

## Record of Telephone Conversation

Name: Eric Eickholt

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Date: Aug 06, 2013

Prepared By: Kevin Rowse, Wichita FSDO Aviation Safety Inspector

Description: Mr. Eickholt is a witness in the fatal aircraft accident involving Rufus M. Woods on July 28, 2013

---

This interview was done via telephone on August 06, 2013 at 1345. Mr. Eickholt was fixing fence in a pasture approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to the north of the accident site. Mr. Eickholt stated the following:

- Mr. Eickholt stated that the weather at the time of the crash was 50' overcast. This was based on power poles. He could see the top of one, but not the second, if you were to put it on top of the other. The visibility was estimated at one and one half miles. It was raining at the time of the crash.
- He could hear above him what sounded like an aircraft circling. He thought he could hear two planes.
- He saw the flash and heard a pop. The flash was like a mist or vapor when the aircraft hit the ground.
- The aircraft engine was running at a constant, high RPM until impact.
- After the impact, he could still hear another airplane.
- He drove over to the wreckage, and then called 911.

## Record of Telephone Conversation

Name: David Hilker

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Date: July 31, 2013

Prepared By: Kevin Rowse, Wichita FSDO Aviation Safety Inspector

Description: Mr. Hilker is a witness in the fatal aircraft accident involving Rufus M. Woods on July 28, 2013

---

This interview was done via telephone on July 31, 2013 at 11:57. ASI James Lamb also observed and recorded notes from the conversation. Mr. Hilker in N88XL and Rufus Woods in N131RP began the day departing from Cimarron, KS with an ultimate destination of Oshkosh, WI. They were flying in a loose formation and in radio contact with each other on frequency 122.75. They had two scheduled fuel stops, one in Atlantic, IA and the other at an airport near the Mississippi River closer to Wisconsin. The following is what Mr. Hilker mentioned during the interview.

- They left the Cimarron airport at approximately 0830 and flew over a ranch near Cedar Bluff that one of the men owned. There was weather north and east of their route, so they diverted to Larned, KS. There were a total of seven men in the group from various parts of western Kansas. Each with their RV aircraft, all traveling to Oshkosh, WI. These other men also deviated to Larned to wait out the weather.
- Shortly before noon it looked better (the clouds got higher) and Rusty and Dave were the first to depart Larned. They used weather information that was provided by Chris Pinkston, via an I-Pad.
- Rusty (Rufus) made a comment "we're coming up on Lucas." Dave climbed to 7500' MSL. Rusty asks Dave what heading he was on, "025." Dave looked behind and could see Rusty maybe 1 mile behind. Rusty called again wanting Dave's heading information. Dave mentioned that Rusty was at his 5 o'clock position and 3-5 hundred feet below. They were 1000' above a cloud layer and maybe 4000'-5000' below an overcast layer. The inflight visibility was 4-5 miles.

- Dave mentioned that north of Lucas, Rusty was flying erratic, “kinda here and there. At one time he was pitched up 20-25 degrees and that pitch wasn’t needed to avoid any clouds.”
- North of Lucas the communications stopped.
- Dave-“I went on north. It all cleared up south east of Concordia. I checked for an ELT and heard nothing. I landed at Clay Center and started calling friends and family to see if Rusty had contacted anyone.”
- Dave said that Rusty had no IFR skills, but was a good VFR pilot.
- Rusty’s aircraft was equipped with a True Track, 3 axis autopilot, a KMD-150 moving map with GPS and an Advanced Flight Systems instrument display.
- They were not utilizing Flight Following from Center and they did not file a VFR Flight Plan.
- Throughout the day Rusty did not act or say anything unusual nor did Dave have any concerns, other than the excessive pitch changes.

## *Record of Telephone Conversation*

**Name:** David E. Hilker  
**Address:** [REDACTED]  
**Phone:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** July 31, 2013  
**Description:** Witness for 7-31-13 fatal aircraft accident near Lucas, KS involving Rufus M. Woods.

---

This telecom with Mr. Hilker was conducted by ASI Kevin Rowse. ASI James Lamb observed and also recorded notes from the conversation. This telephone interview started on July 31, 2013 at approximately 11:57 am and ended on July 31, 2013 at approximately 12:24 pm. Mr. Hilker stated the following:

- Hilker advised he had been flying an airplane bearing registration number N8XL.
- He and Rufus Woods departed the Cimmaron airport (8K8) in separate aircraft on July 28 at approximately 8:30 am.
- They were planning on flying by a ranch near Cedar Bluff before proceeding to the first landing point, the Atlantic, IA airport (KAIO). The final destination was Oshkosh, WI.
- They encountered weather so the two aircraft landed at Larned. (The two pilots joined Chris Pinkston at the Larned airport. Hilker, Woods, and Pinkston, in addition to four other Van's RV aircraft, were scheduled to fly as a group to Oshkosh, WI.)
- Hilker and Woods were on the ground at Larned for approximately 1 ½ hours.
- Weather was "pretty good" just before noon so Hilker and Woods departed.
- They encountered a cloud deck just south of Interstate 70.
- Cloud deck was getting a little higher as they went north so Hilker & Woods increased altitude also.
- Hilker was approximately 7500 MSL
- Lower clouds were ragged and Hilker could see Lucas (KS) (38K) ahead.
- Woods was aware they were nearing Lucas as he jokingly asked if they wanted to land at Lucas for lunch (Hilker advised Lucas was a common spot for their Vans RV airplane group to meet).
- Before reaching Lucas, Woods contacted Hilker on the aircraft radio and asked for his heading. Hilker advised that he looked back and saw Woods' aircraft trailing approximately 1 ½ miles, maybe 800 feet lower. He believed the visibility at that time was "about 4 or 5 miles". Hilker communicated his heading.
- Woods advised Hilker that he could see him.
- Shortly after, Woods again contacted Hilker via his aircraft radio and again asked for his heading. Hilker advised he looked back again but did not see Woods at that time. Hilker again communicated his heading.
- The second radio communication from Woods was the last radio contact between Woods and Hilker.
- Hilker reported that he didn't normally talk a lot on the radio but Woods "used the radio a lot".
- At the time of Woods' last radio communication, Hilker estimated the lower cloud deck approximately 1000 feet below and the upper deck approximately 4000 to 5000 feet higher. He also stated that there were some clouds at his flight level to the east of his flight path.

## Record of Telephone Conversation

Name: Chris Pinkston

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Date: July 31, 2013

Prepared By: Kevin Rowse, Wichita FSDO Aviation Safety Inspector

Description: Mr. Pinkston is a witness in the fatal aircraft accident involving Rufus M. Woods on July 28, 2013

---

This interview was done via telephone on July 31, 2013 at 10:55. ASI James Lamb also observed and recorded notes from the conversation. Mr. Pinkston in N8XL began the day departing from St. John, KS with an ultimate destination of Oshkosh, WI. There were seven aircraft from various parts of western Kansas that were to fly in a loose formation and be in radio contact with each other on frequency 122.75. They had two scheduled fuel stops, one in Atlantic, IA and the other at an airport near the Mississippi River closer to Wisconsin. The following is what Mr. Pinkston mentioned during the interview.

- Due to weather, Chris landed in Larned, Ks to wait for improvements. Rusty and Dave Hilker also ended up in Larned. When the weather improved, Rusty and Dave were the first to depart and did so at exactly 11:45. Rusty and Dave headed north and reported back on frequency 122.75 that the weather was much better.
- I heard Rusty say to Dave "I lost you" and that Rusty was at 9500' (this is a different altitude than Dave reported in his statement). Rusty also said, kind of jokingly, "we're over Lucas, we can stop and eat lunch."
- There was no indication that Rusty was in trouble, there was conversation, and then it stopped.
- Chris and Dave became concerned at 12:20-12:25. Chris landed at Great Bend (GBD) and Dave landed at Clay Center. Chris and Dave called each other when they got on the ground, but waited for about an hour for Rusty to call them, then called family and authorities.
- Chris called Lockheed Martin in Ft. Worth at [REDACTED] to report a possible missing aircraft.

- Afterword, Dave Hilker and I (Chris) talked-if Rusty was losing control, he would have called out for help, and he would have keyed the mic. Dave said he was flying erratic, he was all over the place back there, up 30 degrees one time, wasn't right there with him.
- I ask Chris if he had any reason to question Rusty's competency. He said, "No absolutely not, he's an excellent pilot at VFR, control of the aircraft. However, if he got in to IMC conditions he would not last long, that is my opinion."
- Rusty had two aircraft, an RV-8, the accident aircraft, and an RV-6. Chris thought Rusty had 300-400 hours in the RV-6 and 130-150 hours in the RV-8.

## *Record of Telephone Conversation*

**Name:** Chris Pinkston  
**Address:** [REDACTED]  
**Phone:**  
**Date:** July 31, 2013  
**Description:** Witness for 7-31-13 fatal aircraft accident near Lucas, KS involving Rufus M. Woods

---

This telecom with Mr. Pinkston was conducted by ASI Kevin Rowse. ASI James Lamb observed and also recorded notes from the conversation. This telephone interview started on July 31, 2013 at approximately 10:55 am and ended on July 31, 2013 at approximately 11:33 am. Mr. Pinkston stated the following:

- A group of seven Vans RV aircraft were going to fly to Oshkosh, WI but not all of the aircraft were going to start at the same time.
- The initial flight path would be from Larned, KS (KLQR) to Atlantic, IA (KAIO).
- Pinkston departed from Larned while David Hilker and Rusty Woods departed from the Cimmaron Airport (8K8).
- Hilker/Woods departed approximately 30 minutes earlier than Pinkston (about 9:00 am).
- After airborne, Pinkston communicated with Woods and Hilker via aircraft radio about weather problems they were encountering in flight. Pinkston suggested they return to Larned until the weather improved.
- Hilker and Woods flew back to the Larned Airport and landed approximately 10:00 am after which they fueled and discussed the weather.
- The group was using weather reporting information from Pinkston's cellular telephone to determine current conditions.
- At approximately 11:45 am, Hilker and Woods decided to depart. Pinkston said they were airborne by 11:50 am to 11:55 am.
- Pinkston remained at the Larned Airport until the other four aircraft departed their respective airport(s).
- Pinkston departed the Larned Airport about 12 pm.
- In flight, Pinkston communicated with Hilker and Woods. One of them (notes do not indicate which pilot) advised the weather was much better and they thought they should be in the clear in about 30 (not sure if he stated miles or minutes) around Concordia (KS).
- Pinkston overheard radio communication between Woods and Hilker during which Woods advised that "We are about to Lucas" (KS) and further mentioned stopping for lunch. (Pinkston stated that Woods' voice was calm)
- Pinkston also advised that he overheard additional radio communication between Hilker and Woods then it abruptly ceased.
- Pinkston heard Hilker making repeated calls to Woods but did not hear a reply from Woods.
- Hilker called Pinkston via aircraft radio and declared that "he couldn't get ahold of Rusty" (Rufus Woods).
- Pinkston also attempted communication with Woods with no reply. He believed this occurred approximately between 12:20 pm and 12:30 pm.