



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	AVALON, CA	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX00LA038
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	11/21/1999, 1015 PST	<b>Registration:</b>	N97CC
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Smith, Ted Aerostar AEROSTAR 600	<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

The pilot/owner was performing a post maintenance check flight about 20 miles off shore. He was receiving visual flight advisories from a terminal radar approach facility while in level flight about 4,900 feet msl. Subsequently, the airplane started slowing then descending in a right spiral, and radar contact was lost about 1,000 feet msl. The pilot's body was recovered from the ocean. According to the autopsy report, the pilot had experienced sudden cardiac death secondary to an acute myocardial infarction due to atherosclerotic coronary artery disease. Tramadol, a painkiller not approved by the FAA for flight, was detected in a drug screen and may have masked the chest pain.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's in-flight loss of control due to physical incapacitation from sudden cardiac death secondary to an acute myocardial infarction.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT POSSIBLE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) INCAPACITATION(CARDIOVASCULAR) - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

## Factual Information

On November 21, 1999, about 1015 hours Pacific standard time, a Smith Aerostar 600, N97CC, descended into the Pacific Ocean near Avalon, California. The airline transport rated pilot, the sole occupant, received fatal injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the personal flight. The aircraft, owned and operated by the pilot under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91, was destroyed in the collision sequence and sank to the ocean bottom. No flight plan was filed for the local area flight, which originated at Fullerton, California, about 0930.

According to a family member, the pilot was accomplishing a post maintenance flight check.

Review of information and radar data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) disclosed that the pilot was receiving visual flight advisories from Southern California Terminal Radar Approach Control. At 1015, radar contact was lost on the 200-degree radial of the Seal Beach VOR at 20 miles. Recorded radar data revealed that the mode C return was level at 4,900 feet mean sea level (msl) and exhibited a slowing ground speed. The secondary beacon returns then started a descending right spiral and radar contact was lost at 1,000 feet msl.

The pilot's body was recovered from the ocean and an autopsy was conducted by the Los Angeles County Coroner's office. According to the autopsy report, the pilot had experienced sudden cardiac death secondary to an acute myocardial infarction due to atherosclerotic coronary artery disease. The attesting pathologist opined that the event began from 30 minutes to several hours before the pilot's death. Tramadol, a painkiller not approved by the FAA for flight, was detected in blood and tissue samples submitted for toxicological tests. The pathologist stated that the drug may have masked the chest pain symptoms of the cardiac event.

The aircraft was not recovered. Review of the maintenance records disclosed that on November 5, 1999, the oil was changed on both engines. During engine run-up a "hot" or non-grounding magneto was found on the right engine. A loose "P" lead for grounding the magneto was discovered and reattached. At the same time, a broken exhaust flange was discovered on the No. 6 engine cylinder. Subsequently, the entire exhaust system and a gas temperature probe were replaced on the right engine. According to maintenance records, the last annual inspection occurred on July 16, 1999.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Airline Transport	<b>Age:</b>	44, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Unknown
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane	<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>	03/26/1999
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>		
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1710 hours (Total, all aircraft), 851 hours (Total, this make and model), 100 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Smith, Ted Aerostar	<b>Registration:</b>	N97CC
<b>Model/Series:</b>	AEROSTAR 600 AEROSTAR 6	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	No
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	600154068
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Retractable - Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	6
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	07/16/1999, Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	5200 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	1 Hours	<b>Engines:</b>	2 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	4199 Hours	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	TIO-540
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	WALTER L. CECIL	<b>Rated Power:</b>	290 hp
<b>Operator:</b>	WALTER L. CECIL	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	LGB, 57 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	20 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0956 PST	Direction from Accident Site:	20°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	Light and Variable /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16° C / 12° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	FULLERTON, CA (FUL)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	
Departure Time:	0930 PST	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):	GEORGE E PETERSON	Report Date:	05/09/2001
Additional Participating Persons:	RAY HANNA; LONG BEACH, CA		
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](#).