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## ON THE NET

Scott E. Thomas documented the entire process of rebuilding in photos posted online at:http://picasaweb.google.com/sthomas11111

LAKE CLEAR — Scott E. Thomas loved the sky.The Saranac Lake pilot had completely restored the 1968 Beechcraft Baron 55 twin-engine plane he was flying Wednesday afternoon, which crashed shortly after takeoff from Adirondack Regional Airport.
Thomas included a smiling self-portrait, taken from inside the cockpit of his plane.
Wearing headphones, shades and a leather jacket, Thomas captioned the photo: "It'll take an undertaker 6 weeks to get the smile off my face when the time comes! Everyone knows I bleed Beechcraft. If you have to ask why, I really don't know that I can explain it. You just have to step inside 'My Office.'"
Mike Caban, a friend from Dallas, said Thomas, who was 49, was well known to the Beechcraft community. He had helped Caban refurbish a plane four years ago.
"He had a special place in my aviation world," Caban said in a telephone interview Thursday.
Narrating the refurbishing process of the plane that crashed Wednesday, Thomas wrote: "I've owned 5 Bonanzas and 2 Barons during my time on Earth, and without a doubt Beechcraft are the finest G.A. airplanes ever made. This airplane is a dandy."
Flying was a passion for Thomas, Caban said, as was restoration. He actively pursued both as a member of the Beechcraft Museum in Tullahoma, Tenn.
Museum Director Lorraine Carter said she was deeply saddened by the loss.
"He did a lot of formation flying," she said, overcome. "He had a wide group of friends."
"He was very involved with Bonanza Osh Kosh," Carter said.
Bonanza refers to the name of a Beechcraft flying and training group that routinely rendezvous all over the United States, Caban said.
Several photos on Thomas's Web album show the pilot in formation, with comments written to memorialize each event.
Caban said Thomas was an experienced pilot.
"He was not new to the plane. He was absolutely passionate about it.
"His contribution to the aviation community may not have been well known in the Saranac Lake region, but his contribution went so far beyond what he did there. We're just all aghast."
Thomas had kept his plane in a hangar at the Adirondack Regional Airport for at least the past five years, according to Airport Manager Chris Kreig.
The FAA said the plane's owner was listed as Intermountain Inc.; there is no local phone listing for the company.
Caban said Thomas was a pathologist and was not married.
Results from the autopsy were not released Thursday. No funeral information was available, either.
The Federal Aviation Administration said Thursday morning that it has turned the investigation over to the National Transportation Safety Board.
"If it becomes an accident, we turn it over to the NTSB," said spokesman Jim Peters.
That agency takes a lead role in an investigation depending on condition of the aircraft or if

there is a serious injury or death, Peters said.
The cause of the crash is still being investigated.