



Record of Conversation

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Aviation Accident Investigator
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Date: December 9 and 14, 2016, March 14, 2017
Person Interviewed: Richard Sterling, mechanic and CFI
NTSB Accident Number: ANC17FA009

Narrative:

Mr. Sterling is the owner of Sterling Wings Aviation, LLC, where recent maintenance was performed on the accident airplane, Citabria 7GCBC N88452. Mr. Sterling is also a certified flight instructor (CFI) who provided biennial reviews for the accident pilot in the previous years. NTSB accident investigator Eric Swenson was present during the interview on December 9. This is a summary of Mr. Sterling's statements.

- Mr. Sterling had been a certified mechanic since about December 2010 and worked for NorthStar Aviation LLC prior to buying the business and renaming it Sterling Wings Aviation, LLC. He earned his Inspection Authorization (IA) in about 2014.
- He was also a certificated commercial pilot and flight instructor (CFI).
- Mr. Sterling stated that he performed the following maintenance on the airplane the week prior to the accident:
 - Replaced the engine throttle cable due to stiffness.
 - Replaced the alternator on December 6 due to electrical problems during the previous attempted flight on December 2.
 - Removed the transponder for maintenance.
 - Installed Landis 2000 skis.
 - Installed Micro VG kit.
- Mr. Sterling stated that the airplane's engine was running rough at idle the morning of the accident. He brought the airplane back into the hangar to warm it up. The outside air temperature was -25° F that morning. He sumped the fuel system to drain any water out. He did not observe any debris. He observed that the fuel quantity was at $\frac{3}{4}$ of a tank. Once the airplane warmed up, it was pushed outside again and ran fine for Mr. Kelly.

- He noted that the accident pilot, Mr. Kelly, looked well rested and healthy the morning of the accident. He noted Mr. Kelly made two unusual statements that morning. Mr. Kelly told Mr. Sterling's son who was working at the hangar, "flying is dangerous." He also noted that Mr. Kelly did not seem excited to fly. Mr. Sterling thought it was probably because it was so cold outside. He heard Mr. Kelly say, "I guess I have to go do this," before departing.
- Mr. Sterling said that the purpose of the flight was to test the performance of the airplane with the newly installed VGs, in accordance with the Micro VG supplemental type certificate (STC) guidance.
- Mr. Sterling provided Mr. Kelly with biennial flight reviews (BFR) for many years. He characterized Mr. Kelly as a cautious and careful pilot who always used his checklist. He did practice stalls during the BFRs, but could not recall if he had ever performed them in the Citabria. He usually flew in Mr. Kelly's Cessna 180. When Mr. Sterling performed practice stalls, he usually set up at 3,500 feet. He said that recovery after a stall was usually within 75 feet but could be as much as 200 feet.
- When asked if Mr. Kelly expressed any concerns about the accident airplane, he said that Mr. Kelly experienced some type of wind shear event with his granddaughter onboard, and airplane dropped very rapidly near the runway. Mr. Kelly wanted the Micro VGs installed to improve the handling qualities of the airplane.
- Mr. Sterling stated that he did not install or modify the pilot seat in the airplane.

The end.