



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Joshua D. Cawthra**  
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**Western Pacific Region**

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**Date: 7/25/2018**  
**Person Contacted: Stephen Driscoll (Airplane Crew Chief)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR18FA201**

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### **Narrative:**

During an in-person interview, Mr. Driscoll reported that his aviation experience included being a private pilot with an airplane single-engine land airplane. He stated that his tailwheel aircraft experience includes 30-hours in a Cessna 140, however, he primarily flies Cessna 172, tri-pacer, and a Navion.

Mr. Driscoll said that he came out the day before the accident, assisted getting the airplane ready, filled engines with oil to their max, transitioned to the accumulator, checked hydraulic oil, hooked nitrogen bottle up, charged system, and started cleaning. He wanted to get the propellers cleaned. After launch, Juan showed up, started servicing the landing gear, put air in the tires and nitrogen in the struts. Mr. Driscoll said that Juan did all of the air pressures on the tires and they did a general walk around on the airplane before they started loading camping gear for Oshkosh. Mr. Driscoll stated that loaded tents in front, chairs under the right side bucket seats, loaded 26 gallons of oil in the back of the airplane next to the hell hole, and he loaded a backpack in the back. Mr. Driscoll recalled that he looked over the forms inside the airplane (letter of authorization, registration, and airworthiness certificate) and asked about the where the maintenance records were before they were loaded on the airplane by the breaker box area. In addition, he checked fire extinguishers to make sure they were in good shape.

Mr. Driscoll said that the following day, he arrived about 0700 and loaded his personal items onto the airplane, hooked tow bar up, and saw Greg doing a preflight. He talked about the pre flight, asked how much fuel they were going to use, but never heard anything back on the fuel load. Mr. Driscoll put personal items, camping gear, personal bags from passengers into the upper left side of the baggage areas up front and strapped it down with a cargo net. He then loaded ice chests to the right side of the airplane, secured them to the wall, and loaded tents under the forward bucket seats. Overflow of bags and stairs were loaded behind the seats and secured with a cargo net. Mr. Driscoll said that at this point, airplane was loaded, and they pushed airplane out of the hangar about 0745, pointed into the wind, detached tow bar, and loaded it in the airplane, in front of the bucket seats, under the stretcher area, on the right side, and secured it with two straps. Mr. Driscoll said that all safeties removed from

the airplane, and recalled that he was trying to find the passenger manifest and trying to get people to sign it off, prior to talking to Mark to discuss crew chief, etc.

Mr. Driscoll said that brought fire extinguishers and battery cart out, and he located the passengers, and performed his normal brief. He said that he told people to get ready for the flight, and during the safety briefing, he didn't recall pilots being there. Mr. Driscoll said he briefed passengers at the back of the airplane, talked about exits, fire extinguishers, seat belts, fire exits, and opening doors/exit points with an axe. Mr. Driscoll stated he had never done a crew brief that day with the pilots, as they were in the front seats of the airplane while the passengers were loading in, and didn't hear anything about wind or weather, and that it's typically it's never been done to this affect. He recalled the pilots asking if the passengers were briefed and that Mark or Juan closed the aft door as Stephen went to the front of the airplane.

Mr. Driscoll said that Greg told him that one of the doors was open per a warning light, so he went back, verified all doors were closed, and told Greg that the switch would need to be looked at. During this time, the pilots were starting the number two engine, Mr. Driscoll got jump seat oriented and Randy called for disconnect of the cart. Mr. Driscoll said that he was on a headset, listening and monitoring, recalling that he heard discussions including temps coming up, idling, check list was being used by the pilots. He said that Greg was going down the list, including the trims, recalls rudder was left of 0, operated the flaps. Mr. Driscoll looked at the gauges for surge, Randy signaled for the chocks to be pulled, and then taxied the airplane to runway 19 and didn't say anything abnormal.

Mr. Driscoll said that he was just watching for anything abnormal, looked back at the passengers, heard the pilot's discussing about the airplanes to the right. Once at the runup area, the airplane swung right and then left and Randy locked the tailwheel. Mr. Driscoll said that the pilot's did the run ups on the number 2 engine first, 1900 rpm, went through the feathering first, didn't see current on the gauge, hears engine feather, switches to the left engine, runs it up, feathers it, cycled the propellers, everything cycled correctly, did magneto check on each engine, both ok. Mr. Driscoll said that the engines sounded fine and the pilot's continued the runup, noting all was ok. Mr. Driscoll said that at this point, pilots gave a briefing about the takeoff, what they were going to do, and that's when he learned Greg was going to do the takeoff. The pilot's made a call that they were taxing onto 19. As Randy taxied the airplane, they discussed wind, Randy thought there may be a crosswind, but Greg said it was down the runway, and then both decided it was down the runway. As the airplane got into position, Mr. Driscoll remembered Randy locking the tailwheel while on the runway, Randy said you have the aircraft to Greg and Greg did departure brief, which included 'running to 30 inches mp, you'll take the throttles.

Mr. Driscoll said that as the engines revved up, Randy started moving throttles to 42 inches, and called out set, and that Randy was looking up and down inside and outside of the airplane. Mr. Driscoll said that he was concentrating on the instrument panel, and heard Randy tell Greg not to push forward on the stick to let the tail come up naturally, followed by about 3-5 seconds later, Randy saying I have the aircraft. Mr. Driscoll said that he tried to raise up to look outside and could see they were on the far left side of the runway, and saw Randy doing input on the controls, moving rudder pedals and ailerons. Mr. Driscoll said that he felt the airplane yawing back and forth, 5-10 seconds later felt the airplane being squirrely, then thought something on the left side touched something, assumed it was the left wheel, then the airplane really yawed to the left. Mr. Driscoll said that he put his hands on whatever bracing he could get and moved his head down and road out the bouncing as the airplane was skidding to the right which he thought was down the runway. As the airplane came to a stop, he felt gear come up and hit the airplane, and the engines stopped.

Mr. Driscoll said that he unbuckled his seatbelt and someone in the back of the airplane screamed get off. Mr. Driscoll stowed his seat to a normal position, tried to open "hamburger door" while down on his knees. He noted that the handle was jammed, and tried to open it a second time, and it opened. Just prior to the door opening, he heard a boom, thinking it was a tire. Mr. Driscoll said that he then saw flames, which it hit him in the face and arm, and he tried to close door. He noted that the heat was too intense to close it, turned away, crawled some before he got up and continued moving down to the rear door. Heard someone behind him while he could see flames out the door and right side of the windows. Mr. Driscoll said that he jumped out of the aft door and ran away from the airplane. As he turned around, he saw Randy coming off the airplane. Mr. Driscoll said he thought he was second to the last out of the airplane, as he saw Randy getting out, and thought Greg got out while he was trying to open the door.

When asked about check lists and conversations, Mr. Driscoll said that check lists prior to takeoff and engine start were used, and Greg was using the checklist while Randy was doing the checks. He added that communication decreased a lot when they got onto the runway. He recalled that Randy did the departure brief, which was pretty straight forward, including him saying "straight takeoff, left turn out, depart to the north east.": He also remembered Randy saying "you are going to do the takeoff" and recalled Greg seeming ok with it. He didn't recall any mention of letting the tail come up naturally prior to taxing onto the runway nor any discussion on the weight of the airplane.

When asked about the takeoff again, Mr. Driscoll said that Randy taxied onto the runway. He recalled Randy taxing as they entered the runway, unlocked the tailwheel, right around when he was starting to bring the airplane forward, he locked the tailwheel. Mr. Driscoll said that he didn't feel any abnormal yaw and that the only time he felt that was something wrong was when Randy took control of the airplane. He added that he thought Randy took control of the airplane 10-15 seconds into the takeoff roll.

Mr. Driscoll said that he never heard any airspeeds being called out, no v1 v2 calls and that Greg never responded to Randy's comment about letting the tail stay down. Mr. Driscoll said that when Randy said don't push forward on the yoke, 3- 5 seconds later, Randy said I got the controls. He added that there was no reduction in power, no one called for an abort nor reduced power. Mr. Driscoll recalled Randy was working the controls hard.

Mr. Driscoll further reported that he had flown with Greg and Simon during Greg's second training flight on the 14<sup>th</sup>. During the first takeoff of this flight, Greg was flying, and that the airplane moved to the right about 10-seconds into the takeoff roll, and Simon said he had the airplane, and finished the takeoff, and handed it back over to Greg. Mr. Driscoll said that when they came back to the airport, Greg was flying, and everything seemed normal, with the exception for being a little high. He noted that there was an easterly crosswind, and that Greg seemed to have not flared, as the airplane landed hard, bounced, and bounced a second time. Mr. Driscoll said at this point, Simon took control of the airplane and initiated a go-around as he didn't think they had enough runway left to stop. Mr. Driscoll said that Greg then asked Simon if he would fly and let him perform the second in command duties. Mr. Driscoll noticed that Greg seemed to have some difficulty locating where things were (landing gear, flaps, etc.), and that Simon continued instructing Greg, telling him to not be afraid of putting control inputs in., as Simon landed to a full stop. Mr. Driscoll said that Greg then taxied back for takeoff, and that the takeoff was reasonable, and one of his better ones that he saw Greg do). Mr. Driscoll noted that everything looked normal, and that on landing, Greg didn't flare again, and the airplane bounced, however, he

appeared to recover and kept the airplane going straight as it rolled out to the end of the runway. Mr. Driscoll said that in hindsight, Greg's flying was good, but the takeoff and landings, he seemed to be behind the airplane, and not enough control inputs were made as one would normally do. He added that it felt like at the critical phases of flight, is where Greg was making all of the mistakes. Mr. Driscoll continued to say that there was improvements, two way communication, lots of talk about the tailwheel, and Simon went into more detail about the tailwheel locking procedures and how to verify it is locked. He added that Greg was having a hard time of lining the airplane up with the runway, and his first time attempt that day, he taxied onto the runway, 40-45 degrees off runway heading and they ended up having to taxi back around and re line up with the runway.

Mr. Driscoll recalled that prior to the accident flight, the right seat was all the way back, and asked Greg if he needed to move the seat. Greg told him that he didn't need to, as he liked it where it was.

**Addendum 11/13/18:**

When asked about Mr. Foster, Mr. Driscoll stated he saw him with a knee brace on the morning of the accident but did not recall him limping.