

Missouri governor killed in plane crash

GOLDMAN, Mo. (AP) — Gov. Mel Carnahan, the Democratic candidate in one of the most hotly contested U.S. Senate races in the country, was killed when the plane shuttling him to a campaign rally crashed in rainy, foggy weather.

The Cessna 335, also carrying Carnahan's 44-year-old son, Roger, who was piloting the plane, and campaign adviser Chris Sifford, 37, went down Monday night 25 miles south of St. Louis. They were en route to a rally for Carnahan, 66, who was running against Republican Sen. John Ashcroft.

There were no survivors, said Jerry Nachtigal, the governor's spokesman. Investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) were sent to the scene.

"We found wreckage in very small pieces spread over a large area," Jefferson County Sheriff's Capt. Ed Kemp said. "We have found some remains we cannot identify at this point."

Ashcroft's campaign immediately suspended all advertising and other operations.

"Obviously this is not a time for politics," Ashcroft said. "This is a time for the state to come together."

The race, seen as one of the key races in the Democrats' effort to retake control of the Senate, had been a dead heat for months. A Zogby poll taken for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch the first week of September gave Ashcroft 45 percent and Carnahan 43 percent, within the 4-point margin of error.

Carnahan's name will stay on the Nov. 7 ballot because the deadline for changing it was Oct. 13, Secretary of State Bekki Cook said.

Lt. Gov. Roger Wilson will serve out the remainder of Carnahan's term, until Jan. 8.

If more voters cast ballots for Carnahan than Ashcroft on Nov. 7, the seat would become vacant when Ashcroft's current term ends Jan. 3, Cook said. Wilson, a Democrat, would have constitutional authority to appoint a senator to fill the vacancy through the November 2002 general election, when the seat would be up for election, Cook said.

The deaths prompted discussion of whether Tuesday night's debate in St. Louis between Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush should be postponed. Tuesday morning, though, the debate's sponsors said it would go forward, and Carnahan's wife, Jean, said she supported the decision.

"Because my husband cherished our democracy and its expression, he

would very much want the debate scheduled for tonight to go on," she said in a statement.

It will begin with a moment of silence and brief remarks about Carnahan. In a statement, Bush praised his fellow governor as "a thoughtful, distinguished man who was dedicated to quality education and excellence in public service." Gore said he was "deeply saddened" and hailed Carnahan's work on education and other issues.

The NTSB said the twin-engine plane, a six-seater, was registered to a law firm where Roger Carnahan was a partner.

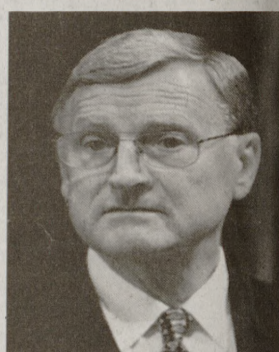
The governor had been expected at the rally at 8 p.m. in New Madrid, about 125 miles south of the crash site, described as a hilly, wooded area.

State Sen. Jerry Howard, who was at the rally, said Roy Temple, executive director of the Missouri Democratic Party, got a page around 8 p.m. from Sifford. Sifford told Temple the governor's plane had encountered lightning and was going to return to St. Louis or Jefferson City, Howard said.

Tom Hunter, who lives near the crash site, said he heard the plane flying overhead.

Mel Carnahan

Missouri's governor died Monday in a plane crash on his way to a campaign rally. Carnahan, a Democrat, was running for the Senate seat held by Republican John Ashcroft in one of the most bitterly contested races this year.



Gov. Melvin Eugene Carnahan

Age: 66
Born: Birch Tree, Mo.
Education: Bachelor's degree in business administration from George Washington University; law degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia
Professional: Agent in the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations during the Korean War; municipal judge, 1960; state representative, 1962-66; majority floor leader, Missouri House, 1964-66; state treasurer, 1980-84; lieutenant governor, 1988-92; Missouri governor, 1992-2000
Personal: Married; four children; two grandchildren

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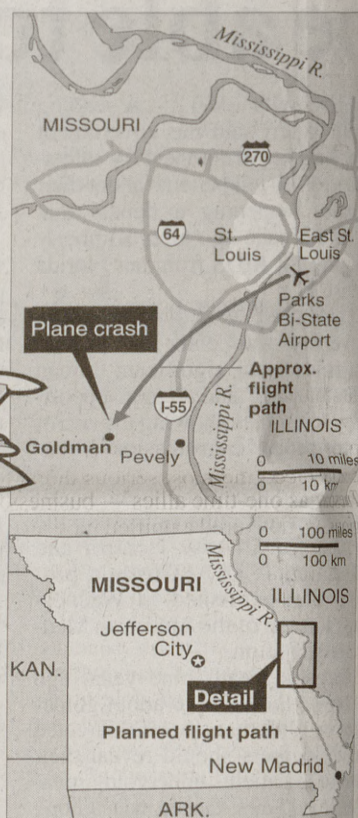
A twin-engine Cessna 335 carrying Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan crashed Monday in rainy, foggy weather. Also aboard were campaign adviser Chris Sifford and the governor's son, Roger, who was piloting the plane.



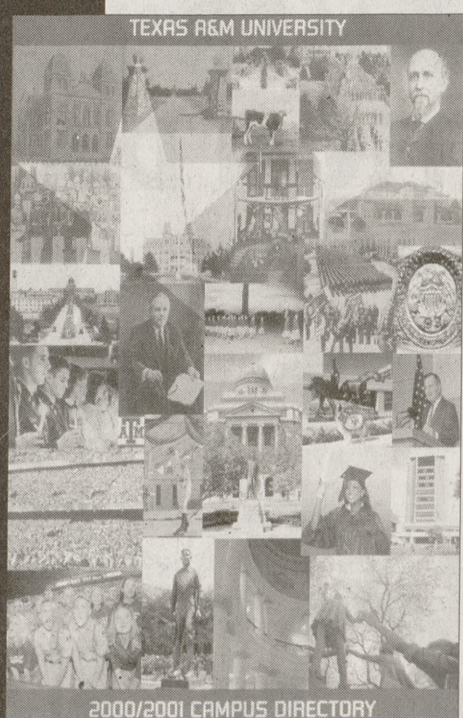
Cessna 335
Length: 34 feet 4 inches
Wingspan: 38 feet 1 inch
Cruising speed: 212 mph

The Cessna 335 can carry four passengers and two crew members. Because its cabin is not pressurized, the aircraft cannot operate above 30,000 feet.

Source: A Field Guide to Airplanes



Wm. J. Castello, F. Duckett



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