

Report on the Incident of Thursday, September 13, 2012

On Thursday, September 13, John Ellis, pilot of the PT-19, had offered his piloting services to help the airport promote the September 22, 2012 Open House and Fun Day. The intention of the media event was to provide reporters from the Southeast Missourian an opportunity to take a helicopter ride and an airplane ride so they could promote our event. During a quick briefing with John, I told him to give the reporters a ride over the City, and then when arriving back at the airport, I asked him to do a fly-by past our "flour drop" target to see how the event would look and to photograph it for the public. I advised John of the rules that we had established for the event and that he should not fly lower than 500 foot Mean Sea Level (MSL). John provided a ride for the first reporter, Lauren Simon. The ride went well and was uneventful, as John took her over the City and came back to the airport. He finished with a couple passes over the flour bombing site to give her an idea of how the event would work by throwing out a flour bomb. In this way, she could see what the event would look like so that she could promote it.

After they landed, John seat belted Jim Samon, the second reporter, into the PT-19 and they took off. Similarly, after they flew over town, they returned to perform a fly-by of the "flour drop" site. Laura Simon, Jessica Sexton, with the City's Public Information Office, and I were sitting in a mule vehicle watching the aircraft line up for an approach to the target area. While we were expecting the aircraft to fly by and pass our location, it appeared to get lower and lower until it seemed something was wrong and that it appeared to be flying too slow and too low. It sounded as if John tried to give the aircraft power, but his left wing hit the ground and the aircraft pivoted to the left on that point. The propeller hit the ground, both landing gears were sheared, and the aircraft came to an upright stop. The three of us drove in the mule to the aircraft, and John was obviously bleeding from his eye, but able to get out on his own. The passenger was also able to get out of the aircraft, but was complaining of rib pain. John stated to me several times that he was very sorry for messing up my event. He stated that he stalled the aircraft and just did not have enough altitude to get out of it. Both were driven to Cape Aviation where responding medical personnel tended to both. They were both transported to a local hospital.

After John was released by the hospital, he came back to the airport and asked us to let him look at the aircraft. We escorted him to the aircraft and when he returned to the ramp I spoke with him. I was told that John had twenty-plus (20+) stitches above his eye and nose. John again apologized to me for "messing up". He also stated that if he had fifty (50) more feet, he may have been able to recover. I told him I was just glad he was able to walk away from the incident.

I contacted George Holtman at the St. Louis Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Flight Standards District Office and provided him the information of the incident. Mr. Holtman asked me to secure the site and to ask for a copy of the video taken by the

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Southeast Missourian reporter. Joel Pettus, also from the same office, called me back late in the day. Mr. Pettus notified me that he was sending an inspector to the airport tomorrow.

Mr. Pettus contacted the airport office at approximately 9:15 a.m., Friday morning, September 14, 2012, and advised us that we could move the aircraft. He stated that they were able to get enough information from the video, which was broadcast on YouTube by the Southeast Missourian, and could see the damage. He said they were sending two FAA investigators, Mr. Charles Heck and Mr. Louis Bettis, who would look at the aircraft after we had it hangared.

Bruce W. Loy
Airport Manager
Cape Girardeau Regional Airport
September 14, 2012

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area. Blue ink scribbles are visible around the box.