

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Pamela S. Sullivan
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: December 5, 2011
Person Contacted: Paul Fullerton
NTSB Accident Number: CEN12FA097

Narrative:

During a face-to face discussion, Mr. Fullerton recounted information regarding the events of the day of the accident.

He stated that Joe started his work day at 1000. This was his first day of work in December.

Pete Freier (another pilot) stated that he had stopped by the airport, but he was not scheduled to work.

There were no reservations in the book for the day that he knew of. He was out of town and returned to the airport around 2030 to pick up his dog. He stated the doors to the airport were open and Joe's car was in the parking lot. He walked to the hangar and noticed the doors were open and the airplane was gone. He checked the reservation book and noticed that there was a flight scheduled to the island at 2105. He stated that his first thought was that Joe had to divert to Pellston and was stuck somewhere else because of the weather.

He stated that he was in Sault Ste. Marie that day and the weather was foggy and rainy all day. He was in and out of fog and rain on the drive back to St. Ignace. He stated that he was able to see the island, but there were low ceilings. He stated the ceilings at the airport were about 300 feet and there was fog coming in.

Joe's wife then called the airport and was concerned because Joe had not returned from a flight that he was scheduled to take. He stated he then began to make telephone calls trying to locate the airplane. By 2045 to 2100 there was a search in progress.

Sheryl who works in the office at the airport reported that she heard the airplane takeoff on runway 25 around 2000. She lives near the west side of the airport and is very familiar with the airport and the operation of the airplanes.

When taking off on runway 25 and going to the island, the pilot's normally make a left turn after takeoff.

He subsequently learned that Mr. Phillips called during the day to schedule the flight to the island. Mr. Phillips was also a pilot and he belonged to a flying club at St. Ignace and would rent a Cherokee during the summers to fly around the area.

The accident flight was being operated as a VFR Part 135 flight.

He stated they mostly fly VFR operations.

Joe began working for Great Lakes Air about a year ago. (Paperwork indicated a Record of Hire dated 2-16-11.) Joe was leaving in about a week to take a job with Kalitta Cargo Air. He was to start school there on the 12th.

The Coast Guard at Traverse City was involved in the search.

The other pilots with the company were:

- Pete Freier – Line pilot and flight instructor

- Ken Smith – Part time – Chief Pilot

- Bruce Johnson – Part Time – Check Airman – Flies for Kalitta

- Joe Penn

- Himself

- Jake Penn – in training.

Go/No-go decision was discussed. He stated that you had to have VFR minimums, at least 1,000 foot ceiling, and had to be able to see the island. There is an AWOS on the island that the pilot's are constantly checking, but the best indicator is to look out the window.

Date of Interview: December 5, 2011

Person Interviewed: Paul S. Fullerton (President, Great Lakes Air, Inc.)

Person's Conducting Interview: Pam Sullivan (NTSB), Tom Kozura (FAA)

Interview Location: Great Lakes Air Office

Time of interview: 6:00 p.m. local

Initial interview with Paul Fullerton

Paul arrived at St. Ignace, Michigan airport (83D) at Saturday 12/3/2011, 8:30 p.m. local and found the hangar door open. Paul said this seemed strange, he observed the weather at St. Ignace airport ceilings were 300' and fog was rolling in.

Joseph Pann's wife called approximately 8:30 p.m., saying she hadn't heard from Joe. Paul stated that at 8:35pm he started calling, at 8:45 – 9:00 p.m. a full fledged search was initiated.

Paul stated there was no one here when Joe left.

Paul stated Cheryl who lives here heard him take off runway 25 at 8:00 p.m.; she could not tell which way he turned.

Q: Pam Sullivan (P.S.): When did passenger Mr. Phillips call?

A: Paul Fullerton (P.F.): Sometime during the day not sure.

Q: (P.S.) Was this flight operated Part 135?

A: (P.F.) Yes part 135 VFR, we mostly fly VFR.

Paul stated Joe is a very good instrument pilot. Paul thought Joe was at Pellston airport, Paul called Pellston, they said they haven't heard from him.

Q: Tom Kozura (T.K.): What is the criteria for a "go-no-go" decision?

A: (P.F.) We need at least 1,000 ft. ceilings

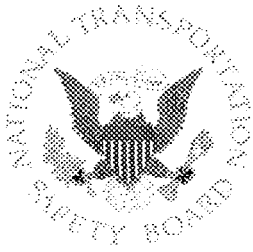
Paul stated he fired dozens of pilots for being stupid. Paul stated Joe was supposed to start school December 12th, Joe was hired by Kalitta Air Cargo to fly DC-9's.

Q: (P.S.): How many pilots work for you?

A: (P.F.): Joe, Pete Freier, Ken Smith, Bruce Johnson, and himself. Ken Smith is Chief Pilot, and Bruce Johnson is a Check Airman.

Paul stated Joe made a left turn out of here, ended up north of the airport. Paul stated Joe started working at 10:00 a.m. there were no other flights that day.

Paul stated a kid named Tyler Oja who lives on the west side of Mackinaw Trail, heard a plane crash.



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Date: December 6, 2011
Person Contacted: Paul Fullerton
NTSB Accident Number: CEN12FA097

Narrative:

He stated he was out of town and returned to the airport on the evening of the accident. When he arrived at the airport he noticed the doors to the building and hangar were open and Joe's car was in the parking lot. Joe's wife called the airport shortly thereafter inquiring about where he was.

Regarding their operations manual and his duties as the Director of Operations to schedule and dispatch flights. He stated he has delegated this authority to the pilots.

He also stated that the pilots would call someone to let them know that they were taking a flight and they would also check back in with that person when they returned. In this case, the pilot's brother Jake, who was currently in training to become pilot at Great Lakes Air, knew that the pilot was taking the flight.

Interview Date: December 6, 2011
Person Interviewed: Paul Fullerton
Person's Conducting Interview: Pam Sullivan (NTSB), Tom Kozura (FAA)
Interview Location: Great Lakes Air, Inc. Office
Time of Interview: 2:05 p.m. local

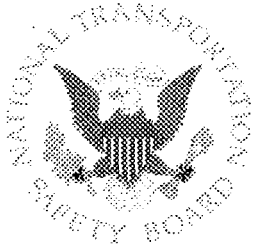
Second Interview with Paul Fullerton

Paul stated he had left that morning to go to a hockey game up at Sault Ste Marie to go to a hockey game. He had come back to the airport and found the doors were open.

Paul stated he noticed Joe's car parked here, and saw the hangar door open. Joe's wife called shortly after.

Paul stated they let the pilots dispatch the flights; he's delegated to the pilots from the D.O. They must maintain continuous communications done via cell phone, hand held radio, or Minneapolis 134.6. During the day it's a non issue.

Paul stated he'd get Jake, Joe's brother to get a copy of Joe's logbook.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Central Region

Date: December 6, 2011
Person Contacted: Ken Smith, Chief Pilot
NTSB Accident Number: CEN12FA097

Narrative:

During a face-to face discussion, Mr. Smith discussed his position at Great Lakes Air and the events of the accident.

Ken stated that he has been the chief pilot, on paper for the last 15 years. He began flying for Great Lakes in 1987. His full time job is as a state trooper and he flies part time when needed at Great Lakes Air. The operations manual is being re-written and he is no longer going to be the chief pilot because he does not have the time to devote to the job. He will continue to work as a line pilot.

He did not know about the accident until 1000 the following day. He was the one that flew over the site and picked up the ELT signal.

He stated that the pilot's check the AWOS, but their best source of weather information to the island is to look out the window.

They are not approved to fly the GPS approach to the island. They will fly the VOR in the twin. The Cherokee is a VFR airplane.

The Pellston VOR Frequency is 111.8.

They need to be in contact with someone on the ground during their flights.

Daytime requirements are that they have 1 mile visibility and stay clear of clouds to fly to the island. Night Part 135 they have to remain 1,000 feet above the ground.

He stated that he personally likes having a 3,000' ceiling when flying to the island at night. This allows him enough clearance to climb to 2,000' for the flight. This would allow him to get to shore should something happen.

Paul never pushed anyone to take a flight.

There are laminated local approach plates that they kept in the airplane along with a Michigan map and a sectional.

They can fly IFR only in the twin.

Once you take off from St. Ignace you are pretty much starting your descent to land at the island. According to the regulations, because of this there really are no minimum terrain clearance requirements.

The pilots are paid salary, not by the flight.

The airplane was fueled on December 1, 2011. There was about 1 hour that was flown off the airplane between the time it was fueled and the accident flight.

Interview Date: December 6, 2011

Person Interviewed: Ken Smith

Person's Conducting Interview: Pam Sullivan (NTSB), Tom Kozura (FAA)

Interview Location: Great Lakes Air, Inc. Office

Time of Interview: 8:15 a.m. local

Interview with Ken Smith

Ken stated he is the Chief Pilot, his role changes quite a bit. Ken stated the General Operations Manual (GOM) was in the process of change, the training manual changed June or July. Ken stated Paul was the D.O.

Ken stated he was not here, he learned about the accident at 10:00 a.m. Sunday December 4, 2011 morning from his wife. Ken stated he came in to fly, and help look for the accident site.

Q: Pam Sullivan (P.S.): How do you check for weather, what's the procedure?

A: Ken Smith (K.S.): Best way is to look out the window, that's the best source. Look at the forecast check the AWOS.

Q: (P.S.): What approaches on Mackinaw, VOR/GPS?

A: (K.S.): Only go VFR,

Ken stated they have to notify someone before they go flying on the ground for notification purposes. Ken stated at night it should only be an IFR flight. Ken stated at night he likes 3,000 ft. ceilings.

Ken stated he likes flying for Paul, because Paul never pushes to take a flight, if a pilot doesn't want to go.

Q: (P.S.): Did you know Mr. Phillips?

A: (K.S.): I've flown him a dozen times.

Ken stated Tom was a pilot, and always wanted to sit up front.

Q: Tom Kozura (T.K.): Would you allow passengers to use electronics in flight?

A: (K.S.): Tom liked his gizmo's, he would have had it shut off at night.

Q: (P.S.): Do you know how Tom Phillips got up here?

A: (K.S.): Not sure,

Ken stated that Tom had family in Detroit area.

Q: (T.K.): Do you have any recommendation for changes to the FARS?

Ken stated if you follow the minimums, it's unsafe at times. Ken stated we don't have a company policy that says you can't fly to Mackinaw Island unless you have at least 3,000 ft.

Ken stated take some of the go-no-go decision away from the pilot, have some sort of procedure.

Ken stated he has done as many as 50 flights to the Island per day.

Q: (P.S.): What would be a realistic change for the better?

A: (K.S.): For night time have an IFR flight plan, have a stricter dispatch.

Ken stated if Joe would have called him, he would not have allowed him to fly.

Ken stated he feels he has not given enough for Chief Pilot position with his work as a State Trooper working sex offender, with the new manual changes Ken stated he doesn't have the time to give for Chief Pilot.

Ken stated he would step away from his Chief Pilot position.

Q: (T.K.): Are pilots paid by each flight?

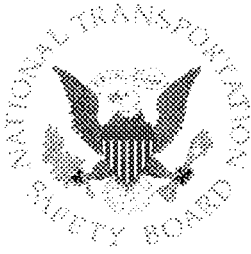
A: (K.S.): No we're paid salary.

Q: (T.K.): Tom the passenger just received his instrument ticket, would Joe ever do instruction on a flight?

A: (K.S.): No.

Q: (T.K.): Have you had any problems with that airplane?

A: (K.S.): Just typical problems for a single.



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Date: December 6, 2011
Person Contacted: Peter Freier, Line Pilot and Flight Instructor
NTSB Accident Number: CEN12FA097

Narrative:

During a face-to face discussion, Mr. Freier discussed his position at Great Lakes Air and the events of the accident. He stated he is a line pilot and the company CFI. He started working for Great Lakes Air in April 2008. He is currently a full time employee.

He had given Tom Phillips flight instruction. Tom was currently working on his instrument rating. He estimated that Tom had about 150 of flight time. Tom belonged to the flying club at St. Ignace. The club has a Warrior and Tom flew it a couple of times this past summer. Tom was always in and out of the area during the summer. Tom owned a home on the island and he was going to get the house ready because his family was going to spend Christmas there.

He spoke with Tom on Friday night and Tom stated he was coming up to St. Ignace on Saturday and he wanted to go to the island. He also stated that he needed to be in Gaylord on Sunday for a 10:00 am meeting. He told Tim to call the airport to schedule the flight.

He and Joe had agreed that Joe would work Saturday and that he would work Sunday. Between 11:30 am and noon on Saturday he looked at the flight schedule and there were no flights scheduled. He said that they knew they wouldn't be flying on Saturday because of the weather. Joe seemed relieved at the possibility he wasn't going to have to make the trip to the island that evening.

He then called Tom and left him a voicemail message regarding the weather saying that it wasn't very good, but that it should improve later in the day so he should take his time getting to St. Ignace. Tom called back and stated no worries. Pete described Tom as being a cautious person.

He spoke with Joe around 6:00pm on Saturday. Joe stated he could see the bluff on the island and the weather was improving. He dialed the AWOS and it was reporting 800 overcast. He told Joe "don't do anything dumb." This is the same thing that Paul Fullerton said all the time. He called Tom back and left a voicemail saying that the weather looked ok now to get to the island.

He then received a call around 2210 saying the airplane was missing. He participated in the search and was actually the first person to locate the wreckage.

They had a group discussion 2 days before the accident where they all talked about personal minimums, comfort levels, and not doing anything stupid. This discussion was part of the training for Jake Pann, and it included Joe Pann and Paul Fullerton.

Regarding the weather they are looking for 1,000' ceiling in the day time. A general guideline is about 1,500' at night.

They kept old approach plates in the airplane as a back-up. Joe knew the local instrument approaches by memory and could have flown them without plates if he really needed to.

He wondered if the weather deteriorated during the flight and if Joe had located the casino which is pretty light up and easier to see. He then could have been following the lake shore back to the airport. The casino is easier to see than the airport lights and beacon.

They haven't had any problems with the airplane other than normal maintenance issues.

Joe loved to fly without using an autopilot. He liked to hand fly to keep up his skills.

Minneapolis approach frequency is 134.6.

The weather at St. Ignace was foggy and rainy all day. He believed that the ceiling never got above 1,500 during the day.

Joe has canceled flights with Tom before and he didn't think that Tom would have pressured Joe to make the flight.

The flight was doable with 1,000' ceiling.

The island had pilot controlled runway lighting. You have to be ready to turn the runway lights on shortly after takeoff from St. Ignace. The island airport just opened for night operations on November 23 as the runway had been redone this year.

General Operations Manual stated that they have to file a flight plan for a flight that is more than 30 miles away.

He always has Minneapolis approach 134.6 dialed into one of the radios.

118.27 – AWOS

112.8 – Pilot controlled lighting on the island.

Interview Date: December 6, 2011

Person Interviewed: Pete A. Freier

Person's Conducting Interview: Pam Sullivan (NTSB), Tom Kozura (FAA)

Interview Location: Great Lakes Air, Inc. Office

Time of Interview: 11:05 a.m. local

Interview with Pete Freier

Q: Pam Sullivan (P.S.): How much fuel do you put in the airplane typically?

A: Pete Freier (P.F.): We usually don't top it off typically 50 gallons.

Pete stated he has been working for Great Lakes Air, Inc. since April 2008; he is a full time employee. Pete had previously worked at Midex Airlines, and Champion air.

Q: (P.S.): What was your work schedule day of the accident?

A: (P.F.): Came up here around 11:30-12:00 on Saturday. Pete stated Tom Phillips was a friend and a student; he had talked to Tom earlier on Friday evening. Pete told Tom the weather would be uncooperative.

Q: (T.K.): Who put the reservation in the scheduling book?

A: (P.F.): Joe or Jake put the reservation in the book.

Pete stated 2 days prior they all had a discussion about this scenario, while training Jake. He couldn't believe Joe flew that flight.

Pete stated that he had called and left a voicemail on Tom's phone, telling him not to hurry because weather would be bad. Tom called Pete back and said he wouldn't hurry.

Pete stated that Tom is by no means a risk taker.

Pete called Joe Saturday at 6:00 p.m. to ask if he'd been in contact with Tom. Pete told Joe over the phone "don't do anything dumb". Joe said he doesn't need 50 bucks that bad.

Pete stated at 8:00 p.m. he didn't hear the airplane. Pete learned about Joe missing from his wife.

Q: (T.K.): Would you go with 800 ft. overcast?

A: (P.F.): No, I wouldn't go at 800 ft. during the day. During the day they don't go until ceilings are at least 1,000 ft. At night I'm comfortable with at least 1,500 ft. ceilings.

Q: (T.K.): Are there any check-in procedures?

A: (P.F.): No, Paul was D.O. for the day, he was away at a hockey game.

Pete stated when winds were calm, usually they use runway 7 and make a "bee" line for the island.

Q: (P.S.): You said 2 days prior you all had a discussion about weather?

A: (P.F.): We were training Jake his brother, that's how the discussion got brought up.

Q: (P.S.): Would Tom have just stayed here if weather cancelled the flight?

A: (P.F.): Tom would have no problem, he was coming up to the island to get the house ready for Christmas.

Pete stated Tom had to be in Gaylord for a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 4, 2011. Tom is usually on a tight schedule, but wouldn't push. He would stay the night in Pellston if they couldn't get in or grab a room here in town.

Q: (T.K.): What frequency is 111.8?

A: (P.F.): It's Pellston VOR

Q: (T.K.): Does he spend allot of time here?

A: (P.F.): His family stays up during the summer, he's usually travelling allot.

Pete stated he would always sit up front.

Q: (P.S.): Would Joe pressure himself to make the trip?

A: (P.F.): No, he sounded relieved he wasn't going to do the flight.

Q: (T.K.): Was he here manning the office?

A: (P.F.): Yes he was here at the office. They didn't cancel the flight that day.

Q: (P.S.): Anything that you can think could have done better? Anything that would have prevented?

A: (P.F.): I don't know why Joe didn't climb or go to Pellston. I have no idea.

Pete stated in bad visibility and precipitation, the casino looks like the airport at night. He may have picked up the casino and follow the shoreline.

Q: (T.K.): Any reason to believe there was anything wrong with the airplane?

A: (P.F.): No, that was my favorite airplane to fly.

Q: (T.K.): Does the D.O. and Chief have safety meetings frequently?

A: (P.F.): When they come in.

Pete stated he's been caught going to the island with weather, he climbed called approach and shot the ILS into Pellston. Pete stated, "It makes no sense whatsoever, he was a very good IFR pilot."

Q: (P.S.): What's Joe's wife's name?

A: (P.F.): Andrea, I spoke with her that morning but haven't spoken with her since.

Q: (T.K.): What frequency do you use?

A: (P.F.): Minneapolis on 134.6

Q: (T.K.): Any idea what Joe's personal minimums were?

A: (P.F.): If Joe checked the AWOS 1 hour before it called 1,000 ft. at 7:00, it gives 1,500-1,600 ft. MSL.

Pete stated by all the time monkeying around with the weather, he could just assume do the flight and get it done, 1,000 ft. is doable during the day. The Mackinaw Island airport Pilot Controlled Lights (PCL), you had to be right on top of the airport to get the lights on.

Pete stated November 23, 2011 was the 1st day you could go into Mackinaw airport at night due to work being done.

Q: (P.S.): If you take a flight, do you have to notify anyone?

A: (P.F.): According to our GOM says we have to open a flight plan beyond 30 nautical miles. Jake knew about the flight, and Paul knew about the flight, they were on the ground.

Q: (P.S.): How far is Jake with his training?

A: (P.F.): He's finishing up, I'm not sure if he's going to continue working here.

Q: (P.S.): Anything you can think of to improve or make any changes?

A: (P.F.): I can't imagine having a second pilot might work, we're a small company & have limited resources. Be tough to keep a person at the office here.

Q: (P.S.): Do you think if Tom with his IFR training possibly was flying the airplane?

A: (P.F.): No that would never happen. They would never let a passenger touch the controls during take off and landing. If Joe was flying the airplane, Tom never would have touched the controls.

Sullivan PAM

From: Tyler Oja [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, December 07, 2011 9:42 AM
To: Sullivan PAM
Subject: statement


Here is that statement Pam, hope this helps.

On Saturday, December 3rd I was at my house at [REDACTED] At around 7:45 PM, I heard what sounded like a plane engine getting lower and lower, followed by a crash. I was startled by this, and went into the next room to see if my brother had heard anything. He too had said that he heard the crash, but not the engine. We actually went behind my house, which is a dense, wooded area to search for what at that time we thought was a plane. We didn't hear any news of plane going down, so I thought maybe I was just hearing things. The next morning we were informed that a plane did in fact go down, so I immediately knew that I heard it the night before. My mom contacted some authorities and minutes later a helicopter, a search plane, and a search party on foot were all around our house and the woods behind it. Soon after that the plane was found just down the road, probably an 8th of a mile away. As for what the plane sounded like, the engine sound went from a higher pitch and got lower and lower, until I heard the crash. I compared it to the typical "movie" plane crash sound.

Again, I hope this helps you guys! If you need anything else just let me know.

Tyler Oja

On December 3, 2011 at approximately 8:00PM ET I did hear a Cherokee 6 depart from the Mackinac County Airport to the west (runway 25). My home is located approximately 2 miles northwest of the departure end of runway 25. In my opinion it sounded like a normal departure.



Sheryl Schairer
Office Manager
Great Lakes Air, Inc.