



RECORD OF COMMUNICATION

Michael Huhn
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: May 30, 2013
Person Contacted: Mr. Jim Gill (Airborne Eyewitness)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR13FA244

Narrative:

The paragraphs below are the verbatim extracted text of the email from Mr. Gill to the NTSB. Mr. Gill reported that the registration of the airplane that he was flying was N3923Q. In a telephone conversation with Mr. Gill on May 29, he noted that at first, because of its low altitude, he thought perhaps the pilot of the Bonanza was "sightseeing." However, since the Bonanza continued to remain extremely low, Mr. Gill queried the Flagstaff air traffic control tower about the Bonanza's situation. During the telephone conversation with the NTSB, Mr. Gill stated that he observed the Bonanza turn towards rising terrain, and could not understand why the pilot of the Bonanza did not turn either towards lower terrain, or towards the nearby interstate highway (I-17).

I took off behind the Bonanza and observed the Bonanza immediately after T/O climbing very slowly on runway HDG. I was flying a 1972 Cessna 172L. My gross weight was approximately 1850 lbs. The density altitude was pushing 10,000. I noticed that when I passed the tower, I was well above the tower (200' above). The surface wind was approximately 10 knots from 20 degrees left to right. By the time I reached the departure end of the runway the Bonanza was below my sight.

At that time I commenced a left turn (keeping the Bonanza in sight), the Bonanza continued to descend banking 5 degrees to 10 degrees right, then left, then straight. Again I noticed he was continuing to descend. At that point I radioed the tower and asked if the aircraft in front of me was in trouble. Then the Bonanza responded, "We are climbing, but very slowly". I believe the Bonanza in a 2nd transmission said; "I think we are going to try to make it back..."

That was the last transmission from the Bonanza. I then observed the Bonanza continue to descend making indecisive (wavering) banks, and then the Bonanza flew into the pine trees near a house and burst into flames.

I immediately radioed Flagstaff tower and informed them that the plane crashed, and I was turning to fly to circle the wreckage to facilitate crash, fire, and rescue. I circled the crash site 3 to 4 times, relaying to the tower the location of the crash site and my observations, no visible signs of people outside of the aircraft. The resulting fire was large.

Tower radioed me to ask if I could see first responders. I radioed back that I could see people and a fire truck arriving around the crash site, and that I would depart the area and continue on route to Santa Fe.



RECORD OF COMMUNICATION

Michael Huhn
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: June 6, 2013
Person Contacted: Mr. Jim Gill (Airborne Eyewitness)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR13FA244

Narrative:

The paragraphs below are the verbatim extracted text of the email from Mr. Gill to the NTSB, in response to an NTSB request for additional details regarding the flight paths of his airplane and the accident airplane.

To the best of my recollection...

I took off (solo, 80% fuel load - no baggage) from A1 on runway 21 at FLG. I was airborne in my 150 hp Cessna 172L by the displaced threshold (A2).

By the time I passed the control tower, I was above the tower (200 - 300 feet AGL and climbing "normally" at 80 MPH).

I noticed the Bonanza in front of me was about level with me (maybe a little higher than me - but not much higher).

The Bonanza was straight & level on runway HDG.

As I crossed the departure end of RWY 21 my altitude was ~ 500-600 feet AGL.

The Bonanza at that point was over the interstate highway (17) about 1/2 to 3/4 mile ahead of me and descending.

The Bonanza's descent was gradual (FPM ??)

The Bonanza appeared as though it was (intentionally/deliberately) following the highway. (refer to hand-marked Google Map attached)

The Bonanza continued to descend, and was getting noticeably LOW.

At that time the Bonanza's position was over the highway east of Golf Course. (see Google Map)

It was at that time (refer to TWR tapes) that I radioed the TWR... (FLG TWR Skyhawk 23Q, is the aircraft ahead of me in trouble? Because he is awfully low)

The Bonanza replied to my inquiry "we're climbing (pause) but very slowly" (the man's voice sounded concerned)

I think the Bonanza made a second transmission "I think we're gonna try and make it back"

At that time I commenced a shallow left turn (to the east) and leveled-off (~1500 AGL) keeping the Bonanza in sight.

The Bonanza continued it's slow decent, making shallow banking maneuvers (that appeared to be indecisive)

At that time, the Bonanza commenced a shallow left turn (to the southeast) away from the highway.

A short time later, the Bonanza leveled it's wings, descending into some tall pine trees, and exploded into flames.

It was my observation, that the Bonanza had difficulty climbing about 1/2 - 3/4 mile after the departure end of the runway.

From that point on, it was a gradual decent until impact.

I did not notice his rotation/liftoff point on the runway, or if his climb profile after liftoff was abnormal.

I am a flight instructor, Embry-Riddle graduate and former US NAVY Pilot with just over 3000 hours.

In my opinion, the pilot could (and should) have landed the Bonanza on the highway (the highway was empty - very few vehicles) and it is huge (wide open)

Because of my position (above) and distance, I could not determine the Bonanza's configuration during all of this.

In retrospect, I wish I had "piped-up" on the radio, and said "Put it down on the highway. You won't make it back to the airport"

But I did not.

* HOLD UP TO LIGHT FOR *
BETTER VIEWING
(BEST I CAN DO)

WPR13FA244 Accident Locale



key:

- BONANZA FLIGHT PATH (APPROX.)
- MY FLIGHT PATH (APPROX.)

① - LOCATION OF BONANZA WHEN I MADE MY FIRST CALL TO TWR.

- * WHEN I CALLED TWR TO REPORT AIRPLANE CAPTURED
- * MY FIRST CALL TO TWR.