

**DAN MORTENSEN'S Amsoil Rutan Racer** apparently got caught in wake turbulence.



... DUG A wingtip into the brush past the scatter pylon in a heat race. ...



... AND CRASHED, destroying the aircraft but barely injured the pilot, as seen in these exclusive photos by Maxine Carlin

Dan Mortensen obviously has a friend in very high places.

Just a few months ago, he found himself in a bad situation: a broken prop trying to shake the engine loose from his Ams/Oil Rutan Racer at 5,000 feet.

Providentially, he looked down to spy an Air National Guard field and subsequently landed the plane safely.

Last month at the Reno National Championship Air Races, he tested fate again and — to the wonder of all who witnessed it — walked away from what should have been a terminal arrival.

He had qualified the Rutan Racer in the racing biplane class at 210.33 mph and was entered in a heat race with three other entries: Pat Hines of Canoga Park, Cal. in the "Sundancer," Don Beck of Tahoe Vista, Cal. in his "Soceress" and Al Kramer of Van Nuys, S. Cal. in the "Cobra."

The start was clean, with Beck leading and Mortensen almost parallel as they approached the scatter pylon. Then it happened.

As Mortensen told it later: "Don Beck was on my right, the pylon was on my left and I had the pole for the turn. I took my eye off of Don to look for the position of the scatter pylon and Don turned in front of me, from my right to my left, and didn't leave me any option because there was another pilot right above me.

"I had nowhere to go but down into the dirt," Mortensen continued. "I think I went into a high speed stall trying to turn to avoid Beck."

The left wingtip of Mortensen's airplane dug into the sagebrush at approximately 200 mph, sending up plumes of dust and sagebrush as it smashed its way across the rough desert terrain.

Mortensen said he remained



# Mortensen Survives ... Again

## Rutan Racer May Be Back

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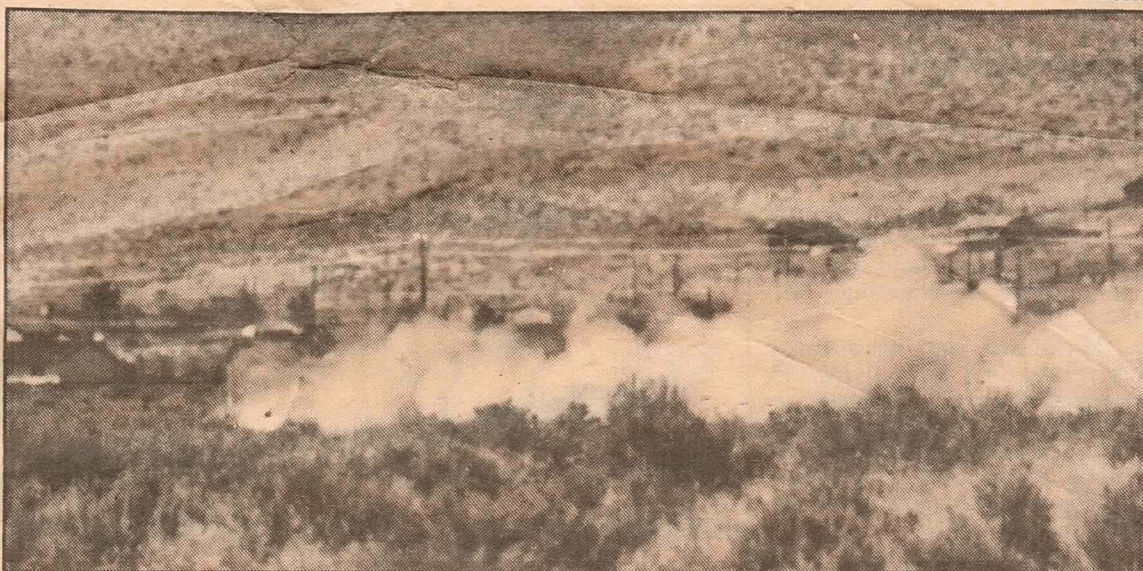
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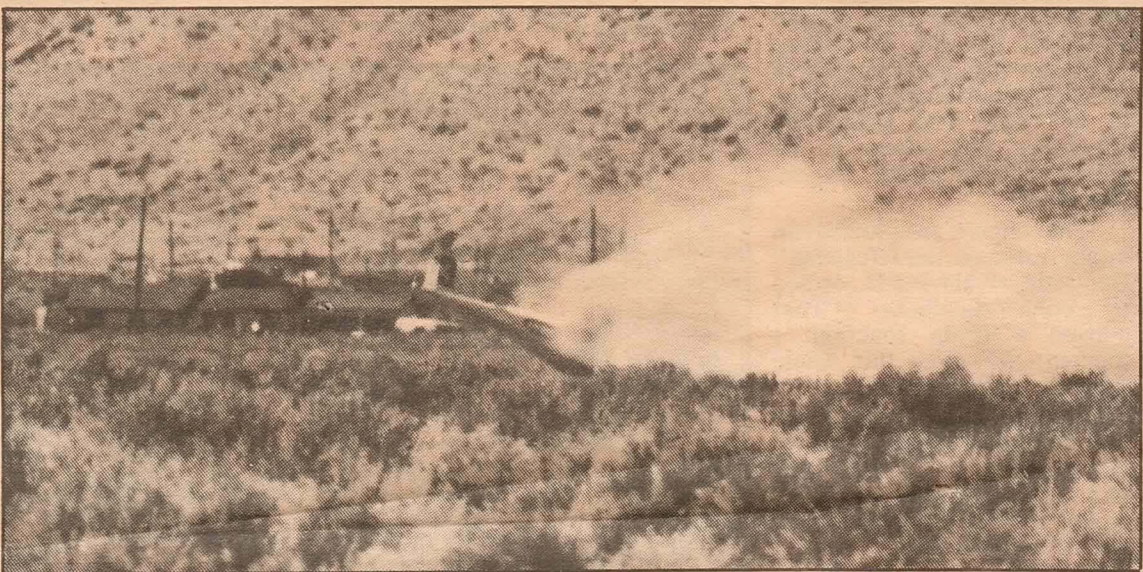
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## Mortensen Survives...

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conscious all the way through the crash.

"I was really surprised, because it was just like sitting in a car going down a bumpy road," he said later. "There was nothing to it. At the first impact, the airplane started to decelerate and I didn't lose consciousness and I thought, 'Well, there's nothing to this, I'll just ride this thing out.' I had nothing to do anyway.

"The airplane finally stopped rolling and I looked up and there's a hole in the canopy and I just hit my quick release on the seatbelt and pushed out."

Mortensen said he knew the airplane would be "totalled" as soon as he hit, but he was surprised he didn't black out.

"That is really a test of Rutan's design," he said. "He said that cockpit would take 22 G's and he was right. He builds a hell of a good airplane."

Mortensen sustained a separated shoulder, sprained ankle, neck and back and a cut on the leg.

After he hit, he said, "I was trying to visualize what the airplane was doing as I rolled through the dirt. I never could figure it out. It's like sitting in a simulator. . . it's really strange because everything stops. It slows down. Everything goes in slow motion. You just sit there and watch little things going on around you."

His most prominent memo-

ry, he said, was of climbing out of the airplane and being spotted by the crowd.

"When I stood up the crowd out along the west boundary could see me stand up and they were all cheering," he said.

Mortensen said he planned to return next year, flying his personal airplane, "Mong," in the sport biplane class. It was later revealed that plans are afoot to rebuild the Rutan Racer, which would really be a comeback story.

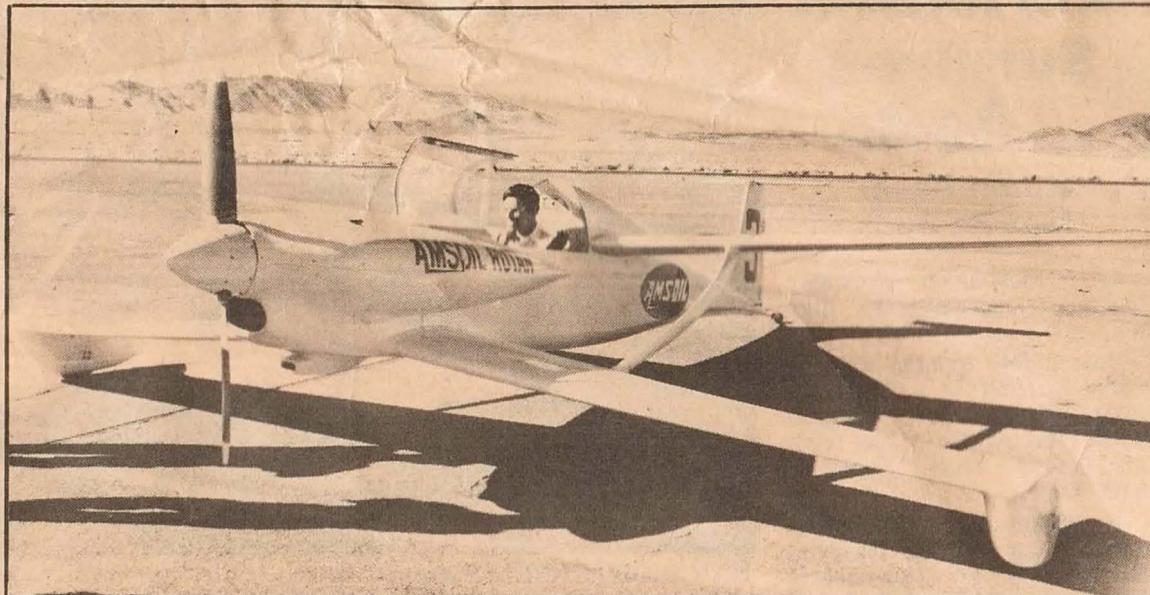
He was not the only racer to see the Nevada terrain up close over the weekend. Airline pilot Chuck Hall of San Diego in the No. 28 "Topsy Too" had just won his heat in the Unlimited Medallion Race at 364 mph and taken the checkered flag when, as he pulled back the power, the engine blew.

"The engine swallowed an intake valve on the left bank," Hall said of his P-51D, owned by John Sandberg. "That started a chain reaction. I thought, 'My God, this whole thing is coming apart.'"

His radio had also gone out and the only notice the crowd and officials had of his problem was a cloud of black smoke coming from the direction of a small lake.

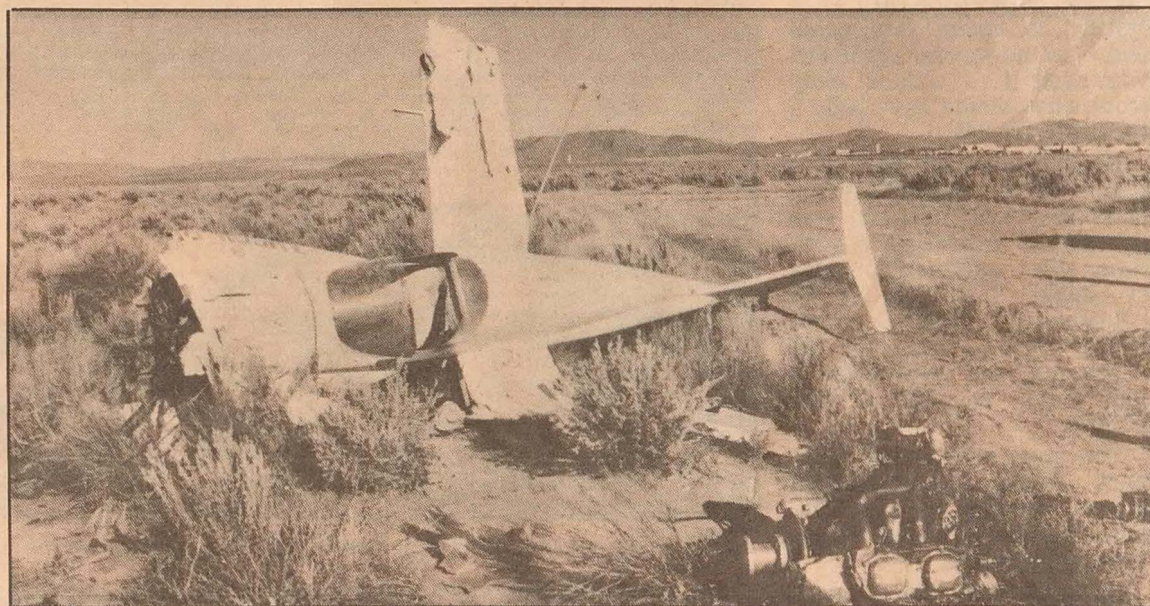
Hall, who flies 747's for a living, said he was most concerned about what his wife, Evelyn, was thinking as she sat in the stands.

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MORTENSEN'S Rutan racer, shortly before his heat race. ...

Bill LeSanche



Wayman Dunlap

... AND AFTERWARDS. Plans have been announced to rebuild it.