WITNESS INTERVIEW RECORD

Richard Parker, ASI

Date August 5, 2000

Person Contacted: Mr. Kenneth Carlton

Organization: Rogers Helicopters

Phone Number:

Subject: Pilot Observations About The Accident

Mr. Carlton is the pilot-in-command of the accident helicopter. He was interviewed at his hotel in Elko Nevada.

Mr. Carlton summarized his flying background as follows. He flew in Vietnam in the late 1960's as a helicopter pilot in the U. S. Army and accumulated about 3000 hours. He flew helicopters in Alaska in 1971 before joining the Kern County (California) Sheriff's Department where he flew co-pilot between 1972 and 1976. He has since flown for the Army Guard, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and a corporation. He has about 7,000 hours flight time in helicopters and 3,000 hours in fixed wing aircraft. He joined Rogers Helicopters in January 2000 and has since flown about 125 hours in the 206. He last attended a Bell factory training school for the model 407 in April, 1999.

On Tuesday, August 1st, he worked from 0630 to 2030, on the 2nd he worked from 0730 to 2030 and on the day of the accident he worked from 0730 until the time of the accident. He flew only 2 or 3 hours each day and reported that, on the day of the accident he felt well and rested.

On the day of the accident he had flown 3 flights, one ferry flight to Montello and 2 communications missions to place repeaters. There were no discrepancies on the aircraft. The only abnormality he noted was an unexplained "thump" sound heard by him and one other crewmember during the second communication flight. He heard the "thump" and thought that he felt it in the airframe. The winds were gusty and he thought it might have been due to turbulence. After the flight, since there was no mechanic on site, he looked at the rotor head himself but saw nothing unusual.

Between 1500 and 1830 there was a wind storm with wind gusts of 50 – 60 knot associated with a thunderstorm that passed west of their location. He tied down the main and tail rotor blades

before the windstorm and by 1845 the weather was clear enough to return to Wells and the wind had decreased to 5 – 10 knots.

He pre-flighted the helicopter, untied the rotors and hooked up the battery that he had disconnected to prevent inadvertent discharge at the remote location. He said that, after boarding the passengers, the start and pre-takeoff checks were normal. He performed a normal hydraulics-off control check. He "picked the helicopter up" to a 3-foot hover height and glanced down at the engine torque gauge that he recalled was at 80 percent torque. Suddenly, the helicopter did a "violent snap roll" to the right coming to rest upright. He estimated the whole event only lasted about ¼ of a second. The first thing he recalled was dirt hitting the helicopter and he could not be certain if the helicopter rolled all the way over or not. He was certain he had not started his transition to forward flight.

He added that the wind was on the nose of the helicopter at less than 10 knots, there was no yaw associated with the event, it was pure roll, and the engine operated "fine" the entire time. The engine was still running after the accident and he had to shut it off manually. There was no change in audible tone prior to the roll, although he may have heard another "thump" sound similar to the heard on the earlier flight. The anti-torque pedals and collective did not move or provide any abnormal feedback prior to the roll.

He said the landing pad elevation is about 5,000 feet msl, the temperature was about 80 degrees Fahrenheit and there was 350 pounds fuel aboard.

When the Safety Board investigator inquired about the ¼-second duration of the event and how brief a time period this is, the pilot emphasized the violent nature of the roll. It was the pilot's opinion that even an abrupt, full right cyclic input could not have produced the rate of roll he experienced.

WITNESS INTERVIEW RECORD

Richard Parker, ASI

Date: August 5,2000

Person Contacted: Mr. Cameron Dingman

Organization: Bureau of Land Management

Phone Number: [redacted]

Subject: Observations of Accident

Mr. Dingman is a helicopter crew supervisor with the Bureau of Land Management. He has held this position since 1995 and has had "lots" of safety training but he is neither a pilot nor mechanic.

Mr. Dingman said that on the day of the accident he was supervising a crew of about 10 people assigned to place radio repeater equipment in proximity of a fire near Montello, Nevada. The crew originated in Wells, Nevada in the morning. The pilot and 2 crewmen, who were later in the day to be the 3 persons aboard the helicopter during the accident, flew the helicopter to the helicopter atttack (helitack) base at Montello. Mr. Dingman and the other support personnel drove to the base. After arrival at the base, 2 flights were flown during the day to place radio repeaters.

About 1600 hours (PDT), a high-wind warning was issued and the wind started to blow. The pilot tied down the rotors of the helicopter using a cap that fit over the rotor tips and tied to the steps in front and the skid on the right side in back. The wind blew hard for about 2 hours reaching about 45 mph and subsided about 1800. About 1830 the wind had dropped to 10-12 knots and the pilot thought it would be safe to return to Wells. The pilot removed the rotor tiedowns and was observed putting them aboard the helicopter and preflighting the helicopter as his 2 passengers were putting their equipment aboard. When they boarded the helicopter the pilot was in the right front seat, one passenger was in the left front seat and the second passenger was in the left rear seat. The helicopter was headed west and the winds were steady from the west at 10 - 15 knots.

Mr. Dingman thought the engine start and pre-takeoff checks seemed normal and the pilot advised via the radio he was leaving. The helicopter lifted to a 2 or 3-foot hover and Mr. Dingman looked away. He then heard a noise that he thinks may have been the rotors striking the ground, and when he looked back the helicopter was rolling quickly to the right. He recalled seeing one rotor

blade strike the left side of the fuselage at shoulder height of the left front passenger and down the left side of the aircraft. The engine sound level seemed to increase. Mr. Dingman called for his people to call [on the radio] for help and when he looked back at the helicopter it was upright on its skids, 30 feet north of where it had been and still headed west.

Mr. Dingman said he did not recall any side-to-side, fishtailing motion. Using his hand he described a rolling maneuver. He is certain that the helicopter was hovering clear of the ground and the wind was steady at 10 - 12 knots. Within one hour the wind was calm.

He ran, with others, to the helicopter. The engine was still running but was spooling down as they reached it. The pilot emerged from the aircraft with a look of confusion and disbelief on his face. The left front passenger was unconscious for 5 - 10 minutes and then regained consciousness but was incoherent. The passenger in the left rear seat was unconscious and did not respond to CPR.

Mr. Dingman said that after the accident the rotor retention straps were still on the shelf in the cabin.

All of the witnesses were in a group about 50 feet south of where the helicopter lifted off.. No maintenance was performed that day. A 50 hour airframe inspection and a 150 hour engine inspection were performed earlier in the week.