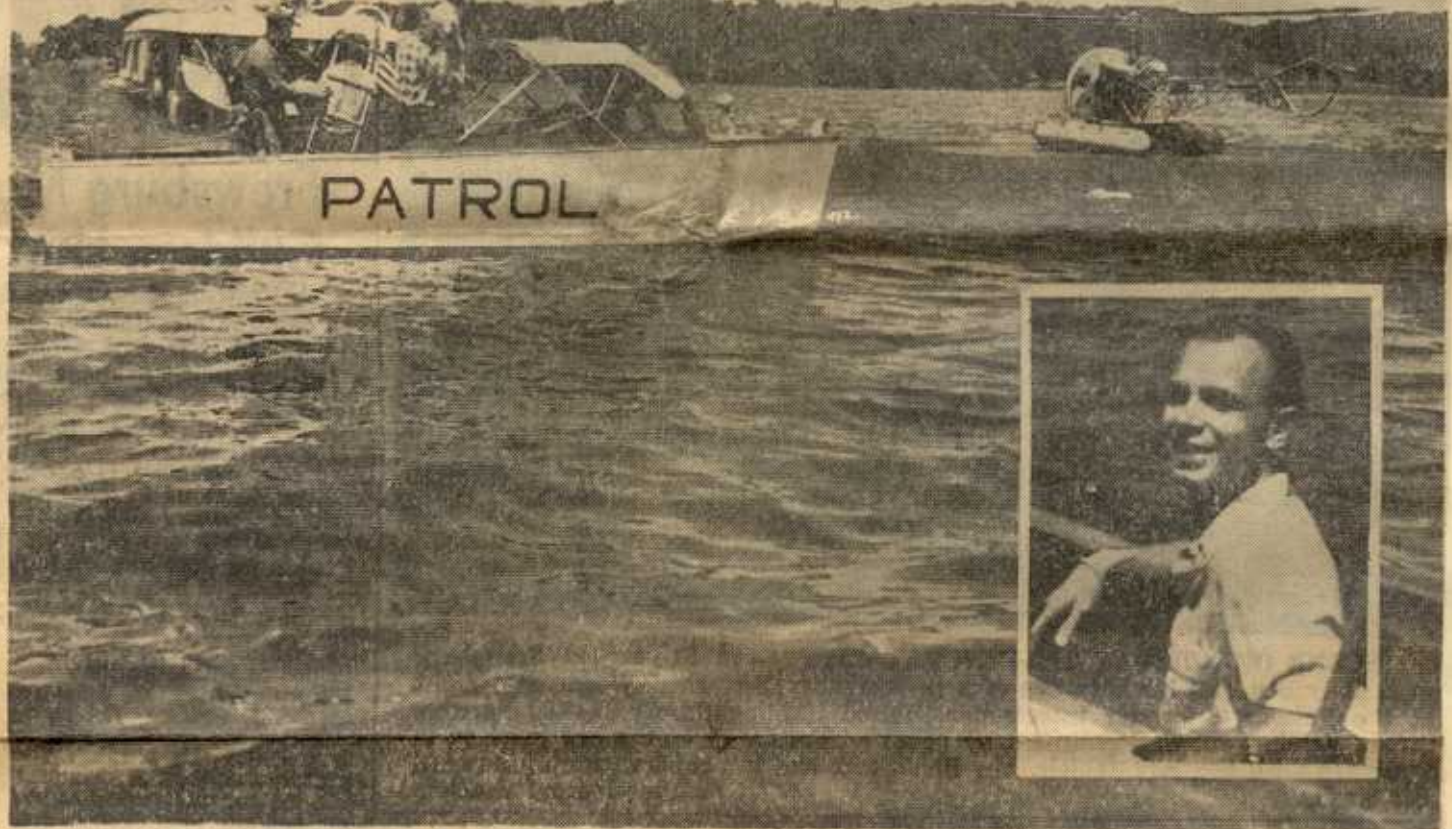


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WHERE NAVY PLANE CRASHED IN CHAUTAUQUA LAKE—A slick of gasoline and oil marks the site of Tuesday's crash of a Navy "Skyraider" aircraft in Chautauqua Lake, in this photo made as beginning steps in salvage operations were taken. On patrol boat, left, are Trooper D. P. Studd; Joseph H. Dornberger, Chautauqua Lake Navigation Commissioner, in plaid shirt; and George Preiss, under canopy. At right is helicopter from Niagara Falls Naval Training Center. In front of helicopter, one of two divers: Frank Falczyk and Leonard Soderberg. Inset is pilot, Lt. (jg) Barry Firth Hampe. —Post-Journal Staff photo

Plane Down in 60 Feet of Water

Salvage of Crashed Aircraft Will Begin Today

A crew from the Naval Air Station at Niagara Falls is expected to begin operations today in an effort to recover the AD 6 Skyraider plane which crashed into Chautauqua Lake off Point Chautauqua shortly before noon on Tuesday.

A spokesman from the station said that the crew includes divers who will attach a sling to the fuselage of the plane, and that the plane will then be floated to the surface by the use of an 18-foot air bag. According to Sheriff Charles C. McCloskey, Jr., the plane sank at a point where the lake is about 60 feet deep.

The accident occurred while the pilot, Lt. (jg) Barry Firth Hampe, 20, of Reading, Pa., and a companion pilot were flying their two planes on a routine flight tour out of their base at Oceana, Va. Lieutenant Firth, who was uninjured, said the plane developed mechanical trouble, and he decided to

"ditch" it in the lake. He leaped from the cockpit as soon as the craft struck the water, and was picked up immediately by John and Lester Pepicelli of Meadville, Pa., who were fishing from a boat about 100 yards from the scene of the crash.

The companion pilot, Lt. A. H. Cummings, circled the area for a while, and then proceeded to Niagara Falls.

Volunteer and official help, from divers to pilots, converged on the scene almost immediately. Apparently witnessed by many fishermen, boaters and those along the shore, the "tick" and "splash" signalled a mass convergence of help to the scene.

Robert Stevenson, Maple Springs, took two skin divers to the scene and they immediately started diving operations. Frank Falczyk, Jamestown, and Leonard Soderberg, Celoron, equipped with air tanks, located

the plane after several dives from the Stevenson boat. They secured the craft and its location was later marked by Navigation Commissioner Joseph H. Dornberger.

Sheriff's Deputies, State Police, Navigation Commissioners and volunteer firemen rushed to the scene. The Lakewood Rescue boat came to the area.

Deputy Sheriff George W. Preiss, who is also a deputy navigation commissioner, manned the patrol boat accompanied by Deputy Paul Trippy. He was soon joined by Walter Kelly and Joseph Mayer with a Chautauqua Lake Boat Yard boat. Navigation Commissioner Dornberger arrived on the scene shortly after. The commissioners kept boats from the oil slick caused by the crash and checked the area periodically over the holiday pending the start of salvage operations by the Navy. Undersheriff Merle A. Campaign

and Chief Criminal Deputy Robert Edwards questioned Hampe as did Troopers Kenneth Hemmer and Chester Chwala. Trooper Donald P. Studd accompanied Deputy Preiss in the patrol boat.

Sheriff McCloskey, at the control center in the jail, helped to coordinate police and firemen's activities. County Fire Coordinator Raymond Hughes and Deputy Coordinator Charles Pryde offered their services at the scene.

A Lieutenant Wright, flying a helicopter out of the Niagara Falls Naval Air Station, later took Lieutenant Hampe to that base.

Several witnesses said that the planes were flying north toward Mayville and that the lower of the two, piloted by Lieutenant Hampe, "ticked" the water, bounced up and dived into the lake. The pilot immediately pulled clear of the craft, which floated briefly with tail protruding above the surface.