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Retro Indy: 1978 plane crash claims USAC officials

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(Photo: file)

Hail and 100-mile-an-hour winds allegedly caused a 10-seat Piper Navajo Chieftain to crash in a muddy field near the Rush County, IN community of Arlington on April 23, 1978.

The crash killed 7 United States Auto Club (USAC) officials, a staffer and pilot.

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The plane, bound for Indianapolis, had left Trenton, NJ after completion of the Gabriel 200-mile race. The plane made a stop at Johnstown, PA en route to Indianapolis .

The pilot, Don Mullendore, radioed the control tower at Indianapolis International Airport as he reached its radar scanning area and told of the "severe turbulence" he was encountering and was instructed to drop altitude. Witnesses say they heard a "big thump" and then saw a "ball of fire".



(Photo: file)

Killed were:

Ray Marquette, 48 – USAC vice president for public relations and former sports writer for The Indianapolis Star.

Frank DelRoy, 65 – USAC Technical Director. DelRoy was the last riding mechanic to sit on the pole in the Indianapolis 500, sharing the ride with Bill Cummings in 1937.

Ross Teeguarden, 57 – USAC deputy technical director inspected race cars and enforced various technical phases of USAC races.

Shim Malone, 48 – Midget Supervisor and race flagman, Malone handled the flags for every USAC championship race except the Indianapolis 500.

Dr. Bruce White, 27 – was one of three physicians who attended USAC races as part of its medical staff

Don Peabody, 54 – Sprint car supervisor and had only joined USAC in January of 1988.

Stan Worley, 65 - USAC registrar was in charge of signing in drivers, cars and crews of all major USAC races.

Judy Phillips, 40 – worked in public relations for USAC

Don Mullendore, 54 – Pilot from the Mullendore Aircraft Charter Co., out of the Franklin Flying Field, was a member of a pioneer family in Hoosier aviation.

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