

Two victims perish in Sunday plane crash

LA Airport> Craft went down just after take-off

By Tris DeRoma

Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at 12:25 pm (Updated: December 10, 7:58 pm)

A woman from Harmony, Minn. has confirmed that her fiancé was one of the victims in Sunday's plane crash. Darla Reynolds said Monday that the man's name is Mike Fjetland, 51, a successful and prominent Minnesota businessman



Tris DeRoma

This was the scene of the Sunday plane crash that killed two out-of-state businessmen.

Reynolds told The Los Alamos Monitor that the last text he sent to her was on Sunday morning. It said he was about to take off from the Los Alamos County Airport to fly to Chandler, Ariz.

She said they have a house in Stellar Airpark and she was going to join him later. With Fjetland was his longtime friend and business partner, Kevin Burrs of Corwith, Iowa.

Susan Burrs, Kevin's wife, later confirmed to the Los Alamos Monitor that crash authorities contacted her earlier about her husband.

"He was a great man, always willing to help everybody, and always did help everybody," Susan Burrs said. "He was called on quite a bit by his friends and family."

Susan Burrs also said Burrs was a good dad to his two sons. She added that he worked as a design engineer and that he too was looking forward to the trip with his best friend.

Reynolds said one of the goals of their trip was to solidify a business deal in Denver, Colo. When Fjetland did not call her at the prescribed time, she had a family friend who was also an experienced pilot, help in trying to track him down. That's when they came across a story about the early Sunday plane crash just south of LA Airport on LAMonitor.com.

From there, she said, they were able to make contact with investigators in New Mexico. The Los Alamos Monitor was able to confirm through a description of the plane and a cross reference of the tail number supplied by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Even though she was still grieving, she thought it was important that people know what kind of a man Fjetland was.

"He was a very smart man, very business oriented." Reynolds said. "Anything anyone ever said went into his head and he turned it into a business deal and made money off it."

She also described him as unflappable. "He was always happy, you could never make him mad or upset. To him, everything was going to be OK, he would always figure something out. He was a very sweet man," she said.

Not much is known about his friend, who Reynolds said he picked up in Iowa.

"I was supposed to be in that plane, but I decided I was going to have a late Thanksgiving and an early Christmas with my adult children, so I stayed home," she said. "He then told me that he was going to make it a guys' weekend and take his friend he's known since grade school. He was very excited."

Fjetland and Reynolds shared a farm in Harmony that has its own hangar. That's where he started his journey from, she said. The two men were trying to make it to Chandler when the inclement weather forced them into Los Alamos on Saturday morning. The last text he sent her was at 7:56 a.m. Sunday. It simply read "Good morning sweetheart, I'm in my plane, it's warming up. I'm going to try it again. I love you."

The plane crashed around 8:15 a.m., about one mile south of the Los Alamos County Airport in Omega Canyon, on land that is owned by the U.S. Dept. of Energy. On Sunday, The Los Alamos Fire Department and police used a section of Canyon Rim Trail off of East Road as a staging area to get to the crash.

The National Transportation Safety Board has since taken over the crash site, and investigators are due at the site 9 a.m. Tuesday to start their examination of what caused the crash.

According to sources at the Federal Aviation Administration, Fjetland was flying a Husky A-1C-200, manufactured by Aviat Aircraft. It was built in 2012, and was powered by a Lycoming 10-360-A1D6 engine.

This particular model's gross weight is 2,250 pounds. Depending on option choices the Husky model can have an additional payload variance between 842 and 925 pounds.



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Submitted by Carol A. Clark on December 8, 2013 - 1:22pm



Scene of this morning's plane crash in Los Alamos Canyon. Photo by Greg Kendall/ladaily.com

Firefighters survey this morning's plane crash site. Photo by Greg Kendall/ladaily.com

UPDATE: The County just released a statement saying The Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI) has completed its investigation at the site of the single engine plane crash that occurred at approximately 8:10 a.m. today on Canyon Rim Trail just south of the Los Alamos Airport. The OMI findings have not yet been released.



By **CAROL A. CLARK**
Los Alamos Daily Post

Driving east past the airport heading for coffee at the Los Alamos Cooperative Market, a Los Alamos woman witnessed an inbound plane disappear from the sky this morning.

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"It was about 8 a.m. and I saw snow whirling down near the far end of the airport and then a little plane coming out of that whirling snow," Patty Wills told the *Los Alamos Daily Post*. "It was about halfway down the runway when it pulled up and banked toward me, making a U-turn like it was heading for Santa Fe. I looked up in the sky for the plane but couldn't see it."

Wills recalled entering the Co-op to buy her coffee and seeing smoke when she came back out.

"There was a humongous ball of black smoke ... really big ... really black," she said. "I thought, 'Oh God the plane' and called 911. I got in my car and drove past where I saw the smoke and the fire emergency vehicles were already getting there ... it's kind of frightening."

Wills drove on to her job at the Pajarito Brewpub & Grill in Los Alamos.

Firefighters from the Los Alamos Fire Department responded to the scene and Deputy Fire Chief Justin Grider confirmed this morning that the plane had crashed into Los Alamos Canyon.

"There are an unknown number of victims on the plane," Grider said during an interview earlier today, adding that the crash site has been sealed off.

Los Alamos County Public Information Officer Julie Habiger said in a statement this morning that the single engine plane crashed on the Canyon Rim Trail near N.M. 502 and the entrance of Los Alamos, just south of the Los Alamos Airport. The Canyon Rim Trail is closed due to the accident.

No information is available for release yet about the number of passengers, pilot of the plane, tail number or make of the plane, she said.

A fire at the scene of the crash has been extinguished, Habiger said, and crews are preserving the scene for the FAA investigation, which is now pending.

"The Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI) is on scene," Habiger said. "We do NOT have confirmation of any deaths at this time."

She said information on any deaths will come from the OMI, which is closed today.

"The public and media are asked to stay clear of the crash site and Canyon Rim Trail parking lot along N.M. 502 to allow fire and police responders to complete their work," Habiger said.

The *Los Alamos Daily Post* will continue to report information on this plane crash as it becomes available.

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