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## Airframe icing, MU-2, near Pleasant Hope, Missouri

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Micro-summary: This MU-2 crashed into terrain

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Event Date: 1968-12-21 at 1010 CDT

Investigative Body: National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), USA

Investigative Body's Web Site: <http://www.ntsb.gov/>

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1. Accident reports can be and sometimes are revised. Be sure to consult the investigative agency for the latest version before basing anything significant on content (e.g., thesis, research, etc).
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NTSB Identification: **MKC69A0039**  
 14 CFR Part 91 General Aviation  
 Event occurred Saturday, December 21, 1968 in SPRINGFIELD, MO  
 Aircraft: MITSUBISHI MU-2B, registration: N3550X

FILE	DATE	LOCATION	AIRCRAFT DATA	INJURIES			FLIGHT PURPOSE	PILOT DATA
				F	S	M/N		
3-4630	68/12/21	NR. SPRINGFIELD, MO	MITSUBISHI MU-2B N3550X TIME - 1010 DAMAGE-DESTROYED	CR-	1	0	NONCOMMERCIAL	COMMERCIAL, FL. INSTR., AGE 35, 2910 TOTAL HOURS, 100 IN TYPE, INSTRUMENT RATED.
				PX-	4	0	CORP/EXEC	
				OT-	0	0		

TYPE OF ACCIDENT  
 COLLISION WITH GROUND/WATER: UNCONTROLLED

PROBABLE CAUSE(S)  
 MISCELLANEOUS - UNDETERMINED

FACTOR(S)  
 PILOT IN COMMAND - ATTEMPTED OPERATION W/KNOWN DEFICIENCIES IN EQUIPMENT  
 FIRE AFTER IMPACT

REMARKS- MALFUNCTION OF ARTIFICIAL HORIZON AND TURN NEEDLE. ACFT OBSERVED TO CRASH FROM VERTICAL DIVE.

PHASE OF OPERATION  
 IN FLIGHT: UNCONTROLLED DESCENT

[Index for Dec 1968](#) | [Index of months](#)

# Bolivar Herald-Free Press

VOLUME 96 NUMBER 42

4,500 COPIES THIS WEEK

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1968

BOLIVAR, MISSOURI

EIGHTEEN PAGES IN THREE SECTIONS

TEN CENTS

[Photo Caption, Front Page]:

Five persons died in this burned out, twisted mass that was once a twin-engine turboprop. The aircraft, carrying the J. C. Vaughn family of Joplin, and the pilot, crashed on the Roy Brown farm, south of Pleasant Hope Saturday morning.

BOLIVAR HERALD-FREE PRESS PHOTO

[Photo Caption, Page 3]:

## Five die ...

Only part of the tail assembly is left intact as this twin engine plane crashed almost nose-first into the ground and exploded. Most of the plane, including the engines and cockpit, are buried.

BOLIVAR HERALD-FREE PRESS PHOTO

### Airplane crashes, burns

## Five perish in fiery crash south of Pleasant Hope

A family of four from Joplin, and their pilot were killed in a plane crash Saturday morning about five miles south of Pleasant Hope near the junction of H and Greene County CC.

The victims were identified by the highway patrol as J. C. Vaughn, 38 years old; his wife, Martha, who was in her 30s; their son, Timmy, 6; and their daughter, Nancy[,] 5 [?].

The pilot was identified as Gary [sic] Louden, 34, of Carthage.

Vaughn was president of the Midwestern Land Investment Corporation in Joplin. He also was president and chairman of the board of the Richmond Life Insurance Company.

Their plane, a twin-engine turboprop, crashed into a small hill and burned in a cow pasture.

Vaughn and his family left Joplin Friday morning. They were heading for a vacation in Miami, Fla.

Vaughn moved to Joplin from Fort Scott, Kans. four years ago.

Two Green [sic] County rural fire units were at the crash scene but the heat of the flames prevented attempts to get into the cabin of the craft.

The plane came down on a farm owned by Roy Brown.

About 300-feet from the crash scene Jerry Cossins was hauling gravel from a creek bed. He said his son Terry, 10, shouted from the cab of the truck, Daddy, the plane is going to crash.

Cossins said he looked up just as the plane hit and on impact there was a huge ball of flame.

A nephew of Cossins, Mike Schmeetz, 18, of Brighton, Mo., had been helping load the gravel and he ran to the plane but the flames drove him back. He said he heard nothing from inside the wreckage.

Keith Goman, a farmer living across the road from the pasture, said he heard the plane's engines sputtering and saw it come out of the clouds and crash at a steep angle.

Vaughn was born near Humansville. The family later moved to New York state.

Five sisters survive Mr. Vaughn. They are Mrs. Janet Baxley, of Hollywood, Calif., Mrs. Edith Steelman of Ajo, Ariz., Mrs. Dorothy Koehler of Collins, Mrs. Velma Campbell of Stockton and Mrs. Wilma Ferguson of Topeka.

In recent years he acquired about 1,200 acres in the Prescott, Kans. area and later purchased the Prescott State Bank. He purchased and later sold the 8-story Conner Hotel in Joplin and maintained two planes in the Joplin-Carthage area.

An autopsy on the body of Roger Keith Louden, was scheduled for 7 a.m. Monday at Burge-Protestant Hospital.

Meanwhile, the remains of the four others who died in the crash were sent to Joplin Sunday.

Alan Crawford, investigator for the National Transportation Board, who is seeking to determine the cause of the accident, spent the day Sunday gathering facts, but said a complete determination may be 30 days or more away. He was to have left Sunday night for Kansas City.

Greene County Coroner Ralph H. Thieme announced there will be no inquest.

Memorial services for Mr. Louden, the pilot, were conducted by the Rev. E. A. Neimeyer at 11 o'clock Monday morning in the Knell-Mortuary [sic] at Carthage.

Final services and burial were Tuesday in LaHarpe, Ill.

The Vaughn services were conducted by E. Kriefall at 1:30 p.m. in the Mason Chapel at Joplin. Burial will be in the Ozark Memorial Park.

Crawford said his agency will want to know what the autopsy shows. It will want to know more about communications (some conversations are recorded), and it will want to know more about the weather. Though there are weather records for the time of the crash, Crawford is not sure they reflect the exact weather through which Louden was flying.

The aircraft itself is being thoroughly examined.





Sat., Dec. 21, 1968

**SPRINGFIELD (Mo.) LEADER-PRESS**

Page 10

## **5 Feared Dead as Prop-Jet Falls, Burns**

### **Wealthy Joplin Man, Family Believed Lost Near Pleasant Hope**

Five persons were believed to have died when their private prop-jet airplane plummeted into a soggy farm pasture and burst into flames a dozen miles north of Springfield at 10 a.m. today.

Greene County sheriff's deputies confirmed that at least two bodies were spotted amid the charred and twisted wreckage, but Greene County Coroner Ralph Thieme said preliminary investigation indicated there were five persons aboard the craft.

Thieme tentatively identified the victims as J. C. Vaughn, Vaughn's wife and their two children, and pilot Roger Lowden [sic], all of Joplin [sic].

The twin-engine, white and orange craft [N3550X] apparently slammed nose-down into the field on the farm of Roy Brown on Greene County CC near the Greene-Polk county line.

The intense heat of the wreckage hampered immediate exploration after fire units from Nichols Junction and Fair Grove extinguished the flames.

Initial information on the 37-year-old Vaughn indicate he moved to Joplin from Fort Scott, Kan., about two years ago. He once told a reporter he moved there because he needed instrument landing facilities for his Mooney [Mitsubishi] MU-2[B] turbo-prop.

He reportedly held extensive farming interests, at least in Bourbon County, Kan., and was head of a West Coast Manufacturing firm.

\* \* \*

Several months ago he purchased the Connor Hotel in Joplin, reportedly spent large sums remodeling the building, then sold it recently to a Tulsa, Okla., insurance firm.

Joplin newsmen described Vaughn as "almost impossible to talk to." The only picture immediately available was an "accidental" group shot, from which his picture could be lifted.

"He was friendly enough," said one reporter, "but we just couldn't get him pinned down. It took a reporter three weeks hounding him just to get a little basic story after he moved here."

The man believed to be the pilot, Lowden [sic], reportedly is a native of Carthage [sic] and was a former flight instructor at the airport there.

\* \* \*

There were several persons in the vicinity of the crash, including Jerry Cossins, 34, Pleasant Hope, and his son, Terry, 10, who were driving a dump truck full of gravel from a creek bed about 300 feet from the crash site.

Cossins said his son looked out the truck window and shouted, "Daddy, the plane's going to crash!" Cossins said he looked to see the field erupt into a towering column of fire and smoke.

Cossins' 18-year-old nephew, Mike Schmeets, Brighton, was on the creek bank when he heard the plane make its last dive. He said he raced to the edge of the flames, but could hear no cries from inside the crumpled wreckage.

Not quite a mile away, Keith Gomon, who is a private pilot himself, was standing in his back yard when he said he heard the plane's engines "sputtering." He said he looked up to see the craft break through the clouds at an extremely steep angle and nose straight toward the ground.

\* \* \*

Gomon's father, Lyle, was in the field next to the crash scene with his truck which had become mired in the mud. He said he heard the plane coming down and then heard two explosions as it hit the ground. He estimated the column of flames and smoke rose some 150 feet into the air.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Ross L. Estes, pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church about one mile away, heard the plane "roaring in an unusual manner" and raced to the crash scene with farm owner Brown. Mr. Ross said the area was littered with small parts from the plane, but the heat drove them back.

Brown reported he had been in the field with his 21-year-old son, Steve, about five minutes before the plane hit. Brown said they had placed some cattle feed in the exact spot where the craft burrowed in.

Authorities at Joplin said the plane apparently had left there enroute to Tallahassee, Fla., within an hour before the crash. Reports were that the pilot had radioed the Joplin tower that they were experiencing icing on the wings, and that they were about to turn back.

Apparently that was the last communication with the craft.



# SUNDAY NEWS AND LEADER CITY FINAL

SPRINGFIELD, MO., SUNDAY MORNING, DEC. 22, 1968 — EIGHT SECTIONS — 82 PAGES

Published by Springfield Newspapers, Inc. Each Sunday 651 Boonville, Springfield, MO. 65810  
PRICE FIFTEEN CENTS

[Photo Caption, Front Page]:

—News and Leader Staff Photo

Five persons died in this plane wreckage that shows only the tail section as the remaining intact portion of the sleek turbo-prop craft that buried into rain-softened ground about 12 miles north of Springfield Saturday. The crash occurred on the Roy Brown farm near Pleasant Hope. Four members of a Joplin family and the Carthage pilot were killed. (Other pictures on page C-4).

\* \* \*

## Air Crash Kills 5 in County

### **Christmas Flight Ends in Tragedy**

A vigil — sad, lonely and cold — was kept by sheriff's deputies in a field a dozen miles north of Springfield last night.

Their charge: the torn, charred metal of an airplane; the unrecognizable remains of five persons.

Today, FAA officials from Kansas City will work at the nearly impossible task of trying to determine what caused the crash of the plane at mid-morning Saturday, and the removing and identifying of the bodies of J. C. Vaughn, Joplin, his wife and two children, and the pilot, Roger Keith Louden, Carthage.

It had started as a Christmas vacation in Florida . . .

Around 10 a.m. Saturday, Vaughn, 38, his wife, Martha, 28, son Timmy, 6, daughter Nancy, 4 [?], and Louden, 34, got into Vaughn's Mooney MU-2 turbo prop plane at the Joplin Airport, and took off.

\* \* \*

They had filed a flight plan for Tallahassee, Fla.

Some time after that, authorities at the Joplin airport reported they were in radio contact with Louden, and he reported they were experiencing icing trouble around Springfield, and were turning back to Joplin.

Apparently, that was the last communication with the craft.

About 10 a.m., Jerry Cossins, 34, Pleasant Hope, and his son, Terry, 10, were in a dump truck,

See PLANE, Page A-4

Plane  
From Front Page

driving to a creek bed on a farm about a quarter mile northwest of the junction of Greene County H-CC, north of Springfield about 12 miles.

\* \* \*

Cossin's 18-year-old nephew, Mike Schmeets, Brighton, was standing on the creek bank.

Terry Cossins looked out the truck window and shouted, "Daddy, the plane's going to crash!"

Cossins looked—and saw the field about 300 yards distant erupt into a towering column of fire and smoke.

Young Schmeets heard the plane make its last dive. He raced to the plane. The flames drove him back. He did not hear any cries for help from within the wreckage.

Not quite a quarter mile away, Keith Goman, who is a private pilot, was standing in his back yard and had heard the plane's engines sputtering [sic]. He looked up to see the craft break through the overcast at a steep angle and nose straight toward the ground.

\* \* \*

Goman's father, Lyle, was in the field next to the crash with his truck, which had become mired in the mud. He heard the plane coming down, too, and heard two explosions when the plane hit the ground.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Ross L. Estes, pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church, about a mile away, had heard the plane "roaring in an unusual manner," and raced to the crash scene with Roy Brown, owner of the farm where the plane crashed. They tried to reach the occupants of the plane. Heat drove them away.

Brown marveled at his good fortune. Five minutes before the plane crashed, he and his son, Steve, 21, had placed some cattle feed on the exact spot where the plane burrowed in.

State troopers, sheriff's deputies and Greene County Coroner Ralph Thieme went to the scene. All they could do was to wait for the flames to stop and the wreckage to cool. Thieme obtained tentative identification from airport authorities at Joplin.

\* \* \*

Officials reported later they could see the remains of three persons in the plane; after exhaustive checking, it was determined that there had been five occupants. Officials believe two—probably the children—were cremated in the fierce flames.

\* \* \*

Vaughn was "something of a mystery man" around Joplin, where he and his family had moved in 1965. He apparently avoided publicity and the Joplin Globe reported "we have only one picture of him, and that cut out of a group picture he got caught in."

When Vaughn moved to Joplin, the Globe editors hoped to print a profile on him. "He was almost impossible to talk to," recalled a reporter. "He was friendly and nice, but he just wouldn't tell you anything about himself. It took a reporter three weeks hounding him just to get a little basic story after he moved here."

One thing that Vaughn did tell the reporter was that he needed to live near an airport where he could have [an] instrument landing.

Although his business dealings apparently reached proportions his neighbors did not dream of, Vaughn was apparently born in humble enough circumstances—on a farm near Stockton. He later moved to New York state, then returned to Miami County, Kan., and worked for his father on a farm.

\* \* \*

When Vaughn was 20, he started farming for himself, later branched out and acquired 1200 acres near Prescott, Kan. From that venture he entered banking, purchasing the Prescott State Bank, and dealing in mining and oil stocks, life insurance and real estate. He was president of the Midwestern Land Investment Corporation in Joplin and chairman of the board of the Richmond Life Insurance Company.

The Midwestern corporation recently purchased and renovated the Conner Hotel in Joplin and then sold it to a Tulsa life insurance company.

Vaughn's survivors include one brother, Ed, Nevada, and several sisters. His first wife and a child were killed several years ago in a traffic accident in Kansas.

Mrs. Vaughn is survived by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. B. L. Hayes, Independence, Kan.; two sisters, Mrs. Marilyn Alexander, Joplin, and Mrs. Joyce Daily, Nevada; and one brother, Carl Hayes, Marshall, Tex.

Louden, a native of La Harpe, Ill., was apparently a pilot for Richmond insurance Company. However, as recently as three months ago, he flew for the Carthage Airways. He moved to Carthage three years ago from California.

Louden is survived by one daughter, Miss Debbie Louden; his mother, Mrs. Ruth Louden, La Harpe, Ill.; four sisters, Mrs. Eugene Ingram, Carthage, Miss Linda Louden, U.S. Air Force in Thailand, Mrs. Barbara Sutter, Burlington, Iowa, and Mrs. Elizabeth Moore, Santa Barbara, Calif.; three brothers, David, Denver, Robert, Oquawka, Ill., and Donald, Park Forest, Ill.

Memorial services will be at 11 a.m. Monday in Knell Mortuary, Carthage, with final services and burial Tuesday in La Harpe, Ill.