

“Mister Mulligan” crash site north of Crownpoint, NM

DATE September 4, 1936

AIRCRAFT Aircraft racer “Mister Mulligan,” Howard DGA-6, S/N NR273Y

GENERAL LOCATION North of Crownpoint, NM

PEOPLE ABOARD Pilot/owner Benny O. Howard and his wife Maxine

REFERENCES *Gallup Independent* newspaper articles from September 5, 1936, and several Internet websites about the aircraft and associated events.

HISTORY

This historical information was extracted and summarized from the above references

“Mister Mulligan” was the name given to a 1930’s air racer. There was only one built and it was designed and built under the direction of designers Ben O. Howard and Gordon Israel, especially to compete in the *Bendix Trophy Race*. This was a cross-country race that, in 1935 ran from the west coast to the National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio. The plane not only won that trophy, but also the *Thompson Trophy*, a close-course (*closed-course?*) event held at the National Air Races. It was the only aircraft to win both races during the same year. In 1936, “Mister Mulligan” again entered the Bendix Trophy race, which was then flown from New York to Los Angeles. During the event the plane crashed on the Colorado plateau in northern New Mexico.



The crash apparently occurred on September 4, 1936, the day before the articles about it were published. A local Navajo saw the plane flying over his hogan and the local Navajo Day School at about noon. It was trailing smoke and subsequently came down suddenly and crashed in the backyard of another Navajo. The crash was later attributed to a broken propeller. Several other Navajos gathered around the crash and heard the severely wounded pilot and his wife calling for help. However, the Navajos were afraid to do anything, perhaps because some of them had never seen a plane before and they were also afraid of death in any form. Consequently, it was several



hours until some non-Navajos reached the site and removed the pilot, Ben O. Howard, and his 22 year-old wife, Maxine, from the aircraft. In spite of severe injuries, the two recovered, although Ben Howard had part of one leg amputated.

The wreckage remained on site until 1970 until another pilot named Bob Reichardt searched for and found it, thanks to an old Navajo who had witnessed the 1936 event. Reichardt salvaged the wreckage and re-built the plane using information from the remaining parts. Unfortunately, he was killed in 1977 in that aircraft while making a timed run over the Tonopah, Nevada, dry lake.

In 2013, crash explorers attempted to contact local residents for help in finding the crash site. They were told that nobody remembers anything about the event and they are not interested in pursuing the matter. Without local cooperation, finding the site would be difficult.

