

# Airport director recalls

*According to Mt. Vernon Outland Director Chris Collins, Marty Gutzler's aircraft was expected to arrive around 6:30 p.m. Friday*

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MT. VERNON— When Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins noted that Marty Gutzler had not arrived in the hangar by expected arrival time on Friday evening, he knew that something was wrong.

Gutzler's plane was headed to Mt. Vernon from Key West, Fla. on Friday evening when it crashed near Eddyville, Ky., according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

"We saw him on the computer, he was on the IFR, instrument

flight rules, most of them appear on software that we have, and I saw that he was inbound for about 6:30 p.m.," recalled Collins. "Because he's one of our based tenants and it's one of our based aircraft, we don't necessarily wait around for them to land because they just go to the hangar and take care of things themselves. Every once in a while they may call in saying they need the aircraft topped off or they need some other kind of service, and at that point we would wait around for 'em."

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## Gutzler:

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"But this was a routine instance for us. The fixed base operations staff went home probably around 5 p.m. when they closed and I left the airport around 5:45. Marty's partner called me at about 7:15 expressing he was worried. So we met here at the airport, went to the hangar, opened the hangar up, and the Gutzler vehicle was still in there. That's when you get worried."

According to a statement from FAA officials, air traffic controllers received a report of engine trouble from a small Piper PA-34 then lost contact with the aircraft at approximately 5:55 p.m. Friday as the plane flew over southwestern Kentucky.

Collins stated that he discovered no plane in the hangar around 7:40 p.m. Then he looked online where he found reports of the plane crash.

Collins first came to know Marty Gutzler outside of aviation, by shopping at Gutzler's Furniture in Nashville.

In the 1990s, Collins came to know Gutzler as a pilot. Gutzler had been flying out of the Mt. Vernon airport since the late 1980s.

"I knew Marty before I came to the airport," said Collins. "Like most people in Jefferson and Washington County, I bought furniture at the store. You walk in and there's aviation stuff everywhere. Once I became a pilot we reconnected through that means. Marty never met a stranger and he always had a positive attitude and he just loved aviation. ... Aviation's a small world, and in Southern Illinois we all know each other and we're all friends."

According to Collins, Gutzler flew for a regional airline, but was furloughed after the events of Sept. 11, 2001. When he was called to begin flying again, Gutzler chose to remain in Nashville to run the furniture business.

"He elected to stay in Nashville, which is a testament to his dedication to his hometown," Collins stated.

"We're just devastated here," he continued. "We lost a community leader and a strong advocate for aviation."

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