MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation **March 5, 2017**

Subject: ERA17FA119 Duette FL
Name: Brody Gullett – Student/Rancher

Mr. Gullett witnessed the accident from his home. He was interviewed at his home in the company of his parents, with their permission.

Mr. Gullett's attention was drawn to the airplane by its sound. He said the airplane sounded "like a regular airplane" and the engine sound was smooth.

With a model of an airplane in his hand, Mr. Gullet demonstrated an airplane in straight and level flight, going "kind of slow" as the nose gradually pitched up. He said he was "going along nice and easy, kind of low, and then he just started going up. I thought he was going up to miss the trees."

He then demonstrated the airplane falling off on one wing, and the airplane entering a spiraling descent. The engine sound was smooth and continuous throughout, and the engine sound increased throughout its descent until the airplane disappeared from his view and the sounds of impact were heard.

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation **March 5, 2017**

Subject: ERA17FA119 Duette FL
Name: Clayton Gullett – Student/Rancher

Mr. Gullett witnessed the accident from his home. He was interviewed at his home in the company of his parents, with their permission.

Mr. Gullett's attention was drawn to the airplane by its sound. He said the airplane sounded as if it was at "low" altitude, but the engine sound was smooth.

With a model of an airplane in his hand, Mr. Gullet demonstrated an airplane in straight and level flight, going "kind of slow" as the nose gradually pitched up. He then demonstrated the airplane falling off on one wing, and the airplane entering a spiraling descent. The engine sound was smooth and continuous throughout, and the engine sound increased throughout its descent until the airplane disappeared from his view and the sounds of impact were heard.

Mr. Gullett added that as the airplane disappeared behind the trees and out of view, he "heard him give it gas," and described an engine sound increasing to very high rpm.

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Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation **March 5, 2017**

Subject: ERA17FA119 Duette FL
Name: Jason Robert Gullett –Rancher/Engine Mechanic

Mr. Gullett did not witness the accident, but heard the accident from his home. He was interviewed at his home.

Mr. Gullett's attention was drawn to the airplane by his sons and by its sound. He said the airplane sounded as if it was at "low" altitude, but the engine sound was smooth.

Mr. Gullett said his sons called to him about the approaching airplane, but that he was familiar with airplanes flying over his property, and that he was busy in the maintenance shop of his ranch, and chose not to come outside at his sons' request.

Mr. Gullett said he heard the airplane approach and all the way to ground contact, but did not see it. He went on to say that he was an experienced engine mechanic, and that the engine sounds were smooth and continuous throughout. According to Mr. Gullett, "There was nothing wrong" with the airplane's engines.

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation **March 24, 2017**

Subject: ERA17FA119 Duette FL
Name: Ernest H. (Hal) Spencer – Airline Transport Pilot/Friend of Accident Pilot

Mr. Spencer spoke by telephone with the accident pilot. They discussed the events of the first day of training, and the pilot's concerns about the techniques taught and employed by the instructor. Mr. Spencer provided two email statements regarding his conversations with the accident pilot, and they are excerpted below:

Submitted by Ernest H. Spencer, Jr. at the request of Brian Rayner, NTSB

Pilot Certificate: [redacted] CFI, MEI, ATP

Friday - March 3, 2017 6:04PM
Conversation length: 11 minutes

Brad Mutchler called me from Florida where he was receiving recurrent training in the Beech Duke N39AG required by his aviation insurance company. He had flown with an instructor on this day and he called me to express concerns over the instructor's methods used for flying the Duke. Brad said he had always advanced the mixture and propeller controls full forward before landing in the event a go-around was necessary. He asked if that was the method I used and I agreed with Brad. He said the instructor told him to leave the mixture and propeller controls where they were on final because advancing the prop controls would cause the props to make additional noise and advancing the mixture would waste fuel. Brad and I agreed that the lower power setting around 20" MAP or less on final would result in the prop governors being close to or out of their effective operating range and would not result in significant additional noise if advanced. With the throttles retarded to approximately 20" MAP or less, wasting fuel is not be a consideration. We agreed that advancing the props and mixture was one less thing to be concerned with if a go-around was necessary. I told Brad just to bear with the instructor and when he finished his training he could use the method he preferred. Brad did not tell me the instructor's name but did say with a chuckle, "this old fart must be 80 years old".

Saturday - March 4, 2017 7:49AM
Conversation length: 5 minutes

Brad Mutchler called me and said the had forgotten to tell me something else that happened on Friday while flying with the instructor in the Duke. Brad said he was doing a power off stall recovery using his usual method of first lowering the nose to break the stall, then leveling the wings while adding power. I told him this was the method I would recommend. Brad said the instructor had him bank 20 degrees to the left and recover from the on-set of the stall by applying power first, then lower the nose and wings level. I told Brad I thought this method of recovering from a imminent stall could result in a spin due to the prop wash from the right engine generating additional lift on the right wind and rolling the aircraft to the left and into a possible spin. Brad said that is exactly what happened when he used the instructor's method for stall recovery. Brad said stall recovery was being demonstrated at 3000' MSL and the aircraft entered a spin to the left. Brad said they recovered after the aircraft made 1 1/2 turns. He did not say what the altitude was following the recovery. Brad said he asked the instructor "what the hell are you doing we just went into a spin". The instructor said it wasn't considered a spin until you made 3 turns.

Hal Spencer

After submitting my recollections of conversations with Brad Mutchler to you I recalled another part of my conversation with him. I believe this was conveyed to me during the conversation on Friday night March 3, 2017. Hope this additional information will be helpful in your analysis.

Brad said the instructor had him do an instrument approach to a runway which at the time placed the aircraft in a position with a tailwind to land. He mentioned that the winds were gusting and the landing was difficult. I asked him if the instructor mentioned doing a circle to land on a runway favoring a headwind. He said no. After he landed the instructor asked why he had landed downwind and Brad replied "because that is what you said to do". Brad obviously disagreed with the instructor's choice to do the approach considering the existing conditions.

Submitted by:
Ernest H. Spencer, Jr.
March 20, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Subject: David Bradley Mutchler

Reference: Phone Conversation

I received a phone call from Brad on early Friday evening March 3rd, 2017. Brad was supposed to fly from where he was training in Sarasoto, FL to Apopka, FL where he was going to have dinner with my wife and myself and then spend the night. He would then return to Sarasota to continue his training on Saturday morning.

When Brad called he stated that it had been a long hard day. He went on to state how the instructor scared the living shit out of him. He used a term I had not heard before, he said "It scared me down to the core of my spine". I asked him what had happened. He stated that they where flying at 3000 feet in slow flight preparing to do a power on stall. When the plane started to stall the instructor reached over and pulled the power on the starboard motor causing the plane to go inverted. Brad said it took him a thousand feet to get the plane gathered up and regain his composure. Brad said it took so much out of him that he had already gotten a hotel room, was going to get something to eat and then get to bed as he was plum worn out. For the above conversation he asked if he could have a rain check on dinner and spending the night. Of course I agreed and said I looked forward to seeing him tomorrow, after he was finished as I was planning on going back to NC with him either Saturday night or he would spend the night with us and then we would fly up to NC on Sunday.

John Davis

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From: [redacted]
To:
Subject: Re: ERA17FA119 Duette FL
Date: Monday, March 6, 2017 9:26:07 AM

Please call me at [redacted] at your earliest convenience. There were seven motorcycles traveling up to Ocala. We were riding on State Road 37 and the driver in front of me (Paul Ballard) pointed up. I noticed what I thought was a large single engine white plane. My view of the plane was that it first made a slow role then went straight down. Our distance, from first noticing the plane, was approximately one and a half miles north of us. We did not hear any sounds once the plane hit the ground. At first I thought the plane was a crop duster. As we were heading north the plane's cockpit turned south as it headed for the ground. Other riders including Al Carlson who has a pilots license stated that he saw the plane making several loops before hitting the ground. A number of our club memberss went into the area to help but the flames were too intense. There was no signs of the people inside the plane. Other's in our group also witnessed the accident. We happened to stop for gas after leaving the site and met up with a Bay Nine news crew. They interviewed me and Paul Ballard about the incident.

Don Williams

On Mar 6, 2017, at 7:55 AM, Rayner Brian [redacted] wrote:

Mr. Williams,

Thank you for reaching out to us. I'm sorry for your experience.

I am traveling by car today and then completing work examining the accident airplane, but would like to speak with you either later today or tomorrow.

Would you be kind enough to send me a separate, stand-alone email describing your observations, and how you came to notice the airplane in the first place? Was it possible to hear the airplane over your motorcycles?

Thank you again for reaching out.

v/r

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator

[redacted]

[redacted]

Sunday, March 5, 2017
8:30 AM

Approximately 9:45 PM Saturday, March 3, 2017 I learned of Brad's death from Leo Cochran. This morning I write the following while it is still fresh in my mind. I feel this maybe important in determining how this tragedy occurred.

Notes: Telephone Conversations with Brad Mutchler

Friday, March 3, 2017

5:09 PM - 9 minute call:
Brad said he just got back from flying with the Instructor. He said he had the scariest moment of his life. This is the description he gave me regarding the incident:

Flying at about 3000 feet the instructor had him cut power to a point where the plane was barely airborne. The instructor then banked (or turned) the plane at 45 degrees causing the plane to stall. The plane went into a nose dive straight towards the ground. He said they lost 1000 feet before he was able to pull them out of the stall. Brad said the air conditioner was on and he was wearing a sweat shirt. He said by the time he pulled them out of the stall he was covered in sweat. Brad said he looked at the instructor and said "Why did you do that?" The instructor responded that he wanted to see how Brad would handle the situation. The instructor said he did not know his actions would cause that to happen. Brad said you should have told me what you were going to do and we should have been at 10,000 feet not 3000 feet.

Brad went on to explain to me the circumstances that cause a stall and what he had to do to bring them out of it saying: The reduced air speed had them right at the minimum to stay in the air. The abrupt turn caused them to drop speed below the minimum sending them into a dive. He said he actually had to increase the speed of the plane as they were heading straight toward the ground to be able to pull them out of the dive. Brad went on to say that in a single engine plane the maneuver is a required part of training, but in a twin engine plane it is not required. You only have to know what to do. Brad said at least I know I can do it.

Brad went on to tell me how great the plane flew and that he could not wait for me to see it. Throughout the conversation Brad talked about how incompetent he thought the instructor was. He kept referring to how old he was. I said I was surprised he could keep his Medical Card. I said it looks like the doctor would keep him grounded. Brad responded, "You would think!"

Brad followed up with references to the instructor's experience. He mentioned the number of hours the instructor had – he may have said 15,000 hours but I'm not sure of the number Brad stated. He went on to mention a group of people that the instructor had trained, I am assuming the group is elite and Brad must have thought I had heard of them. He said the instructor had flown commercial planes – 747, etc. But again Brad said he is just too old to be doing what he is doing. I asked how old and

Brad said probably 80, maybe 77 – I don't know but OLD! Brad said the instructor had driven him to the hotel after their flight and that his driving wasn't much better.

I could tell Brad was shaken by the experience and glad to be at the hotel.

Saturday, March 3, 2017

11:53 AM – 1 Minute Call:

Brad called when he was on his way to the plane for his final instructional flight. He said he had just finished his classroom/test work and was getting ready to go back up with instructor. He seemed concerned but said he just wanted to get it over with. I joked for him not to tear up the plane before I got to ride in it. He responded, "Don't worry."

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Mutchler Annual Inspection - ERA17FA119 Duette FL BE-60 N39AG
Date: Thursday, March 16, 2017 6:06:27 AM
Attachments: [redacted]

Included attachment…
(Brian – I amended my comments to include Brads comments with respect to altitude in reference to the simulated stall maneuver summarized below)

Brian,

I am an industrial engineer by education and not a pilot. I am comfortable in small aircraft and I have sat in the right seat of private aircraft many times. I flew as a passenger (mostly right seat) a considerable number of hours in my 20's in a private 402 Cessna twin aircraft. (I'm guessing 100-200 hrs).

In the past 6 months - I flew with Brad Mutchler in a single engine aircraft about 12 times for a total of approximately 20 hours. Each trip I observed his advance planning and consideration for smoke (due to heavy forest fires in NC this fall), light, weather, wind and course. He exhibited conservative and careful judgement in my opinion. From my experience and observations - I considered Brad to be an excellent pilot.

Brad Mutchler called me from his hotel room in FLA Friday night March the 3rd after his first day of training. His call was not unusual as we typically talked daily however Brad was noticeably interested in sharing his flight experience that day.

Brad repeated a number of times that he was very tired and worn out from the day and needed rest. The tone and phrasing of his comments were not typical for Brad and it seemed from what he shared that he had experienced a very stressful day.

He complained that the trainer had put him through extensive test - landings always in an approach direction opposite of "normal" in consideration of wind direction and purposefully in a direction to amplify the difficulty of landing with the days heavy cross winds. He shared - At one point the tower suggested they should select an approach from the opposite direction of their requested approach, to which he replied something sarcastic to the tower like "this is the way like to do it". My impression from his comments is he felt the landing exercises were excessive in consideration of safety.

As you know I am not a pilot, but Brad described a test maneuver where he was requested to simulate a stall of the air craft with a slight turn to (I think) the left. As he began to slow and turn the plane to induce the stall, he stated that normal procedure would be to drop the nose to regain air speed and avoid/eliminate the stalled condition. Something about the turn, he stated, technically took air off one wing??? This seemed to be a common or expected maneuver except for the request to do so was at an altitude of 3000 ft. Brad stated as he began to drop the nose to regain airspeed the trainer reached over and advanced the throttles which cause the plane to ultimately enter into a "spin" and resulted in a 1000 foot drop in altitude before regaining control of the aircraft. The recovery of full control of the aircraft would had then occurred at an approximate altitude of 2000 ft.

He was very upset with the trainer and looked at him and stated "we are not doing that again!"… He said the guys was probably 80 and was at that point "white as a sheet". Brad told the trainer that they were landing at the very next regional airport where he said he was dripping wet with sweat and got out of the plane to remove his sweatshirt. He told me " I sweated a gallon of sweat in 20 seconds!".

That is the extent of any specifics comments I recall. He stated he was flying with the trainer the next day and planned to return to Raleigh Saturday or Sunday with our mutual friend John Davis who lives in Sanford FLA.

Attached is a screen shot of my last text to Brad that reflects the tone of this phone call the night before and the impression that Brad's comments left in my mind….. On Saturday March the 4th at 1:24pm approximately (7 minutes before his crash). I was working in my shop in Raleigh NC and I had not heard from Brad… I sent Brad the following text (attached)….

"Hey give me a call when you get on the ground interested to hear how your day is going

Hopefully no more barrel rolls "