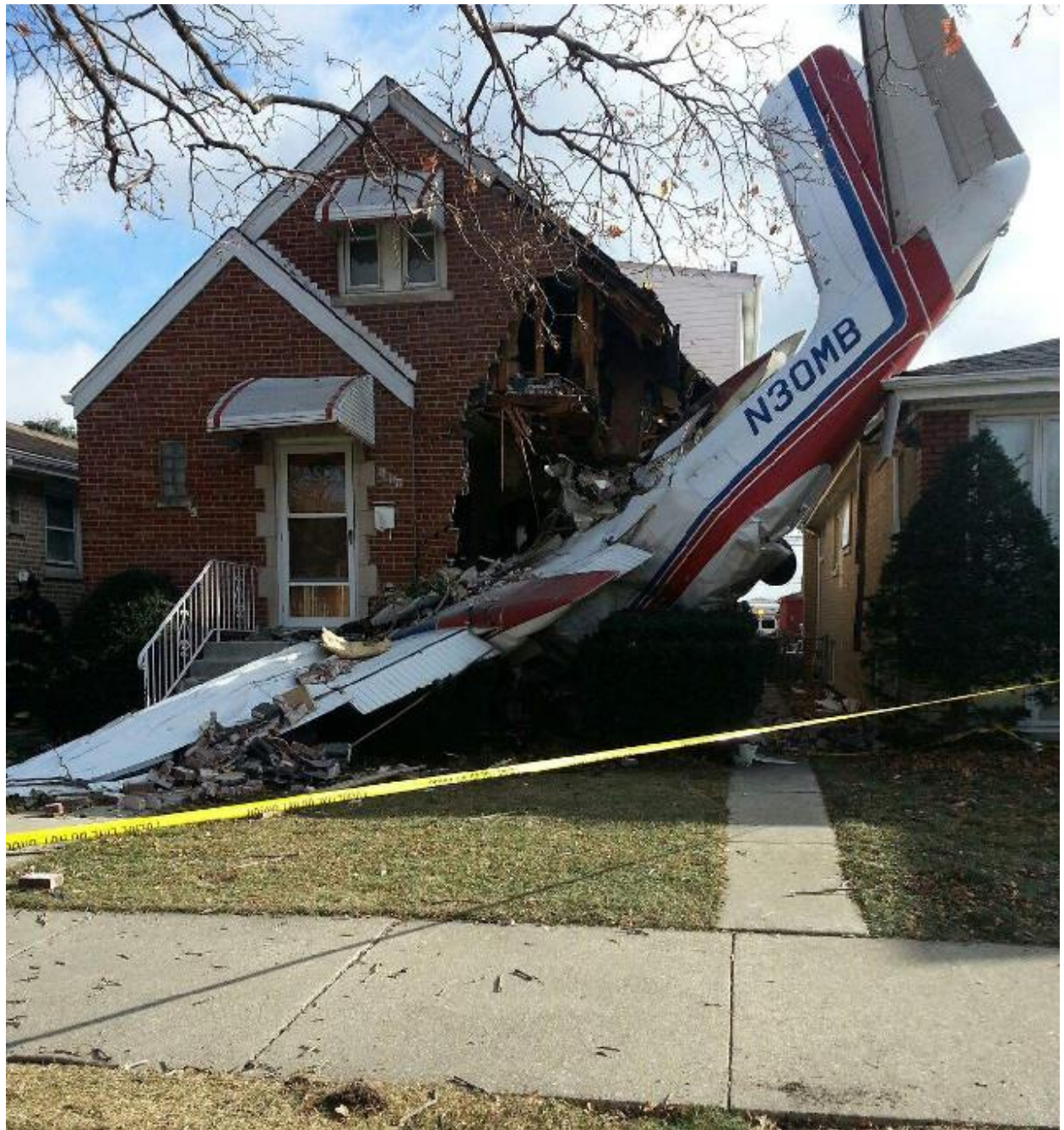
CHI04LA047 [**Helicopter MRO**, December 22, 2003, Sikorsky S-58JT, registration: N598S]

https://www.nts.gov/layouts/nts.aviation/brief.aspx?ev_id=20040202X00138&key=1

According to the fire department chief, the impact below missed the sleeping elderly couple living there by just eight inches as shown in the next several pictures!









Tuesday February 28, 2017 - Former mayor killed in small [Experimental Amateur Built \(E-AB\)](#) plane crash show sticking out of the top of the condo here





Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB) airplane sticking out condo roof



More shots of **Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** airplane sticking out condo roof





Burned interior of condo showing **Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** airplane crash impact



crane lifting the wrecked **small Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB)** plane crash aircraft out of the roof of the condominium



crane lifting the wrecked **small Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB) plane crash** aircraft out of the roof of the condominium



what's left of the **small Experimental Amateur Built (E-AB) plane crash** lifted on to a flatbed trailer

Monday February 27, 2017 - Plane Crash into Home That Leaves 3 Dead, 2 Critically Injured

(1) surveillance Video shows plane crash into Riverside homes - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhQGO2aAJ34>

sad, horrible, actual crash impact

(2) REAL FOOTAGE: Plane Crash into house in Riverside, California | Feb 27, 2017 - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exu6ToWqbLw>

real footage seconds after crash

(3) CBSLA.com <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpohKSAbMTE>

initial report

(4) New Details About Riverside Plane Crash That Leaves 3 Dead, 2 Critically Injured - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ym6vlbm6VEA>

updated report







Initial Facebook posting of Surveillance Video showing fatal crash impact

<https://www.facebook.com/fox11la/videos/10158309797575553/>

Seconds after fatal crash . . .

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BRCaVq5F17y/>

Violent crash through the roof in the back of the home.



Close-up of gaping hole from helicopter crash directly into the home



Smashing out the front door area





The completely destroyed helicopter ended up across the street barely missing another home.



The totaled helicopter being raised off the neighbors front yard.

Completely destroyed helicopter being lowered on trailer



NTSB Batch Brief for CHI08FA293 – Helicopter Crashes into Home

http://www.asias.faa.gov/pls/apex/f?p=100:17:0::NO::AP_BRIEF_RPT_VAR:CHI08FA293

NTSB Aviation Results for CHI08FA293 – Helicopter Crashes into Home

<https://www.nts.gov/layouts/nts.aviation/Results.aspx?queryId=58c54c6b-c087-4f8d-b582-57dd050d10df>

Helicopter Crashes Through Home - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=III1DZ6fJdk>

Helicopter Home Crash - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIQ1zgl7ths>

.....
see [original newspaper clippings](#) and other files regarding the **fatal** crashes at **1d2** that provide better readability.

Please [Donate to Close 1d2 Canton-Plymouth Mettetal Airport](#)! Thank you very much!

More information and details will be added continually, please check back for updates . . .