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Subject: Remarks
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REMARKS-

My assessment of the accident:

After the accident I drove over to the crash site along Cattlebaron Road from the intersection of White Settlement Road and Cattlebaron Road, I was amazed at the height of the crest of the hill just north of this intersection as it slopes down to Cattle Parc Dr. where the house we took pictures of is located. It looks like about a 3-4 mile slope from the crest down to the valley where the house sits. Seeing that, it immediately became clear to me as to the cause of the crash.

I was assuming the land was relatively flat between Bourland Field and my friend's house but it certainly is not. I realize now that as I left the house and was flying south toward Bourland, I was flying almost immediately into rising terrain. With this new insight into the topography it becomes obvious as to why the trees were getting closer while I was in level flight. I was thinking there was something wrong with the engine and I must have been pulling very slightly back on the stick to cause a gradual loss of airspeed as I flew into the rising terrain flying south from the house. I had not realized I was flying into rising terrain until viewing the area from the road. I am guessing I made it less than halfway up the slope before impacting the trees in my too-late attempt to reverse course. I now see that by not recognizing the terrain was rising there was no way I was going to get out by heading in any southerly direction at my then-current altitude and airspeed. Any other direction from the house would have been fine.

I never once thought about rising terrain! For some reason it was imbedded in my mind that the terrain all around the house was relatively flat. I was focused on the instrument panel and looking out my side window (instead of ahead) at the rising trees thinking engine problems as the cause of the trees closing in. I can only recall glancing out the bottom of the front window but again, it never occurred to me I was flying into a hill. My last thought about the situation I was in the wind must be pushing me down into the trees and so that was what prompted me to start turning around..... too late.

After driving back to the area, I do not think I made it anywhere near the 2-3 miles Mr. Smelley had stated the crash site was from Cattle Parc Dr. I am of the opinion he over estimated that distance by almost twice as much as it is. I think it was less than a minute before I impacted the trees. After checking the distance on Google Maps, it appears to be about a mile.

I reviewed this with my gyro CFI and he is in agreement with me. He reminded me of all the times we practiced slow flight along the runway and teaching me that to gain back

airspeed you must either drop the nose or cover some distance in level flight for the rotors and aircraft to pick up enough speed to begin a climb.

I was in no position to drop the nose after I knew there was something wrong since the trees were getting ever closer as we flew along. I just figured we would eventually get our speed up by keeping it level. That obviously does not work with rising terrain.

Experience is a wonderful teacher, although it can be humbling and painful. I am acutely aware of what I did wrong and what I should have done. There is not much else I have been thinking about since the accident. Reviewing every aspect over and over.....

I have 78 hours in gyros and my CFI said slow flight recovery training is something we might consider spending some more time on. If I decide to fly again.....

My friend went to the ER and received a thorough check over, and was released that evening. I also went to an ER later that evening just for a checkup. Neither of us received any broken bones or serious injuries, just a few scrapes and bruises and we are both very sore and feel very fortunate. I feel very stupid about the accident as it was totally preventable by simply getting my head out of the cockpit and looking where I was going.