

N36900 Power Failure
By Pilot J. Donald Parker

We were flying straight and level at 7300 to 7500 feet in southerly direction with smooth air and no turbulence above cloud layer, just south of Oberlin, Kansas. I felt the engine flutter as if it were out of fuel. I immediately switched the fuel tank selector from left tank to right tank thinking it would regain power. When that failed, I turned the key to try and restart the engine, but the propeller was turning fast enough that I could not tell if the starter ever kicked in. I had no success. We were losing altitude in clouds with no visibility; I switched fuel selector back to left tank hoping for power, but felt nothing. My concentration became focused on instruments, trying to keep reasonable air speed and rate of descent above stall rate and not exceed yellow line airspeed. At one point my altimeter indicated very fast descent after we had lost airspeed and I manually pushed the nose down to maintain speed and not reach stall speed. I over corrected and was losing altitude at a high rate after I over corrected for low airspeed. So I began using considerable force on yoke to get the nose up and slow descent to a reasonable rate, at approximately 1500 feet AGL, we broke out under cloud cover and were able to maintain airspeed of approximately 80-90 MPH. Circling to observe possible emergency landing locations and options, I circled to south parallel to north and south county road and chose to try to make an emergency landing to the north. I turned base leg to road and then turned final, I lined up with the road in a northerly direction for landing to the north. With approximately 500 to 600 feet altitude I detected a high line across the road so I extended full flaps and slowed descent all that I could without reaching stall speed which was approximately 65-70 MPH to try and clear high line wires and draw that crossed road. Concentrating on hi line on final I veered to right of road and had to try and correct heading to get straight with the road before touch down. I had lowered the landing gear after I extended the flaps and when touched down was at about 30 degree angle to road. My right main gear caught the shoulder of the road. It had rained the night before, so the road shoulder was soft and I could not get the plane to straighten up with the road. When I touched down the soft shoulder pulled us across a 4 foot deep bar ditch and bounced, knocking the left gear off on a ditch bank and going into a corn field which was wet and soft and spun around to a stop facing the road about 40 feet off road in the wet corn field with the nose headed west. My wife was with me and had on an apple emergency watch; and that notified her to call 911, about the time she stepped out onto the wing. She did not seem to be hurt and I was not hurt so she got out of the plane and called 911 from on the wing of the plane while I was still in the plane looking for my phone and her glasses. My wife told the emergency operator we went down but did not know our location. The operator told her she could tell our exact location from her call and she had emergency personnel already on the way. My wife told her theres was no fire and we were not injured so there was no need for fire or ambulance, but she sent a sherriff and he arrived within minutes after the call. Before the sherriff arrived a county road grader stopped and the driver assisted in finding my phone and looked for my wife's glasses with no luck. When the sherriff and deputy arrived, the deputy found the glasses behind the rutter pedals on the floor board of the plane. The sherriff escorted us to Oberlin airport where they were kind enough to loan us their courtesy car.