
Passenger lands plane as pilot dies at controls

AUBURN, Maine (AP) — A Massachusetts man who had not piloted a plane in 30 years landed a twin-engine aircraft here yesterday after the pilot collapsed at the controls.

Earl R. Myntti, 50, of Gardner was sitting in the co-pilot's seat when the pilot, John Bent, 51, of Ashburnham, Mass., slumped in his seat during the flight between Pittsfield and Gardner.

A medical examiner later pronounced Bent dead of a heart attack.

Myntti could not use the wheel brakes because they were on the pilot's side; nor could he use the radio, which he apparently could not reach and was not sure how to operate, officials said.

Looking down from 4,000 feet, not sure where he was, Myntti spotted the Auburn Municipal Airport.

With no wheel brakes, he used almost the entire 5,000 foot runway, then steered the plane onto the grass to slow it further before turning around and coming to a stop, near a hangar.

Police said Myntti flew single-engine planes during World War II but had not flown since then.

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