

Attachment 12

to Operational Factors / Human Performance Group Chairman's Factual Report

DCA00MA005

**SWISHER INTERNATIONAL GROUP INC.
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MEMORANDUM

TO : Kenneth Egge, National Transportation Safety Board

FROM : Robert A. Britton

SUBJECT : Lear 35 crash (Payne Stewart plane)

DATE : November 5, 1999

Mr. Egge,

I am the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Swisher International Group Inc. ("SWR"). On October 20, 1999 I was a passenger on the Lear 35 jet that later crashed while carrying Payne Stewart and several other people. Incidentally, our co-pilot was the same young lady that served as co-pilot on the fatal flight. This was my only time in that aircraft. Previously, SWR had access to corporate aircraft. Through a predecessor company, we had a Falcon 10, two Mitsubishi MU-2's, and later, a shared ownership program with Netjets on a Citation after the owned aircraft were sold.

SWR chartered the plane for a one-day trip between Jacksonville, FL – Wheeling, WV – Jacksonville, FL. I was only on the portion of the trip from Wheeling to Jacksonville, which was the last leg of the trip. A total of four passengers, all SWR executives, were on that flight to Florida.

As I mentioned to you and your staff during our phone call, we experienced a few "events" that might be of interest to your investigation. First, when the plane was stating to taxi and it started its right engine (when facing forward, the right side of the aircraft) there was a large blue/ grey cloud of smoke accompanied by the strong smell of kerosene. We brought it to the attention of the pilot (who told us before we took off that his father owned the charter company). I believe that he shut the engine down, but I could not swear to it. We waited for about one or two minutes on the tarmac, and then proceeded to the takeoff area. Obviously, if the engine was shut down, it was restarted. We were talking and there was a fair amount of noise from the engine(s), which is why I do not recall if the right engine was shut down or not. The noise was not of an unusual nature. We saw no further indication of smoke. Later on during the flight, the pilot said that the engine had been running a bit rich and at no time was the smoke a safety concern. No smoke entered the cabin, to my knowledge. All we noticed was the kerosene smell.

The second "event" deals with the interior air conditioning/ heating system. Once airborne the cabin was warm. We asked the pilot to put on the air conditioning to cool things off. When it came on it was blowing very hard, and before long the cabin was quite cold. We then asked the pilot to try to regulate the temperature. It then got very warm inside. We again asked the crew to regulate the temperature. It then got very cold. This went on for the rest of the flight - either too warm or too cool.

The third "event" deals with the very high temperatures in the side panel next to my seat. I was in a rear-facing seat on the left side (when facing the front) of the plane. Therefore, the panel was by my right side. It was so hot that I could not put my hand or leg next to it for fear of burning it. The panel was very hot to the touch. I made certain not to touch it during the flight for more than a second (to see if it was any cooler) after I touched it the first time. I did not bring it to the attention of the crew.


The flight itself was fine. We had a smooth trip with no unusual bumps or maneuvers. For the flight, the crew had put on board cheeses, vegetables, chips, soda, water and beer. The pilot and/ or co-pilot had some food and maybe some water.

In addition to myself, we had on board:

- Tom Ryan, EVP Sales & Marketing
- Nick Cevera, EVP Operations
- Joe Augustus, SVP Government Relations

All these individuals are out of our Jacksonville office and can be reached at 904-353-4311 or 800-843-3731.

I hope this helps you in your investigation.

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