

ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
Pacific Grove, CA, Oct. 12, 1997
N555JD, Long EZ

WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

JAMES WILLOUGHBY

Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Interview conducted on October 14, 1997 at 1600L

Inspector Initial Observation: Mr. Willoughby was a witness to the accident in the Pacific Grove area. He escorted us to his view point of the accident. His position was located on Acropolis St. approximately one-half way between Shell Ave. and Del Monte Ave. and about one-half mile south from accident site. His view above is un-obstructed, however, his view towards the accident sight has some trees blocking the his view from my estimation of 150 ft. to 50 ft above the water and ground level.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Willoughby saw the aircraft flying at about 500 ft. (estimated) altitude over the golf course (Golf Links) heading in a West direction. The noise of the engine is what directed his attention to the aircraft. He states that the aircraft engine sounded like a two cylinder motorcycle engine. It appeared he was going full throttle. He then saw the aircraft make a steep right bank and turn to the North and loss of altitude. At this point he stated "the aircraft lost it's RPM, it's momentum, then coughed and sputtered, backfired is a better word". Then he noticed the aircraft go out of sight for a moment and then seen the splash of the water.

Inspector comments and observation:

By Mr. Willoughby's interview and observation the aircraft appeared to be heading West, paralleling Del Monte Blvd. when he heard the load noise of the engine. This load noise directed his attention to the aircraft. At a point approximately over him the aircraft made a sharp right bank and turn to the North and the aircraft losing altitude. This is when he heard the aircraft lose RPM and then sputtered or backfired. The aircraft then went out of sight and then noticed the splash caused by the impact.

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20594

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

The purpose of this statement is intended solely for use in determining the facts, conditions and circumstances, and the probable cause of the subject accident.

- 1. Place of accident Pacific Grove California 93950 Date Nov. 11, 1997
- 2. Type of vehicle "Long Easy" Aircraft Date Oct. 12, 1997 Hour 5:30 PM
- 3. Identification of vehicle News Paper Reports
- 4. What is your name JAMES W WILKINSON Age 66
- 5. Address [REDACTED] PACIFIC GROVE Cal.
- 6. Occupation Retired School Teacher By whom employed —
- 7. Where were you at the time of the accident See attached sheet
- 8. Tell in your own words what you saw or heard before and at the time the accident occurred.

See attached sheet.

[REDACTED]
(Signature)

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National Transportation Safety Board - Statement of Witness
James W. Willoughby

On Sunday, October 12, 1997 at 5:30 p.m., my wife and I entered Acropolis Street in front of our house and walked toward the golf course one half block away to play a round of golf.

Our attention was drawn to the sounds and appearance of an experimental type of aircraft flying due west at about 500 ft. altitude. The engine of the airplane was distinctly loud and coarse. It sounded much like a two cycle high speed gasoline engine without a muffler.

As the plane was nearly overhead, it turned and banked on a course due north paralleling Acropolis street and headed toward the ocean. When the plane was overhead, it emitted two loud backfires and carburator choking sounds. The aircraft was still traveling at a high rate of speed, but was losing altitude. As the plane came within about 100 yards of the shoreline, it banked again from a horizontal to a vertical position.

We continued to watch the plane and we thought the pilot was doing some low altitude maneuvers or stunt flying, and that he would pull out of his downward descent. He did not. He crashed about 150 yards from the shore in about 30 feet of water. There was no explosion, just a tremendous splash.

After making a quick 911 call, I immediately ran down to the water's edge where there were other witnesses to the crash. On the surface, there were pieces of styrofoam from the aircraft, and what appeared to be rather large fiberglass pieces. One witness told me he had seen a large red coloration in the water at the point of impact. The crash site attracted a large number of sea gulls, and the water still showed signs of upwelling. Several minutes later, emergency vehicles arrived at the scene.

James W. Willoughby

Pacific Grove, CA. 93950



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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

PENNY MORGAN

[REDACTED]
Pacific Grove, CA 93950
[REDACTED]

Interview conducted at witness residence on October 14, 1997 at 1730L.

Inspector Initial Observation: Witness observed from a upstairs room, looking out of a bay view window facing North. The residence location is one block South of and parallel to Ocean View Blvd. The view is blocked by other homes and trees at a level of approximately 100 ft above ground. Some of the comment is made by the mother who was in the room at the same time, but did not see the aircraft.

Synopsis of conversation:

Her attention was drawn by the loud noise of the engine. Her first site of the aircraft was that it pointed straight down and then she saw the splash of the water. Her mother interjected that the noise of the engine sounded as if she were driving 60 mph in second gear. Then she heard a loud backfire.

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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

CLIFFORD DILLING

[REDACTED]

El Cajon, CA 92020

[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 15, 1997 at 0940L.

Inspector comment: This witness was visiting the Pacific Grove area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Dilling was on the beach at the accident site facing in an East direction (verified by water on his left, houses on right). He heard an engine winding, as if no load on the engine. When he looked up he saw the nose of the aircraft pointing down at approximately 35 to 40 degrees at about 100 ft. He then witnessed a slight pitch up, as if trying to recover, then the nose came back over at a greater pitch angle. Then the aircraft hit the water and was destroyed.

Mr. Dilling was asked the direction the aircraft came from. His reply was from his right to the North, perpendicular with the coast line. Asked if he heard any backfire type noise and his response was no.

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STATEMENT OF WITNESS

The purpose of this statement is intended solely for use in determining the facts, conditions and circumstances, and the probable cause of the subject accident.

Date 2 NOV 97

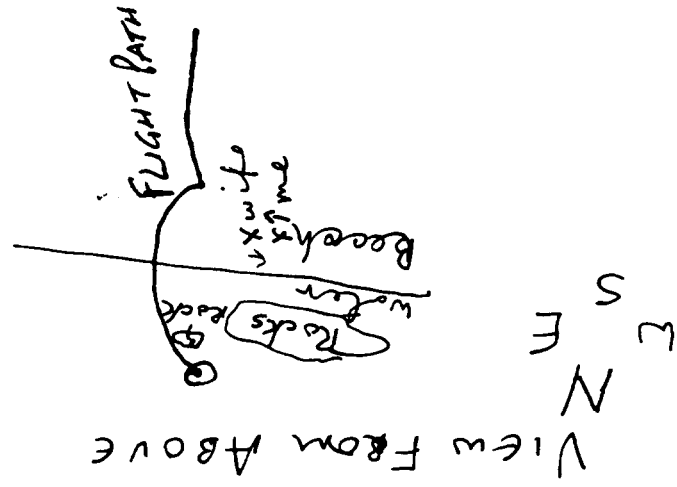
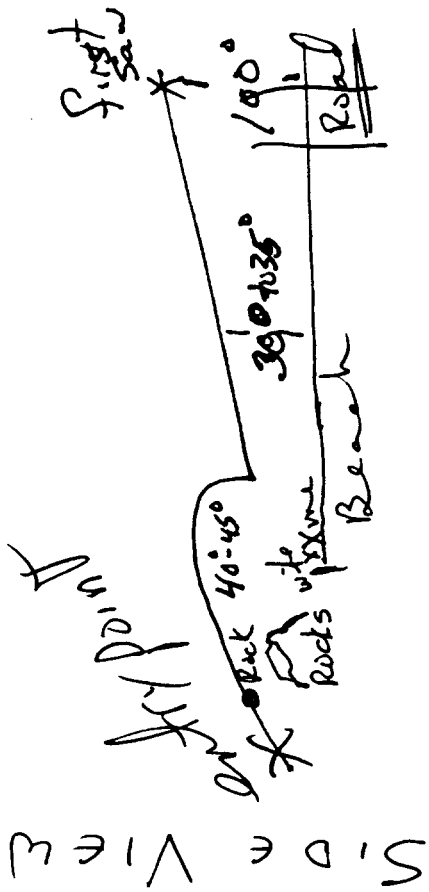
1. Place of accident PACIFIC GROVE, CA. Date 12 OCT 97 Hour 5:27 PM
2. Type of vehicle AIRCRAFT
3. Identification of vehicle ULTRA-LIGHT AIRCRAFT
4. What is your name CLIFFORD C. DILLING Age 45
5. Address [REDACTED] EL CAJON, CA 92020
6. Occupation MASTER CHIEF FIRE CONTROL MAN By whom employed US NAVY
7. Where were you at the time of the accident ON BEACH

8. Tell in your own words what you saw or heard before and at the time the accident occurred.

I was on the beach taking a picture of my wife. SHE WAS FACING West (W) and I was facing East (E). I heard a motor sound ~~was~~ winding out as if you had removed the load from it. I looked to the South over my right shoulder to locate the sound and saw a small ultra-light aircraft headed to the North at about 100ft in elevation at an angle of about 30-35°. It appeared that the pilot thought they might hit the beach vice the water and tried to raise the nose of the aircraft. The nose raised a bit and then tipped right back over changing the angle to about 40-45° and carrying the aircraft into the water about 10-15 feet beyond the Rocks to the right edge of the big rock outcropping. The aircraft motor appeared to be running and in not sure if it stalled when the nose was raised.

Clifford C. Dilling
 (Signature)

DIAGRAM ON BACK



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**ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
Pacific Grove, CA, Oct. 12, 1997
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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

ROGER RODRIGUEZ

[REDACTED]

Greenfield, CA 93927

[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 0830L.

Inspector comment: This witness was visiting the Pacific Grove area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Rodriguez attention to the accident aircraft was drawn by the noise of the engine. He heard the engine "sputter". He stated that the direction the aircraft was flying was in a North direction. He saw the aircraft flying towards the rocks when he noticed the nose pull up, as if to avoid the rocks or people, and then nose dive. He did not witness the aircraft hitting the water, stated the rocks were in the way.

Asked further about the engine noise he replied that he heard it sputter and then wind up to a high RPM.

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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

STEVEN MAYNARD
[REDACTED]

Pacific Grove, CA 93950
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 0850L.

Inspector comment: This witness is a resident of Pacific Grove and was in the area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Maynard was walking North on Asilomar Ave at approx. the 18th Tee of the golf course [Golf Links]. He looked up and saw the aircraft descending at approx. a 45 degree angle. His attention to the aircraft was drawn by what sounded like a model [radio controlled] aircraft, he further stated a high pitched, unmuffled engine. He saw the aircraft moving from his right to his left, he stated about a NW direction. He then seen the aircraft go into a steep angle with right wing down, his guess at the angle was almost 90 degrees. The aircraft then dropped nose down and disappeared behind the rocks. He then seen the white styrofoam pieces flying. He did not see the impact.

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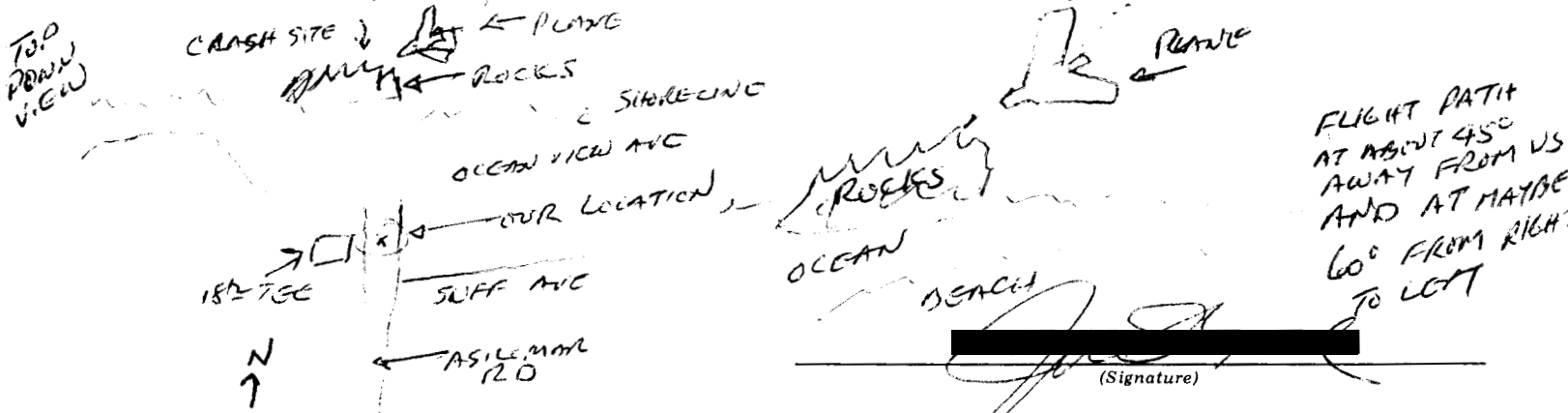
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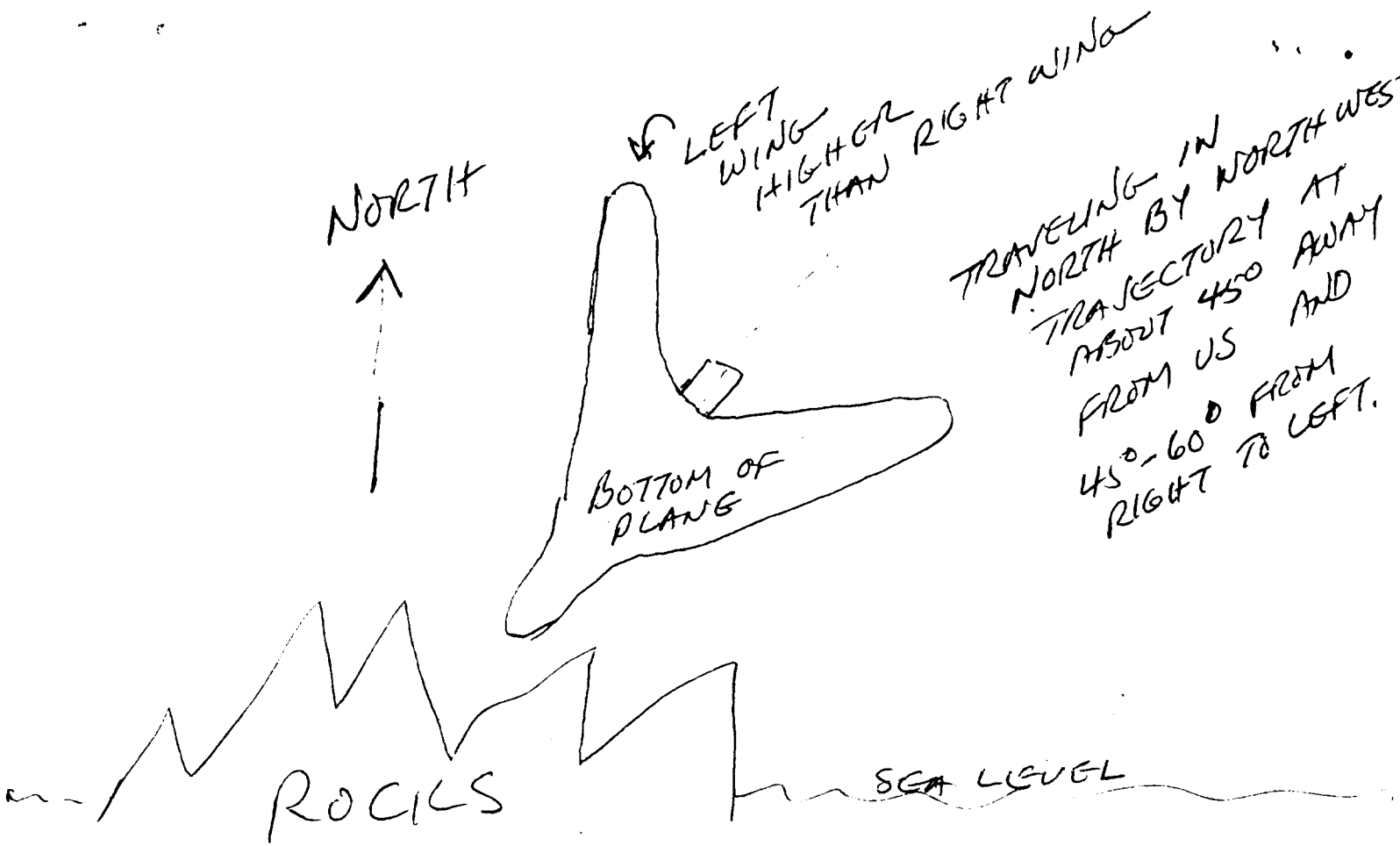
STATEMENT OF WITNESS

The purpose of this statement is intended solely for use in determining the facts, conditions and circumstances, and the probable cause of the subject accident.

- 1. Place of accident PACIFIC GROVE AIRPLANE CRASH Date OCT 23, 1997
ASILOMAR CA Date OCT 12, '97 Hour 5:30 PM
- 2. Type of vehicle AIRPLANE ACCIDENT
- 3. Identification of vehicle JOHN DENVER'S PLANE
- 4. What is your name J. STEVEN MAYNARD Age 52
- 5. Address [REDACTED] PACIFIC GROVE, CA
- 6. Occupation CONSULTANT By whom employed SELF
- 7. Where were you at the time of the accident WALKING ON ASILOMAR ROAD
- 8. Tell in your own words what you saw or heard before and at the time the accident occurred.

MY WIFE AND I WERE WALKING NORTH ON ASILOMAR RD, NEAR 18TH TEE OF P.C. GOLF COURSE. WE SUDDENLY HEARD A SMALL PLANE ABOVE US AND TO OUR RIGHT. I LOOKED UP AND SAW IT IN A SHARP DESCENT. IT CRASHED INTO THE OCEAN BEYOND A ROCK FORMATION AND DISINTEGRATED INTO MANY PIECES AT CONTACT. BEFORE IT CRASHED, I COULD HEAR ITS ENGINE, WHICH SOUNDED LIKE AN UNMUFFLED TOY PLANE ENGINE. AFTER CRASH, I RAN TO A FRIEND'S HOUSE ON SURF AVE AND CALLED 911.

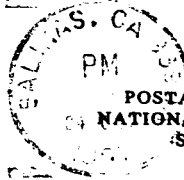




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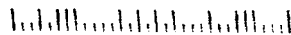


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**ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

WILLIAM TYLER
[REDACTED]

Pacific Grove, CA. 93950
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 0911L.

Inspector comment: This witness is a resident of Pacific Grove and was in the area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Tyler was watching this aircraft with his telescope fly straight out from MRY. He heard the engine have a power reduction and then heard it backfire. After that point the aircraft disappeared from his view.

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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

ROD RAINEY
[REDACTED]

San Jose, CA. 95125
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 0930L.

Inspector comment: This witness was visiting in the area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Rainey was approximately a 150 yds. from the accident site. He was a passenger in a car traveling westbound on Ocean View Blvd. He was looking North [at the bay] when he heard a "POP" above him. He then witnessed the aircraft hit the water, nose first. Just prior to the aircraft hitting the water he mentioned he heard the engine "fully going".

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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

PETER ALINE
[REDACTED]

Pacific Grove, CA. 93950
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 1000L.

Inspector comment: This witness is a resident of Pacific Grove and was in the area on the day of the accident. His residence is on the corner of Asilomar and Ocean View Blvd. Mr. Aline was in his backyard at the time.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Aline heard a rough running engine, this is what drew his attention to the aircraft. He then heard a "POP, POP" and seen the wings rock left to right just above a telephone poll near his residence. He guessed that the aircraft was at approximately 75 ft. above the pole. He appeared to be fighting the airplane [he could see the pilot inside the aircraft] to keep it between the houses. The aircraft disappeared beyond his roof. His wife [who was on the roof] told him to call 911 that the aircraft crashed. The aircraft was heading North.

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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

RICHARD ELLIS
[REDACTED]

Redding, CA. 96001
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 1045L.

Inspector comment: This witness also maintains a residence in Pacific Grove and was in the area on the day of the accident

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Ellis was driving West on Ocean View Blvd. when he seen the fuselage and wing going vertical. He mentioned that it looked like the wing was off and held on by something such as a cable. It looked as if it was a board. He doesn't believe the aircraft was in one piece. He did not hear any of the engine noises or see the plane flying. He mentioned the size of the "board" was about 2/3's of the fuselage.

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STATEMENT OF WITNESS

The purpose of this statement is intended solely for use in determining the facts, conditions and circumstances, and the probable cause of the subject accident.

Date October 30, 1997
Grove, CA

- 1. Place of accident Asilomar & Ocean View, Pacific Grove, CA Date 10/12/97 Hour 5:15 - 5:30 P.M.
- 2. Type of vehicle _____
- 3. Identification of vehicle _____
- 4. What is your name Richard L. Ellis Age 67
- 5. Address [REDACTED] Redding, CA 96001 / [REDACTED] Pacific Grove, CA 93950
- 6. Occupation Orthodontist By whom employed Retired
- 7. Where were you at the time of the accident Headed west in our automobile on Ocean View Blvd.
approximately three hundred yards from crash site.
- 8. Tell in your own words what you saw or heard before and at the time the accident occurred.

I observed two large pieces of the airplane falling vertically. They came into view at a height of approximately 600 to 800 feet.

From the shape and size of the wreckage pieces I think what I saw was the fuselage and a wing. The wing was separated from the fuselage and falling vertically with it. Possibly the wing was still attached to the fuselage by something like a cable.

ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
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WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

DON FLINT

[REDACTED]
Pacific Grove, CA. 93950
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 1300L.

Inspector comment: This witness is a resident in Pacific Grove and was in the area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Flint was walking West on Ocean View Blvd. He heard the aircraft and saw that it was in a right bank [slight] heading North and in a slight climb. He heard the engine to be running OK. Then he heard the sound of the engine being retarded. Prior to impact he heard the "pop" of the engine. the aircraft impacted at that time. He estimated that the aircraft's altitude when he first saw it to be about 500 ft.

ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
Pacific Grove, CA, Oct. 12, 1997
N555JD, Long EZ

WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

PETER BURSCHINGER

██████████
Pacific Grove, CA. 93950
██████████

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 1330L.

Inspector comment: This witness is a resident in Pacific Grove and was in the area on the day of the accident.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Burschinger was at home, his residence is located on the corner of ██████████
██████████ he was looking out a window that was facing to the North. He heard the aircraft approach from his right to his left [from east to west]. He then saw the aircraft drop in his front window from his estimate of 350 ft to 75 ft. His impression was that the engine was running rich and it was very loud. He did not recall hearing power on the way down. He then heard a "snap" sound but could not identify see anything associated with that sound. He did not see the aircraft hit the water, due to his view was blocked.

**ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
Pacific Grove, CA, Oct. 12, 1997
N555JD, Long EZ**

WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

JUDITH FINN

[REDACTED]
Aptos, CA 95003
[REDACTED]

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 1400L.

Inspector comment: This witness was in Pacific Grove near the accident site.

Synopsis of conversation:

Ms. Finn was parked in the middle of the parking lot in front of the rocks and facing North inside a vehicle. This parking lot was directly in front of the accident site. She had her head out the window of the vehicle and saw the aircraft flying over the homes, she mentioned in a westerly direction. She said the plane seem to be flying normal at a low altitude [- 100 ft., her estimate] and that it sounded normal. She next witnessed heading towards the rocks [North]. She believed to hear it go full throttle and then seen the aircraft nose first into the water.

**ACCIDENT LAX98FA008
Pacific Grove, CA, Oct. 12, 1997
N555JD, Long EZ**

WITNESS STATEMENT SYNOPSIS:

CHARLIE WITHERELL

██████████
Salinas, CA. 93908-9039

██████████ work

A telephone interview was conducted with this witness on October 17, 1997 at 1500L.

Inspector comment: This witness was at a church on the corner of Pine and Fountain, several blocks east from the accident site. Mr. Witherell is a pilot.

Synopsis of conversation:

Mr. Witherell was looking North when he heard the airplane. He described the noise as loud. The aircraft was moving fast, heading west at about the coastline. The engine noise was high pitched, he added that it sounded smooth. The aircraft disappeared from his view, but he could still hear the aircraft. the attitude of the aircraft seemed stable with a slight climb. He did not hear any "pop" or "bang" sound. He thinks it to be a structural failure, maybe a flutter problem.