9 December 2014

As part of an aerial survey project, I served as a sensor operator (non-flying passenger) in Aero Commander (AC-50) N14AV from 20 October to 7 November 2014 with Mr. Daniel "Dan" Disbrow acting as pilot-in-command during this entire period. During this time I had the opportunity to observe Mr. Disbrow's flying from the front-right seat of the aircraft from which position I operated the survey equipment. Our normal operations consisted of six hours of average daily flight time during daylight hours and visual meteorological conditions due to our mapping requirements except for two instances where it became necessary to ferry to survey areas during poor visibility and rain.

Some traits I noticed that were common to Dan's flying were his habit of engaging the aircraft's autopilot system for every ferry leg during our operations to and from survey lines. For short ferries he flew from between 1,000 feet AGL to 3,000 feet MSL in order to remain close to the low altitude our survey required. For longer ferries of a half-hour or more he would usually climb higher to approximately 6,000 to 9,000 feet MSL. Dan was very comfortable in the aircraft and seemed to be very confident in his handling and control. More than once we experienced wind gusts in excess of 30 knots during which time Dan exhibited the same excellent control of the aircraft while competently maneuvering with reference to our survey targets on the ground. Also, Dan always seemed to be aware of where large towers were present in order to avoid them during ground reference maneuvering and frequently pointed their location out to me so that I could help him keep track. During the brief time we flew through instrument meteorological conditions Dan also kept good control of the aircraft with a calm and professional demeanor. He spoke with authority to air traffic control at all times and told me that he had logged several thousand hours of flight time as pilot-in-command of N14AV and that he held an Airline Transport Pilot Certificate and well as Airframe and Powerplant Mechanic Certificates.

Dan wore a hearing aid and there were two brief instances where I noticed that he did not hear me speak to him via normal headset communications. There was one instance where a call from air traffic control was missed due to turning down the aircraft radio volume control knob too far by accident but this error was quickly remedied and Dan queried approach control to ask if they had called since he noticed that the radio had been silent for longer than what was normally experienced. I observed Dan to be in the habit of exercising good decision making during our day-to-day in-flight operations. During one morning flight we experienced an abnormal reading from the right engine oil temperature gauge at which point Dan made the proper decision to return back to Hooks Field (KDWH) where the issue could be resolved since this item is required equipment under 91.205(b). Also, Dan was in the habit of performing a pre-flight inspection each morning before our first flight and also after every re-fuel which included inspecting oil level and fuel quality. During ground operations Dan had a slight but consistent tendency to "cut the corner" of the taxiway when turning off of an active runway after landing. Although this was the case, there was never a close call or concern that Dan would exit the designated movement area by accident or strike an object such as a taxiway light. Overall I felt safe flying with Dan and was looking forward to flying with him in the future.

[redacted]

William M. Kowalsky, [redacted]