

By this time other people who had witnessed the crash from the road arrived and called 911. We attempted to stop the bleeding with compression and it was then that I recognized the pilot as Richard Bach, an old friend whom I hadn't seen in over 15 years. I also realized at this time that the dripping fluid was actually bilge water, and made no further effort to remove Dick from the plane, satisfied that if it did catch fire we would now be able to pull him clear in a few seconds. In almost no time emergency personnel began arriving in increasing numbers and I mentally relinquished responsibility for Dick's extrication and survival to these more qualified people.

You were there by that time so I won't reiterate the sequence of events any further as you are already familiar with that activity. As I am cc:ing this to Bill Shinn at the FAA I will include my appraisal of the probable causes of this accident. After talking with Rod Wagner on Orcas I understand that, prior to Dick's taking off, Rod advised Dick of the presence of wires at the north end of our field. There are in fact two separate sets of wires. On the north side of the road are black telephone wires, and on the south side there are aluminum power lines, which are six to eight feet higher than the telephone wires. The telephone wires being black are easy to spot from the air, while the aluminum wires are very difficult to see as they almost disappear against the foliage. It is my conjecture that Dick was referencing his final approach altitude to the telephone wires allowing the lower 18 inches of the left landing gear to impact the higher power lines which he probably never saw. Inspection of the SeaRay show the wires skimmed the bottom of the hull and also impacted the right tire.

If you require further information please let me know and I will be happy to provide what I can. Again, our heartfelt thanks to you and all the SJI emergency personnel for your prompt and professional response to, and handling of, this tragic event.

Stuart MacPherson

Hi Scott,

As you requested I will attempt to relate what I witnessed last Saturday, Sept. 1st., 2012 during the crash of the SeaRay amphibian at our farm on San Juan Valley Road. At about 4 o'clock I was working around the barn on a project when the SeaRay flew over and circled a couple of times.

It is not unusual for light aircraft to circle over the valley and of course as a pilot myself I always stop what I'm doing to watch. Our neighbor Kenny Franklin and I both land our planes in our respective hay fields and when a plane is parked in a field I assume this is what attracts other pilots interest. We did not have a plane parked in our field that day, and I'm not sure if Kenny did either. As the plane was an amphibian I thought the pilot might also be interested in Dykstra lake, or possibly be a friend of Kenny's.

The wind was out of the south blowing about 5 to 10 knots. After I think the third circle the SeaRay turned north and started lowering its landing gear. This would put it on a left hand downwind leg for a landing in our field, which caused me concern as we do not land to the south due to the down sloping of the field to the south, and the power lines bordering the field on the north end. I started running toward the field and got past the treeline just in time to see the SeaRay on a short final approach to our field. In less time than it takes to tell the amphibian struck the wires, flipped over, and impacted the ground about 50 yards beyond the road and power poles. The aircraft severed two of the power lines and the force on the wires snapped a nearby power pole.

I just kept running toward the plane and got there in about 20 or 30 seconds. The engine was still running although the propeller had stopped turning. I immediately turned off the master switch and the mags but, being unfamiliar with the aircraft, was unable to locate the fuel shutoff.

There was the smell of gasoline and liquid dripping and I tried to untangle the pilot and release his seat belt and harness. He was unconscious and bleeding profusely from the head, crumpled on the ground under the upside down wreckage. I finally realized that his seat belt had broken and at that point started tearing away the cockpit combing and straightening his legs out from under the airplane so that it would be possible to drag him clear if it should catch fire.