



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Leah D. Yeager
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: March 21, 2014
Person Contacted: Mr. John Buckingham
NTSB Accident Number: CEN14FA163

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Buckingham stated that the pilot planned to fly over his home that afternoon to show him and another mutual friend the airplane he recently purchased. Mr. Buckingham, who was also a retired military pilot, said he was standing outside his home about ¼-mile from the accident site, when he first saw the airplane approach from east to west. The airplane flew over a set of power lines and cleared them by about five feet at an estimated speed of 200-230 knots. He said the airplane then made a sharp right hand turn toward the north before it pitched straight up with the nose of the airplane going "pure vertical" and performed a "hammerhead stall." Mr. Buckingham said the pilot kicked full right rudder, descended, and recovered from the dive about 20 feet above the ground. The airplane then headed toward the south and flew over the witness's home at a height of 20-feet-high above the roof.

Mr. Buckingham said that as the airplane flew over his home, he was yelling out loud to the pilot to "Just stop!" He said the pilot then made two more "extremely low" passes. On the fifth and final pass, the pilot again flew east to west and cleared Mr. Buckingham's home by about 5 feet, before making a right 90-degree turn to the north. Mr. Buckingham said he then ran around the side of his home, when he heard a shotgun-like sound followed by an explosion. Mr. Buckingham thought the pilot had overstressed the airplane. The witness then saw smoke, realized the airplane had crashed and responded to the accident site.

Mr. Buckingham said that he has seen the pilot "push the limit of an airplane and his ability as a pilot" before, but not nearly as low to the ground as he did on the day of the accident. He also stated the pilot may have been under the influence of alcohol during the flight.



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region –Dallas, Texas

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: Mark Heckle

When: March 26, 2014

In a telephone conversation, Mr. Heckle stated that the pilot had called him at 1614 MDT on the day of the accident and asked him where he was. Mr. Heckle told him he was driving to a mutual friends home. The pilot told him that he was going to fly over their friend's home in about 10 minutes. The pilot did not mention where he was departing from (he assumed Front Range Airport), but the friend said that he did not hear any background noise and assumed he was not calling from the airplane. At 1638 MDT, the pilot tried to call again (Mr. Heckle assumed this time it was from the airplane because it was noisy in the background), but the call did not go through. At 1640, the pilot called the friend again from the airplane, established communication, and told him he was two minutes out and would be approaching from the east.

Mr. Heckle said that he was standing outside his friend's home along with the friend, his wife and another mutual friend. He estimated they were about 600 yards away from where the airplane eventually would crash.

Mr. Heckle said the pilot made the first pass over the home about 300-foot-high above the house. He then turned and went "straight up into a fake stall." The airplane then nosed over and the pilot recovered about 250 feet above the ground, before making a turn to the east. The pilot then made three more passes over the house that were "pretty low" and he could see the pilot in the cockpit. The airplane entered a right turn and disappeared from their view behind the home. That is when they heard a crash sound followed by another crash sound then saw black smoke.

Mr. Heckle said he was not a pilot and had been friends with the pilot for 25 years. He had flown with him several times before and never experienced or had seen the pilot fly like he did on the day of the accident. Mr. Heckle said the pilot had flown over his home, which was about 5 miles east of the accident site, the week before in the accident airplane, but not nearly as low.

Mr. Heckle said the pilot had two DUI's several years ago, and there was time that he was very concerned about his drinking. However, over the past year he had met a

woman, had reorganized his finances and was doing really well. Mr. Heckle said the pilot sounded “normal” over the phone and was excited about his new airplane.

When asked what the pilot’s preferred alcohol was when he was drinking, Mr. Heckle said it was either Famous Grouse or Highland Mist whiskey.

Mr. Heckle said the pilot was an excellent pilot; however, he was unsure as to why he would be flying so low over homes and busy roads, especially during rush hour. His only reasoning was that maybe the pilot felt he had an audience and was “showing off.” Their mutual friend, who owned the home the pilot flew over, was a retired Air Force pilot who flew jets in the military and the pilot had always wanted to fly a fighter jet. Mr. Heckle said, “The audience may have made it all that more fun for him.”

Leah D. Yeager
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Central Region – Dallas, Texas

Record of Telephone Conversation
Person Interviewed: Shawn Vinson
Date: March 25, 2014
Subject: CEN14FA163

During the telephone conversation, Mr. Vinson stated he was a retired military pilot and was currently employed as a pilot for United Airlines. He said that he observed the airplane from his home that was located about 1/8th of a mile from the accident site. The time was about 4:45 MDT. Mr. Vinson said the airplane was making low altitude, high-bank turns, and "wing-over" maneuvers for about five minutes before it impacted terrain. He said the airplane was continually operating in a "high kinetic energy" manner where each maneuver went immediately into another maneuver. Mr. Vinson thought the pilot had to have been a very experienced aerobatic pilot to maneuver the airplane the way he did. He said the pilot flew from one maneuver directly into another maneuver and the power was at a high RPM the entire time. There was no "relaxing" between maneuvers and he estimated the degree of bank during the turns was between 80-110 degrees. The witness said that when the airplane recovered from the wing-over maneuvers, it leveled about 50 to 70-feet-high above the ground.

On the last wing-over he saw the airplane going nose down and thought he did not have room to recover. The nose kept pointing down and as the pilot started to pull up, he saw the wings roll level then rock about 15 degrees to the right, then back to level, then it dropped behind a ridge where it impacted terrain. Based on Mr. Vinson's experience he thought due to the excessive wing loading that the airplane may have encountered an accelerated stall.

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