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B-3

## When plane fell, lake was near to soften the landing

□ A single-engine Cessna stalled, then crashed into Lake Virginia near Rollins College, dodging skiers and sunbathers.

By Luz Villareal

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — A single-engine Cessna plane crashed into Lake Virginia Saturday morning, steering clear of water skiers and sunbathers on the shore by Rollins College.

The pilot, 24-year-old Carlos Curti of Orlando, was not injured. He said the plane's engine began losing power four or five minutes after leaving Orlando Executive Airport. Curti aimed for the lake when he realized he could not make it back to the airport.

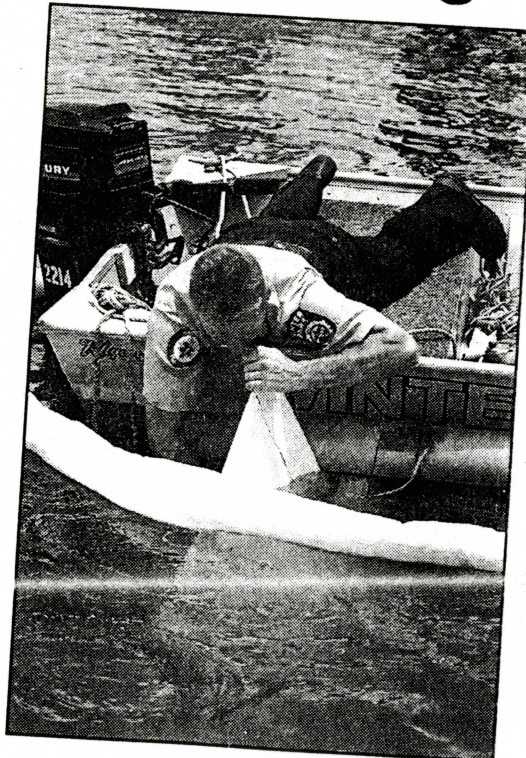


Curti

"It was either land in the trees, a busy road where I could hurt people or the lake," he said. "The lake is a lot softer."

Curti, who said he has a student pilot's license and flies at least once a week, said he remained calm and tried to glide the plane down softly. He panicked only when water began rushing into the cockpit before he managed to escape.

"When I got scared was when I was strapped to the seat," he said. "My first re-



JOHN RAOUX/SENTINEL

Winter Park firefighter Craig Rosewicz, holding the tip of the plane's tail, sets up a buoy to absorb any fuel that may leak.

action was to get out of there. The airplane was underwater in 20 seconds."

A ski boat picked Curti up. "He did a great job landing," said Todd Hicks, who witnessed the crash from the shore. "It was wild."