



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Ralph E. Hicks
Senior Air Safety Investigator, IIC
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: August 9, 2022
Witness Statement: Robby Lassiter (Pilot) [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA338 – Portland, AR

The following witness statement was provided by Mr. Lassiter via telephone.

- I introduced myself and informed Mr. Lassiter that I was the lead investigator for his accident.
- Mr. Lassiter described his injuries. He suffered a broken right leg and rods were used to repair it from the knee down. He has a bad cut on his left leg with ligament damage. His left arm was “rebuilt” from the elbow to the wrist. He suffered 10 broken ribs in various places. He is recovering at home now. He had a neck fracture (C-2). He had a “bad gash” on his head. He was not wearing a helmet at the time.
- He stated that, “I just don’t get it” (as to why the accident occurred).
- He stated that his air bags on his shoulder harness did not deploy, and he wanted to know why.
- I asked him to recall what he could about the accident flight. He stated that it was “another busy day.” He had just finished spraying soybeans on a friend’s farm and was heading back to his home airstrip on Highway 160. He was heading southeast, not sure of the exact heading. His hopper was empty. He took off from the same airstrip, so it was a local flight. He did not recall times of takeoff or the accident time.

- Suddenly, he heard and felt the impact. He recalled seeing the red stripe on the other airplane (N749LA) and he knew immediately that it was Rusty Johnson in the other airplane. Mr. Lassiter recalled that his airplane immediately started to spin, it probably spun around 3-4 times before hitting the ground. He recalled going straight down with no lateral movement. He believes that the forward windscreen blew out in the air during the collision because he remembered the breeze going through the open cockpit and it was very quiet. I asked him again if the windscreen came out in the air and he responded yes, "It was gone." He did not recall hearing the engine running after the collision with N749LA.
- He never lost consciousness. His friend, Nelson (Wells) arrived and helped him out. He recalled everything that happened. He is curious as to how this happened.
- I asked him if he recalled what altitude he was at. He stated that he aims for 500-600 ft when ferrying. He has flown in the vicinity of the other ag pilots for 15 years and they all seem to know what the others are doing. They do communicate; sometimes they will "hit the smoke" to show where they are. He was not communicating on the radio at the time and was not aware that Rusty was in the area, spraying.
- He stated that the normal ferry altitude is 500-600 ft. There is a saying, "Ferry at 5, stay alive." He stated that dusters with smaller engines will top at 400-600 ft when turning around, but the big turbine-powered airplanes will get higher, especially on cool days. They may top out at 600-700 ft when doing a reverse direction turn.
- I reviewed Mr. Lassiter's latest pilot log pages with him. He stated that his airplane had about 1,085 hours on it, and all the time was his since new. No one else flew it. He stated that he flew it 580 hours in 2021 and so far in 2022, about 505 hours. His latest flight review was March, 2021 with Kelly Peeler (CFI).
- Mr. Lassiter concluded the interview by stating that his airplane has big wings and lots of blind spots; lots of areas where you cannot see.