

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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JANUARY 10, 2014

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CESSNA 310R, N3829G,

* Docket No.: CEN14FA110

ROYAL AIR FLIGHT 907

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PONTIAC, MICHIGAN

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Interview of: ROBERT BECKMAN

Waterford Police Department
 5150 Civic Center Drive
 Waterford, Michigan

Thursday,
 March 13, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MITCHELL GALLO
 Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

MITCHELL GALLO, Accident Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

E. BARRY ROGERS, Aviation Safety Inspector
Air Carrier - Operations
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
East Michigan Flight Standards District Office
Belleville, Michigan

BARTHOLEMEW ANGLE, Aviation Safety Inspector
General Aviation - Operations
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I N T E R V I E W

(2:01 p.m.)

INTERVIEW OF ROBERT BECKMAN

BY MR. GALLO:

Q. Thank you for joining us, Mr. Beckman, and I just want to start out by asking you what -- if you could describe your pilot experience prior to coming to Royal Air.

A. My experience prior to Royal Air. Before that I was a first officer for the IFL Group, a competitor, which is a 121 airline Barry's familiar with. I worked there for 4 years, and then, let's see, I had a brief stint at Pinnacle Airlines, which is what I left IFL for. And before that I have probably a few hours of aerial survey out in Philadelphia, and before that I did all collegiate.

Q. What's your total time now and what aircraft have you flown?

A. Have I flown or -- I mean, that list is huge.

Q. Well, type-rated, I guess, any type ratings, checkouts?

A. Currently I work for a Part 91 operator out of Detroit City Airport. I fly a Kingair 350 and I am type-rated in that aircraft.

Q. And what did you fly at -- what do you fly at Royal Air?

A. At Royal Air I flew the Embraer 110, which is a Bandit, a Bandeirante. I flew the 310, R model; the 402, B model, and that was it. I have a handful of hours in their Falcon 20. That

1 was something that I jumped in, and in the beginning when I got
2 hired there it was, well, we're going to help you out by getting
3 you PIC time flying the 310, and then, you know, we realize that
4 you want jet time to further your career, and they were good about
5 that. And so I did 310 training, and Falcon training kind of on
6 the side. And I got checked out in the 310 and started flying,
7 started making money, and then I just didn't pursue the Falcon
8 anymore.

9 Q. So the first airplane at Royal Air was the 310, then?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And when did that occur, an estimate, like month or year
12 if you can?

13 A. I started at Royal Air November of -- I believe it was
14 November of 2011, and I was probably checked out by the end of the
15 month. My first revenue trip had to be somewhere past
16 Thanksgiving.

17 Q. So this was in November, then --

18 A. Uh-huh.

19 Q. -- that you got hired? Okay. And I guess you went
20 through ground training and flight training. Can you kind of just
21 discuss how the ground training was conducted, if you remember?

22 A. The initial ground training was different from previous
23 experiences. I walked in and I would go upstairs and pretty much
24 sit in their conference room, and it was more of a self-study type
25 program. You know, there was always Kirt or Ron -- Kirt Kostich.

1 I'm not sure exactly what his title is there. I've worked there
2 for 2 years and I don't know his title. But Ron is the chief
3 pilot, Birnie. And they were always available to answer and ask
4 questions, you know, and they would come in and periodically check
5 on you. I'm more of a go-getter, go out and do it, you know, so I
6 would take the POH and go sit in an airplane and kind of go
7 through flows, and anything that I didn't have that I felt I
8 needed to ask questions about, I would.

9 Q. So just going back, when you got hired, did you have a
10 certain amount of multi-engine experience in flight time before
11 coming in?

12 A. When I got hired at Royal Air I had roughly 1700 hours
13 and change. Of that time, just ballparking it, 200 hours would
14 have been flight training at college; that all would have been
15 single engine. The rest of it was multi-engine Convair time. I
16 got hired at IFL with just over 200 hours.

17 Q. In the Convair, is that SIC or PIC?

18 A. SIC in the Convair.

19 Q. So how comfortable were you flying the 310 in hard IMC
20 conditions when you started? Or let me -- you can answer that
21 question, because the next question will be did you feel
22 comfortable doing cross-countries in the 310 prior to getting
23 hired?

24 A. You know, I'd always worked in a two-crew environment,
25 so it was different. It was definitely a wake-up call for me, you

1 know, and I talked to a couple other people about it. I said,
2 you know, this single pilot IMC is difficult. Now was it
3 uncomfortable? No. I mean, it's the job; that's what we do.
4 I've been trained by, you know, Western Michigan University, I've
5 been trained by IFL, and then I had more training with Ron, and we
6 even had trips that -- because he rode along on a few of my trips.
7 I did a couple of trips with a few different captains there in the
8 310, and one of them the weather was below minimums and we
9 diverted actually. God, I can't think of -- I remember we went to
10 Columbus. But it was one of those things that happened really
11 fast and you really need to be on your A game to be ahead of the
12 airplane, and I've always felt that I've had that ability, so --

13 Q. So on the ride-alongs what did you do? Were those in
14 the 310, and then when you're riding along, who were you riding
15 along with and what did you do?

16 A. One of the ride-alongs was with a gentleman by the name
17 of Andy Enos, and he was probably my first ride-along, and I just
18 more or less observed, you know, to see what the new trip
19 paperwork was like. Coming from IFL I had a very, very good
20 understanding of what the job was. I knew what I was getting
21 into. You know, it's an on-demand, ad-hoc freight business. And
22 flew down, you know, hey, this is how we do our weight and
23 balance; this is the trip paperwork; this is our POD, proof of
24 delivery; you know, this is all the stuff that we do as a company.
25 And then coming back, empty leg, Part 91, you know, I got to log a

1 little more time in the airplane. You know, just kind of feel
2 things out, get somebody else's perspective of, you know, hey,
3 how's he doing, sort of deal.

4 Q. And did you just ride along in the 310 or did you ride
5 along in other types of airplanes?

6 A. I did ride-alongs in 310s and then I went on a couple of
7 trips with Ron in the Falcon.

8 Q. Okay. And ultimately you got training for your check
9 ride. Can you just kind of describe if you remember what the
10 check ride was like?

11 A. Check rides were very quick and swift: take off out of
12 Pontiac. They like to use Flint a lot, go up to Flint, do a
13 circle. I mean, they'd kick you out -- you could leave 2-7-Right
14 here, take off 2-7-Right, head due north, jump in, do the VOR
15 circle -- the VOR 3-6 circle, come around for a missed, and then
16 come back around, shoot another approach in there to come back to
17 Pontiac to shoot your final approach in there. Usually somewhere
18 in there, there was -- well, three-quarters of it is always single
19 engine. There's like an aborted takeoff, something like that, but
20 it's very quick. Just like, you know, flying an airplane; you
21 have to be ahead, you have to think of what's the approach, what's
22 the miss going to be. It's just a check ride.

23 Q. So are you wearing a hood at this time?

24 A. No, we did not use the hood.

25 Q. Was it IMC out?

1 A. No -- well, that depends. I'd have to look at my
2 logbook. I know he preferred to go when the weather was poor.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Or marginal. That would make it easy to get up into the
5 clouds, come down, shoot your approach. But I know I've done
6 several that have been VFR, clear blue VFR days.

7 Q. Okay, but you didn't have any foggles on or hood --

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. -- for the check ride itself?

10 A. No.

11 Q. How about during training, did you use anything like
12 that?

13 A. No, I did not.

14 Q. Did you use anything to kind of obscure your vision?

15 A. I'm more of a focus on the panel sort of person anyway.
16 When you're flying IFR -- I don't know what your experience is,
17 but when you're flying IFR everything is right there in front of
18 you, and it's not about cheating the situation, you know, because
19 you only cheat yourself.

20 Q. So you just look down and you focused on the instrument
21 panel without looking outside?

22 A. Yeah, I mean, we're -- I like flying IFR. It's very
23 enjoyable to me. And probably one of my first flight instructors
24 really hit the nail on the head: it's mathematical, it's linear,
25 this is how it is, and I enjoy that.

1 Q. And on your check ride what maneuvers did you do?

2 A. I'd have to go back and look.

3 Q. Do you remember doing any stalls?

4 A. I know we did -- I'm not sure if we did it on the check
5 ride. I know we did it in at least training flights.

6 Q. If you recall your interview, did you get to fly during
7 your interview?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And so if you could go back and kind of describe like
10 what the interview was like and what you did on the flight?

11 A. The interview was -- excuse me. You didn't bring me
12 water so I have to --

13 Q. I'm sorry.

14 MR. ROGERS: But you didn't bring me a Coke.

15 MR. BECKMAN: You didn't ask. It wasn't in the
16 subpoena.

17 The interview was a very laid back situation, much like
18 my interview at IFL was. And, you know, it was a, "Hey, how's
19 this guy?" "Okay, seems like he can work well with us." However,
20 the difference was, and Ron caught me off guard, he said, okay,
21 let's go fly. And I said, okay. Never flown a 310 before. I've
22 only got a handful of hours in light twins, but I can fly a
23 Convair; let's go; let's go see what these levers do.

24 And we took off -- I remember that trip. We took off,
25 we went up to Flint, shot an approach to Flint, went over to Port

1 Huron, shot an approach at Port Huron. And I was actually pleased
2 with myself in how I was getting power settings and I was getting
3 the airspeeds that I needed. You know, I was ahead of the
4 airplane with having never flown the airplane, and usually to me
5 I've always found that the first time you get into an airplane
6 you're absolutely lost. You know, new airplane -- especially when
7 you don't know anything about it.

8 And I kind of smiled and Ron looked at me and he goes,
9 "You all right, Bob?" And I was like, "Yeah. Look at this, I got
10 everything set up here." "You sure do." So, you know, that was
11 our first interview/training experience, I guess, together.

12 BY MR. GALLO:

13 Q. Do you think the experience in the Convair helped you
14 because in the Convair things would happen maybe more rapidly?

15 A. Oh, immensely.

16 Q. So the 310 seemed like a slower airplane to you?

17 A. Other than the fact that it flares, you know, roughly 10
18 feet off the ground rather than 50 feet off the ground, that was
19 my biggest learning curve.

20 Q. And as far as, going back to your check ride, did you do
21 any non-precision approaches during the check ride?

22 A. Yes. That's -- VOR circle is a non-precision approach.

23 Q. And I assume that you've flown the ILS 9-Right approach
24 into Pontiac?

25 A. I have, many times.

1 Q. When you first started flying freight at Royal Air, did
2 you have -- were you told of any higher than -- that you were to
3 follow higher minimums than --

4 A. The high mins captain --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- status?

7 Q. Yeah. Not like what's in the op specs, but did anybody
8 tell you that, don't go on a flight if the weather is below 400
9 and 1?

10 A. I don't believe so, no.

11 Q. And any difficulties that you had flying the ILS -- any
12 ILS approach or specifically ILS 9-Right approach into Pontiac?

13 A. I've never had a problem with an ILS. We fly them all
14 raw data. Do you know what that means?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. We flew them all raw data in the Convair, non-coupled --
17 I mean, to fly it in a Convair at 110 knots with a 60,000 pound
18 airplane versus flying it in a go-kart, you know, at 100 knots is
19 -- I don't mean to make it sound like a simple thing; it's not,
20 every time you're flying to the numbers. Things happen so much
21 slower in that airplane in comparison, and that's pretty much
22 where I was at with my career at the time.

23 Q. Did you make use of the autopilot on the 310?

24 A. I did. I used the autopilot majority in cruise. That
25 was the experience that I had with an autopilot. Depending on

1 which airplane you had over there had a different autopilot in it.
2 Some of them would even couple approaches. There's one airplane
3 that will couple the approach over there. I don't remember if
4 2-9-Gulf, the airplane that crashed, if that one would couple or
5 not. I was trying to think about it the other day and I'm not
6 sure. But, you know, they had altitude hold and heading hold, and
7 that's pretty much really all you needed for a long day.

8 Q. During cruise flight or descent did you ever fly the 310
9 above the green arc?

10 A. Above the arc?

11 Q. Yes. Because you have the green arc and then there's
12 the yellow.

13 A. I can't remember what the actual airspeed was for that.
14 You know, we were always hovering right, I believe it was -- I'm
15 trying to think of what the power settings were in that airplane.

16 Q. How about 23 squared?

17 A. Twenty-three squared was a number -- it was -- was it 25
18 squared for departure and then 23 squared in flight, I think is
19 what the recommendation was?

20 Q. I don't know about 25 squared. I've heard 23 squared.

21 A. I'd have to see the actual panel to remember correctly,
22 but 25 squared for departure, I think is what the climb setting
23 was, and then 23 squared in cruise.

24 Q. Well, for cruise did you fly it at an increased power
25 setting to get more speed --

1 A. No.

2 Q. -- or descend at 200 knots indicated?

3 A. No. No.

4 Q. 220 even?

5 A. You know, if it's clear blue and a million, smooth day
6 out, yeah, I mean, you can push it if you want. But we were
7 always taught to, and descent was the easiest time to do it, to
8 keep from -- shoot -- cold shocking the engines or something like
9 that, you always decreased an inch a minute. So my numbers that I
10 generally used were, you know, if you're descending 1,000 feet a
11 minute, pull an inch every 1,000 feet, and that would keep you
12 from cold shocking the engines.

13 Q. So you should be gradually reducing power and slowing
14 down?

15 A. In descent, yeah.

16 Q. And just prior to the outer marker you want to be --

17 A. Prior to the outer marker you should be pretty -- I
18 mean, you should be right around that. Oh, shoot. Let's see. I
19 got to think of how I used to fly the approach. Your power should
20 be set so that when you hit that outer marker you can swing the
21 gear, fly the approach at roughly 120 knots or so. So when you
22 hit the marker you're probably doing -- you're doing about 120 to
23 hit the marker and then when you have the runway in sight you
24 swing the rest of the flaps. So to get that first notch of flaps,
25 I can't think of what the -- I really don't remember what the

1 numbers are, but it was a flaps, gear, flaps. So you wanted to
2 hit that base turn with your first notch of flaps in, turn the
3 final, mile outside of final you should be slowing right around
4 that 135 mark, swing the gear at the marker, and that gives you
5 your 120 to shoot the slope.

6 Q. And if you could discuss how long will you focus on the
7 glideslope indication in the cockpit --

8 A. As soon as it comes alive.

9 Q. -- when you have to transition -- well, at some point
10 you're going to see the runway environment. So are you flying
11 solely on visual at that point or still using the glideslope? And
12 this is in a low IFR night environment.

13 A. Well, this -- that depends on how much of the
14 environment you see. You know, if you just see the lights,
15 technically you have another 100 feet, right? Well, you have 100
16 feet AGL is what you're allowed.

17 As far as how I fly it? You pop out at the bottom,
18 you're on the lights; if that's all you see is the lights, you go
19 back inside. You have to look for that 100 feet. I mean, there's
20 no other way to find it and it's happening fast at that point.
21 That's just how I do it. But I've never had -- I never had to
22 make use of the extra 100 feet. I've always had a threshold at
23 200, and if you don't have a threshold at 200 you're obviously
24 going missed.

25 Q. And I just had a couple more questions. During your

1 training before you got checked out in a 310, you mentioned you
2 were flying on, I think, the Falcon?

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. Were you -- was that right seat or left seat that you --

5 A. Right seat.

6 Q. And did you actually get to fly the airplane or what did
7 you do?

8 A. I did fly the airplane. On an empty leg I was allowed
9 to essentially fly home, and in a live leg I was sitting in the
10 jumpseat.

11 Q. And so when you were flying did -- I guess you flew with
12 Mr. Ron Birnie. Did he ever, did he talk to you about how to fly
13 the Falcon or like what was --

14 A. It was more about flows and checklists and whatnot. You
15 know, getting used to a jet and the feel of the aircraft, flying a
16 different airplane is what he was teaching me about.

17 Q. And since you had experience as SIC, did you get to land
18 the airplane too or take off?

19 A. I think I did -- yeah, I think I might have one or two
20 takeoffs and landings in the airplane, so --

21 Q. Did you get to do an approach?

22 A. Never flew an approach. I was always in the back seat
23 for that.

24 Q. I asked this question of somebody else before, so what
25 do you think of the culture there?

1 A. You know, I don't have very much judging on -- as far as
2 working with those people and working at IFL, it's a lot more of a
3 family, family oriented culture. Everything from, you know, going
4 in, "Hey, how's your wife?"; "Hey, you know, what's going on at
5 home?", yadda-yadda, to the Christmas party. You know, you go to
6 a Christmas party that's held in a hangar with a bunch of
7 inflatables and a bunch of kids running around. I'm sure Barry
8 can tell you about IFL's Christmas parties, and it's just more of
9 -- it's not a very -- it's not an uninviting environment; it's
10 very nice. Everybody there was more than happy to listen to you
11 and your concerns. You know, their culture there I thought was
12 great; the job, however, sucked. I didn't like being on call.

13 Q. Did you find flying on-demand cargo more difficult than
14 flying passenger cargo with the hours involved?

15 A. Can you rephrase --

16 Q. Is there a difference even?

17 A. You just said passenger cargo, so --

18 Q. I mean 135 passenger flights versus 135 cargo, so cargo
19 and passenger. So is there a difference that you saw?

20 A. Yeah, there's a 100 percent difference, you know, and
21 that comes down to pilotage and PIC decisions at that point. I
22 got called for a trip in the middle of the night and the
23 dispatcher wanted me to go pick up in Columbus where the weather
24 was okay, but there was a pretty, pretty stiff crosswind for a
25 310, and I forget what -- there was some weather system coming in

1 and he wanted me to fly from Columbus up to Rochester. And when I
2 reviewed everything, I said, "Man, it's gusty; it's going to be
3 bumpy. Are you sure? Have you talked to these passengers about
4 going on this trip?" And he said, "Yeah, it's just a mechanic."
5 And I sat back down and I started going over the information again
6 and just didn't have a good feeling about it, and I called him up
7 and I said, "No, I'm not going to do this trip." And he said,
8 "Well, is it because of the bumps?" And I was like, "Man, nobody
9 deserves to be sick in an airplane."

10 You know, if it was boxes, yeah, sure; I'll go pick up
11 boxes, I'll go get thrown around for the night. I mean,
12 turbulence is turbulence; it happens. But when there's people
13 involved, you just -- nobody wants to be sick. And I don't know
14 if we had enough sick sacks in the airplane that would have made
15 it through that night. And he was fine about it. My dispatcher
16 that night said, he said -- and I had told him, I said, "You know,
17 call the customer, tell him I'm sick, tell him you don't have a
18 pilot. I don't care. I'll take the abuse on this one." And he
19 said, "No, no, don't worry about it. It's not a big deal anyway."
20 And I never heard heads nor tails about it.

21 Q. And that was somebody else other than Royal Air, right?

22 A. No, that was a Royal Air trip.

23 Q. Oh, they were flying passengers also?

24 A. Uh-huh. Yeah, I flew passengers in a 310.

25 Q. And so they were okay with you canceling it then?

1 A. Uh-huh.

2 Q. Did you ever have any pressure to do flights, to
3 complete them?

4 A. No, unless you consider your paycheck pressure.

5 Q. But you're salaried, right?

6 A. No. No, you get paid by the mile.

7 Q. Okay, but you get a base salary and then you get per
8 mileage, per mile then?

9 A. You get paid -- you have a base salary and your salary,
10 depending on what airplane you flew -- I want to say when I
11 started the -- it was \$400 a week, maybe, and that was based on 20
12 cents a mile. So how many miles is that?

13 Barry is either asleep or it's burning his head off.

14 MR. ROGERS: I'm sitting here trying to figure out 20
15 cents a mile, if you're doing 180 miles an hour?

16 MR. BECKMAN: Yeah.

17 MR. ROGERS: I'm trying to figure out what that's coming
18 out to be per hour.

19 BY MR. GALLO:

20 Q. Well, I mean, just for the sake of argument, so --

21 A. It's roughly 2200 miles a week; roughly 2200.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So once you hit that 2200 mark -- now everything's
24 booked roundtrip. So like IFL used to do, that last leg coming
25 home, if you stayed out on the road, you got paid for that last

1 leg; you didn't fly it but you got paid for it. So it was
2 conducive to the pilot to stay out on the road and see if you
3 could get another trip because you could get paid, you know,
4 essentially empty legs that you never flew.

5 Q. So really you're guaranteed the \$400 if you fly 2200
6 miles; is that --

7 A. You're guaranteed \$400 if you don't fly 2200 miles.

8 Q. Okay. But then if you hit 2200 miles, everything above
9 that --

10 A. It's all in your pocket.

11 Q. -- is additional? Okay.

12 A. What's that work out to a year? Not enough to support a
13 family of any.

14 Q. I don't know.

15 MR. GALLO: Barry, do you have any questions?

16 BY MR. ROGERS:

17 Q. Just trying to make comparison between -- you had pilot
18 training with IFL?

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. You said you went to Pinnacle for a while?

21 A. I went to Pinnacle for 3 months, yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I had -- I went through -- that year I had three 121
24 ground schools. It was fantastic. I loved every minute of it.

25 Q. I bet you did. Then you went to Royal?

1 A. Royal.

2 Q. And now you're with this new firm and you're going
3 through SimuFlite or --

4 A. We go through FlightSafety.

5 Q. FlightSafety.

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. How do you compare the differences in the quality of the
8 ground schooling that you got from each of those groups?

9 A. It depends on how much of a go-getter you are. If
10 you're somebody who's wanting to do something, then they can help
11 you along the way, "they" being Royal. If you're just there to
12 get your training and then jump into an airplane, your training is
13 going to take a long time because they want somebody who is
14 willing to go out there and learn and get the information.

15 Q. So it was more of a self-motivated, self-study type
16 thing?

17 A. Yeah. I remember a pilot when I was there, he -- and
18 this actually really made me respect Ron quite a bit -- he
19 started, and I think his training ended up going 2, almost 3
20 months. And he was supposed to be checked out in the 310, and Ron
21 finally said, there's no way I can let you be PIC in a 310; you're
22 going to kill yourself, for the most part. And he said, you know,
23 let's start you training in the right seat for an SIC position in
24 the Bandit. And they pushed him over to the Bandit, and so -- you
25 know, they do that with people with low time. You know, you're

1 not going to throw anybody in the left seat that's not ready for
2 the challenge, and he was flying the Bandit. I flew with him in
3 the Bandit for several months. So he never got checked out in the
4 310.

5 Q. So, if I can paraphrase, the Royal was not really formal
6 ground school type training, where you went in for 8 hours a day
7 or whatever?

8 A. It's not as structured --

9 Q. Not as structured. Okay.

10 A. -- as like IFL or FlightSafety would be, no.

11 Q. So -- I'm trying to think. Certain topics are supposed
12 to be covered. So the question would be did they -- somebody
13 instruct you on emergency equipment and stuff like that, or is
14 that again self-study?

15 A. That was a self-study. You go out, you know, you jump
16 in the airplane, and all right, you know the fire extinguisher is
17 here. Obviously you know where -- and that's all part of the
18 brief when you get into an airplane as well, so, you know,
19 emergency situation, this is what we do sort of deal.

20 Q. And for doing systems on the airplane -- I don't know
21 that much about a 310, so --

22 A. A 310 is pretty simple. You know, their biggest thing,
23 what both Kirt and Ron really wanted you to figure out was -- the
24 most complex system on the airplane is the fuel system, and it's
25 just about time management. But, you know, I went and diagramed

1 that system. I remember diagramming the hydraulic system in the
2 Bandit too. And then for anything that I would have a question
3 about, you know, "Hey, what do you think about this?", or "Hey,
4 this is my diagram." And Kirt would say, "Yeah, did you read that
5 you have to let the main tanks burn for an hour and a half before
6 you can put any fuel in them?" As in the bypass -- or there's
7 actually like a return, a fuel return on the engine, so -- and
8 it's about a 60 percent return. So out in the mains you have to
9 burn those for an hour and a half, which are the tips, and then
10 when you go to switch -- there's a switch down on the lower floor
11 between the seats. You can flip that switch after an hour and a
12 half because the fuel from the wing tanks is now going to flow out
13 to the engines and then that 60 percent return is going to go back
14 to the mains. So, in actuality, when you burn those, call it 2
15 hours of gas in the mains -- or in the auxiliary wing tanks, when
16 you burned for an hour on those wing tanks, the wing tanks would
17 be empty because the other 50 percent is now out in your mains.

18 MR. ROGERS: Okay. I think that answers most of my
19 questions.

20 MR. ANGLE: Okay.

21 MR. ROGERS: I'll try to think --

22 MR. BECKMAN: You trying to get your head wrapped around
23 that?

24 MR. ROGERS: Well, no, it's not that. It's just, you
25 know, everything else, you know, their training manual and stuff

1 like that, and the regs and trying to figure out where all the
2 pieces are. Yeah, I'll defer to Bart.

3 BY MR. ANGLE:

4 Q. Did you receive any single pilot resource management,
5 CRM-type training at Royal Air?

6 A. CRM training in a single pilot airplane. No, I -- I
7 just -- I don't know what you're looking for in that question,
8 but, I -- you know, as far as what?

9 Q. How about aeronautical decision making?

10 A. That's all left as a PIC decision-making thing. To my
11 knowledge you should come into the industry with that information.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. As far as them saying, you know, "Hey, what can you do?"
14 No.

15 Q. Okay. How did you feel about this style of self-study
16 ground training? How do you feel about that? Did you like it?

17 A. It was different. It was different than what I was used
18 to. You know, like I said, I had collegiate training and then for
19 the most part I had 121 training, and it -- 135 I just pretty
20 walked in and said, "Oh, so this is what 135 is all about," and
21 kind of went with it from there.

22 Q. Did they direct you on what they wanted you to do each
23 day? Did they say, read this or read that? How did they -- did
24 they have a plan that they handed you?

25 A. There was no syllabus, if that's what you're asking.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. No. Just kind of come on in and, you know, let's go
3 through this and --

4 Q. Okay. Were you quizzed or did you get a written test
5 after each segment? How did they assess your knowledge during the
6 training?

7 A. There was no written exam. You know, Ron had asked me
8 questions about the systems in the airplane and stuff like that.
9 You know, you get asked questions here and there. Check ride day
10 they ask you a couple of questions, nothing too extravagant.

11 Q. Okay. Did you train ILS approaches during your flight
12 training?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. Did you do ILS approaches to a landing and to a
15 missed approach during your training?

16 A. Yes. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Was that during the check ride as well?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay. Were you ever -- I believe you talked about this
20 situation, and I've asked the other -- were you given any training
21 on a situation where you would fly an instrument, an ILS approach
22 and at minimums you saw only the lead-in lights or the sequencing
23 flashers, what you would do from that point on? Did you get any
24 training in that situation?

25 A. I did not receive any training in that situation.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. More of a, you know if you get the lights, you can go
3 down to 100 feet AGL.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I don't know how you're supposed to train in that, but
6 that's not up to me, so never mind.

7 Q. But you knew -- but did you know that before --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- Royal Air?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. So they didn't teach that to you; you already
12 knew it?

13 A. Right. I had a base knowledge, yeah.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. You know, and Barry could probably attest to this, my
16 base knowledge was pretty strong going into Royal Air. There
17 wasn't a lot that they could train me that I, without sounding
18 arrogant here, that I didn't already know. It was more of the 135
19 side of things that I had to figure out, you know, duty days and
20 stuff like that. It was just different animal, different plane,
21 same job.

22 Q. Okay. Were there times that you were called for trips
23 that you did not feel fully rested?

24 A. Man, that's a whole ball of worms. You know, the job is
25 20 minutes on call, an hour off the ground. There's going to be

1 days where you got up at 7:00 in the morning and you had a full
2 day of, you know, raking your yard, cleaning up leaves, you go
3 home, you go to bed, 10:00, 10:30, 10:45 your phone rings. That's
4 the job; that's what we do.

5 Q. Sure. Would there have been -- did you feel that if you
6 were assigned a trip and you said to Royal Air, "I'm too tired to
7 go; I've been up all day," how do you think they would have
8 reacted if you would have said that to them?

9 A. I've turned down trips before, even just speaking about,
10 you know, flying passengers, turned down trips that way. I've
11 turned down trips for being tired. You know, we had just an
12 absolute dog of a trip that was scheduled and you knew it was
13 coming, and it went down to Atlanta, all the way up the East
14 Coast, and then back home. I'm sure you guys have seen it. That
15 trip was terrible; it was absolutely brutal. And by the time you
16 dropped off that last piece of freight in Boston, it was up to
17 you; it was your call: do you want to come home, do you want to
18 take a nap in Boston; what do you want to do? And I know several
19 guys that took naps in Boston, you know, took a little time off,
20 got their legs about them again, and then they bring the airplane
21 home or whatnot.

22 You know, they never had a problem with you saying,
23 "Hey, I'm pretty tired." I know of other pilots saying, you know,
24 "Hey, been a long day," and them dispatching another airplane to
25 go get them. So as far as turning down trips and them not

1 respecting the fatigue issues, no, they understood it and you
2 never felt like if you said, "Hey, I'm dog tired right now" -- I
3 remember coming home from a trip -- I got called out late at night
4 and I came home and it was just a quick 5-hour jaunt; I mean out,
5 back, drop, come home, done. I was in bed by 8:00 in the morning,
6 and at 8:30 my phone rang: "Hey, got another one for you." I let
7 it go to voicemail. Never heard heads nor tails about it. You
8 know, and the dispatcher joked with me, he said, "Well, your first
9 officer got up and took that trip." And I was like, "I wasn't
10 taking that trip. I was exhausted." He's like, "All you had to
11 do was tell me you were exhausted." I was like, "I'm pretty sure
12 my voicemail did my bidding for me." And, so, I mean, you never
13 really -- it wasn't a factor; if you were tired, you were tired.

14 Q. How does the schedule actually work? Do you have so
15 many days when you're on standby versus rest, or are you always on
16 standby? How does it work?

17 A. You're on call 24 hours a day until it's not your
18 weekend to work.

19 Q. And then does that rotate? Do you know when that's
20 going to be?

21 A. We're guaranteed a weekend off a month. Okay, so you
22 know -- or sorry. You were guaranteed to work one weekend a
23 month. So you were guaranteed three weekends out of the month not
24 to work. If you weren't going to work, then you could come home
25 on Friday afternoon. Even if you were going to work the weekend,

1 they brought you home Friday afternoon, which I assume is what
2 happened with this gentleman coming back from Fulton County.

3 It -- you know, you went from, what was it, Monday at
4 0001 until Friday at midnight, and Friday at midnight came, your
5 phone, everything went to voicemail, and that's the way that most
6 of the guys did it. You know, so those were your 2 days off, two
7 24-hour periods. It sucks if you're used to working a 9 to 5 and
8 you want to go up north for the weekend, but they were really good
9 about, "Hey, you know, I've got something planned; I want to go do
10 this on Friday," and then use the rest of the weekend. They were
11 really good about that.

12 Q. Okay. Do you feel that the training you received at
13 Royal Air was adequate for the job they were asking you to do?

14 A. That's a personal thing. I mean, as far as for me to do
15 that job, yes, I feel my training was adequate.

16 Q. Okay. As a professional pilot with your background did
17 you feel that there were anything -- was there anything missing or
18 any deficiencies in your training at Royal Air prior to being
19 released to go fly trips?

20 A. No. I feel that I was -- when I finally got released to
21 do trips, and I'm trying to think of when it was, I was pretty
22 much chomping at the bit to go. I had done several ride-alongs, I
23 had ridden along with Ron for a few, ridden along with a couple of
24 the other guys, and then we had done several training flights in
25 and around here, and I was just chomping at the bit. However,

1 thinking as a professional pilot, when you don't get paid for
2 training and you have a wife and a house, you know, there's enough
3 there, enough incentive.

4 Q. Okay. They didn't pay you during your training?

5 A. Training is not paid.

6 Q. So the entire time you're training you're not receiving
7 compensation?

8 A. Correct, unless you spoke with the boss previously about
9 that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. You could get that worked out through the boss.

12 MR. ROGERS: That was on a case-to-case basis?

13 MR. BECKMAN: Uh-huh.

14 COURT REPORTER: Is that a yes?

15 MR. ROGERS: Yes?

16 MR. BECKMAN: I'm Ron Burgundy? Sorry. I'm sorry, yes.

17 COURT REPORTER: That's okay.

18 MR. BECKMAN: Case-to-case basis, yes.

19 BY MR. ANGLE:

20 Q. Did you -- you said that you had met Mr. Andrew Demos?

21 A. I may have met him once in passing. I already put in my
22 notice by the time -- I believe he was checked out -- this is
23 speculation -- right around the first of December, sometime in
24 that first couple of weeks. I flew only a few trips in December
25 and I put my notice in, shoot, 3 weeks before I left. I gave them

1 ample notice just because I respected Ron, I respected Kirt, and I
2 said, "Hey, you know, this is what's going on; I'm leaving,"
3 yadda-yadda, and they were a little taken aback by it. They
4 didn't realize I was leaving so soon, especially at the end of the
5 year. And, you know, they were still nice and gracious to me and
6 they still wanted me to come to the Christmas party and whatnot,
7 and I think I might have met Andy like in passing, like, "Oh, hey,
8 here's the new guy." "Oh, hey, I'm Bob; I'm going to be gone in 3
9 weeks," sort of deal, so -- but that was it. That was the best I
10 knew him.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Thank goodness.

13 MR. ANGLE: That's all I have. Thank you.

14 BY MR. GALLO:

15 Q. When did you give notice that you were going to leave?

16 A. I gave it 3 weeks out. So if I left on the 31st, it
17 would have been 3 weeks before that.

18 Q. In December then?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And they didn't know prior to that that you were
21 leaving?

22 A. Uh-uh.

23 Q. I'm just trying to wonder why Andy Demos was hired, if
24 there was a shortage because of your leaving maybe?

25 A. No. He was already hired and online before I even put

1 my notice in. I'm trying to think. I had an interview on the
2 16th of December, so that was a Monday. I put my notice in -- I
3 put my notice in on the 13th or possibly the 12th.

4 Q. Okay. And in getting called for flights at Royal Air,
5 do they ever have you fly the 310 because a Learjet or a Falcon or
6 an aircraft with higher minimums couldn't fly due to weather so
7 they got the 310?

8 A. No.

9 Q. All right. When you filed your flight plan either
10 leaving and/or coming back to Pontiac, what information would you
11 provide from the flight plan to the company?

12 A. Tail number, call sign; that's about it.

13 Q. Would you give them departure time too?

14 A. Normally when you take off with a trip, hey -- call up,
15 hey, I've got freight, this is it, these are the numbers that I
16 have, part numbers. And they say, "Okay, hold on a second," put
17 you on hold, start burning your cell phone minutes, pick back up
18 again, "Hey, parts check out good. I'll talk to you in so-and-
19 so." "All right, I'll be off the ground in 10 minutes. It's 2
20 hours en route."

21 Q. Any fuel information or alternate airport?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Do they ask you about the weather at all?

24 A. Usually Roy had a pretty good idea what was happening
25 with the weather; Roy, the main dispatcher up there. I think he

1 might be even the dispatch manager. But they usually had a really
2 good idea of what was going on with the weather. If I had any
3 weather concerns I would have given it to them prior to that
4 point.

5 Q. Have you ever made use of the freight delay rule as far
6 as duty time?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And can you explain that? Because I learned about it
9 during the investigation, about the freight delay rule.

10 A. My first freight delay rule was actually a point of
11 anger for me. Because I've been flying 121, you can't exceed your
12 duty day; yeah, you can push your flight time a little bit. But I
13 called up Ron directly and I said, "Hey, I'm going to bust through
14 it." And he said, "Well, what's the circumstances?" And I told
15 him what was going on, and he said, well, that's technically a
16 freight delay; there's nothing you can do about that. And I said,
17 as far as I'm concerned, I can't bust this number. And he said,
18 no, he's like, "It's a 135 thing. I understand you couldn't do it
19 121," he's like, "However, it is in our ability to do it." And I
20 took him at his word for it, and freight delay it was.

21 Q. And when did you first learn about the freight delay
22 rule? Like how many weeks, or were you already working there?

23 A. I was already working there. That was an on-the-trip
24 thing that I learned about it.

25 Q. So how much into, since you were hired, when did you

1 learn? Like a month later or 2 months later?

2 A. I'd have to look.

3 Q. But you didn't --

4 A. It had to be in a 6 month. I mean, it wasn't right off
5 the bat. It wasn't a quick thing because it, like I said, it was
6 a real point of contention for me at that point. Because the
7 dispatcher said one thing and I said, "No, you can push me through
8 to Ron right now."

9 Q. And then going to your training, did you cover Part 135
10 regulations in the company op specs? Were you given those manuals
11 and the regulations to study?

12 A. I was given access to the manuals. Did we go over them?
13 No.

14 Q. Were you -- did they quiz you on the op specs or the
15 company operations manual?

16 A. No.

17 Q. In your training -- well, let me just go back. You
18 know, Royal Air, this is their third fatal accident, and then I
19 think they had some number of non-fatal accidents, I don't know --

20 A. It's four to my knowledge, but --

21 Q. -- prior to that. So during your training or subsequent
22 did anybody tell you, talk to you about these accidents or
23 incidents in the company? How is that information disseminated?

24 A. That's like going up to somebody and asking how their
25 mother died. It's not something that you talk about, especially

1 pilot to pilot; I don't want to know. You know, it was never
2 something that was brought up. It was never something that I
3 asked about. I heard rumors about the last Learjet that went in
4 over in Milwaukee, but nothing more than that.

5 Q. So nobody within the company -- let me just go back.
6 Ron, Mr. Ron Birnie or Mr. Kirt Kostich never said this is what
7 came out of the investigation as a lessons learned?

8 A. Not to me, no.

9 Q. And anything during your training about previous
10 accidents or incidents?

11 A. No. It wasn't anything that I was going to ask. You
12 know, I did my preflight on my airplane; I deemed it airworthy.
13 If I ever had an issue, I knew who to take it to.

14 Q. And then you mentioned if you were tired you could call
15 up the company and say, "I'm tired; I'm going to nap in Boston," I
16 believe was the example. So where would you nap? Would it be in
17 the FBO or did you get a hotel room?

18 A. It was kind of just assumed that you took a nap in the
19 FBO. You know, there's generally a pilot snooze room; there is
20 one there. You know, I never actually asked for a hotel. I
21 assume that if you wanted a hotel they would now assume, "Okay,
22 well, take 10 hours off and you'll be legal again in 10 hours."
23 So rather than do that, close your duty window, leave that duty
24 clock running and by the time you got back to your own bed, you
25 know, it kind of gave you that 10 hours guaranteed at home rather

1 than out on the road.

2 Q. Did you ever have to ask for a hotel, that you were
3 going to stay overnight because you were too tired?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Do you know if they would pay for per diem to stay
6 somewhere overnight?

7 A. The per diem at the company was from when you blocked in
8 at an outstate -- or at an outpost. So if you got a hotel -- say
9 you're going to Smyrna, Tennessee, which is outside Nashville.
10 And you fly down and they have another trip for you in so many
11 hours but you need to rest up, so they'd send you to the hotel.
12 When you blocked in there, you'd start your per diem clock and
13 they'd start paying you right up until the point where you blocked
14 back out again. I think it was like no less than 13 hours or
15 something like that. It came out to roughly \$20.

16 Q. And going back, why did you apply to Royal Air? I don't
17 know if I asked that question.

18 A. You didn't. When I went to Pinnacle my -- I had, like
19 every pilot does, you have something brewing. Nobody wants to go
20 to regional, but I needed jet experience and I needed 100 hours of
21 it to make an insurance requirement for a Part 91 corporation.
22 And so my easiest bet to do that was to go to Pinnacle, take the
23 pay cut from IFL, go to Pinnacle, fly the CRJ for 6 months, and
24 then I would have been set for this other job. However, when I
25 went to Pinnacle they merged the pilot seniority list, Colgan got

1 merged in there and they were also with Mesaba, and I was
2 displaced to Colgan because I felt -- or I fit the turboprop need.
3 It was terrible. I was less than happy. So I went and started
4 training for Colgan up in Minneapolis, and that's when the phone
5 calls started.

6 I called and talked to a couple of people, one of them
7 was Mr. Shawn Farley. And Farley was walking in the door to
8 Royal, and he was supposed to fly their Falcon 20 there, and I
9 said, I need jet time, I need it fast, and, you know, I need
10 something that, you know, I can make a couple of bucks at. And
11 just because I wasn't going to go be based in Dallas flying a
12 turboprop at \$18,000 a year; it just wasn't going to work.

13 And he said, yeah, you know, I'll talk to Ron about you
14 and see what we can get. And he talked to Ron, gave him my
15 resume. Ron looked at my resume and said, wow, you have a lot of
16 turboprop time, however you don't have hardly any PIC time. I
17 think I might have had like 160 hours at the time. And he said,
18 you know, we can get you some PIC time as well as some jet time if
19 you'd like, but, you know, this kinds of fills a need for us. I
20 said, okay, you know, let's do it. And so that brought me home
21 out of Minneapolis and out of the turboprop.

22 Q. All right, two last questions and I think you may have
23 touched upon this: what are some of the negatives working at
24 Royal Air and what are positives working at Royal Air?

25 A. As far as the negatives, it's that whole on-demand

1 freight job; it's terrible. I mean, it's definitely paying your
2 dues. It's hard work. Being on call is brutal. I mean, there's
3 no easy way about it. It's a tough lifestyle.

4 The positives, you know, in a 310 single pilot you're
5 only -- you can only fly 8 hours, so once you fly that 8 hours
6 you're pretty much burned and you get to come home. Bring the
7 airplane home, start all over again the next day. So I got to see
8 my wife a lot. Being home was very nice. I spent, the first year
9 that I was there I spent five nights on the road. Coming from IFL
10 I spent 5 weeks at one time down in Miami; it was awesome. You
11 know, so that was -- that's a perks. That was really nice, and
12 the company cared about you. You know, Ron -- "Hey, how's Amanda
13 doing?" I mean, I had a baby while I was there, "How's Amanda
14 doing? How's Emily?" You know, very personable people, always
15 looking out for you is at least what I felt.

16 MR. GALLO: And then -- well, do you have any other
17 questions?

18 BY MR. ROGERS:

19 Q. So how do you like your new job?

20 A. My new job's awesome.

21 Q. So are you still considering doing some part-time work
22 for Royal or has that kind of changed your mind now?

23 A. I've pretty much cut ties over there. You know, it --
24 the reason I did that trip -- in fact I did one this year with
25 them. I got shortchanged on my yearly bonus, and got a phone

1 call, "Hey, you know, I talked to Kirt and you should be getting a
2 partial sum of your bonus, but, you know, we need a ride and are
3 you still interested in doing part-time work?" I said, "You know,
4 I'll do it as long as I'm current." And he said, "Okay," he's
5 like, "Well, Kirt was going to run a 310 down to Goshen and, you
6 know, bring back a pilot and somebody else" -- they were going to
7 swap something out so that somebody could fly a Bandit. He goes,
8 "But if you can do it, we'll just send you and the Bandit down
9 there and, you know, you can fly the actual trip." I said,
10 "Okay," thinking that I'm going to get my bonus out of this. And
11 the bonuses were pretty sizeable, you know, and I had talked to
12 Kirt about it, and it's one of the stinging points of leaving, and
13 Kirt was all right with it. My previous year I had an issue where
14 it didn't go into my account correctly; they left off a zero.

15 Q. It's an insignificant digit.

16 A. Yeah. You know, leave out a zero and that 400 becomes
17 what?

18 So anyway, you know, they shortchanged me 3,600 bucks
19 last year, and he made up for it; not a big deal. And then this
20 year he, I said, "Hey, are we still having some sort of accounting
21 glitch or something like that?" Because usually it goes in before
22 the end -- the 31st. He said, "Well, you know, I assume that, you
23 know, we've never really had anybody leave like this before." And
24 I said, you know, "Like this, by giving you 3 weeks' notice,
25 working all year for you, working my tail off for my yearly

1 bonus?" "Well, it's more for people who stick around." And I was
2 like, "All right, to each their own."

3 BY MR. GALLO:

4 Q. I have one more question then, or actually two more
5 questions. What's the bonus based on?

6 A. PFM? I have no idea.

7 Q. What's PFM?

8 A. You're going to have to ask Barry.

9 Q. Okay. So it's not -- you don't know if it's based on
10 how many flights you do? It's --

11 A. As far as I know, it's based on longevity, how long
12 you've been there, and maybe how many flights you do. I don't
13 know. I really don't think it's based on that. You know, I flew
14 like 1,000 hours my first year there. I think I flew like 1,000
15 last -- maybe 900 last year, and I heard last year's were lower.
16 This is just through the rumor mill. I heard last year's were
17 lower just based on company income. I don't think last year was
18 as good as the previous year, so -- I think it's more of a profit
19 sharing. I just don't know.

20 Q. Well, do you think they try to do more training during
21 the off-season, off-peak season, which I'm assuming is around
22 December, than in the summer season?

23 A. Yeah, I -- I mean, that's how everybody does it, I
24 assume.

25 Q. Do you have anything else to add or you want to tell us

1 that we haven't asked about, or any concerns?

2 A. No, just whatever you guys need, I mean, feel free to
3 ask. I'm wide open, so --

4 MR. GALLO: All right. Well, thank you then. All
5 right, we're all done.

6 (Whereupon, at 2:59 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: JANUARY 10, 2014
 CESSNA 310R, N3829G,
 ROYAL AIR FLIGHT 907
 PONTIAC, MICHIGAN
 Interview of Robert Beckman

DOCKET NUMBER: CEN14FA110

PLACE: Waterford, Michigan

DATE: March 13, 2014

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the interview.

Kristen Shankleton
Official Reporter