

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Aircraft Maintenance Background
Date: Wednesday, January 18, 2023 7:15:00 PM

Mike,

I have reached out to several people and have been unable to find any information regarding a work order or complaint relating to autopilot malfunctions prior to the accident.

Here is a breakdown of who I contacted and what I found out regarding any maintenance discrepancies:

- Kreg Anderson – KAXN Airport
 - Not aware of any additional training that occurred prior to the flight review with him in Late 2020 (October or November near Halloween)
 - Flight review was VFR only
 - No mention of IFR currency between Jim and Kreg
 - Jim was a cabin owner near Alexandria and would spend May – October each year at the cabin
 - Jim spend the rest of the year at KMLE
 - If there would have been an autopilot discrepancy, Kreg would have referred Jim to Steve Benson at Northpoint Aviation in KBRD

- Steve Benson – Northpoint Aviation – KBRD Airport
 - Only records relating to avionics were as follows:
 - 2016 – No Roll
 - 2018 – Auxiliary Audio
 - Equipped with KFC Gyro Autopilot

- Oracle Aviation – KMLE Airport
 - Home Base for aircraft during winter months
 - July 26, 2021 – Replaced Left Main Landing Gear Tire
 - No other recent maintenance on the aircraft

- Kreg Anderson – KAXN Airport
 - Requested Additional info of anyone on the field that may have provided maintenance for Jim
 - Kreg Recommended Kevin Sather but also stated that Jim would typically go to Kevin for items such as oil changes or annual inspections
 - Kreg also mentioned Jim’s friend Jeff Goldberg who also has a similar Mooney

- Kevin Sather – Weber’s Aero Repair – KAXN Airport
 - Jim would come to him for oil changes or annual inspections
 - Had a scheduled annual inspection on the aircraft at the end of August 2021

- Jeff Goldberg – Friend of Jim – KAXN Airport
 - No issues with the autopilot. If there were, Jim would have fixed it first.
 - Jim spared no expense to keep the aircraft safe
 - Jeff recalled a situation in his own Mooney that was similar to Jim's where he was flying at night and the autopilot gyro slowly precessed and the autopilot suddenly turned off. The aircraft had a large amount of nose up trim and the aircraft pitched up violently. He was at 9,000' when this occurred and was able to recover. Jeff did not mention how much of an altitude change occurred throughout the recovery. Jeff is convinced that this may have happened to Jim.
 - Jeff would tell Jim when they flew together to cross check the altimeter and directional gyro when the autopilot was on in order to verify that the autopilot gyro is still working correctly
 - Jeff stated that he has his gyro in the autopilot replaced/overhauled occasionally due to the life of the gyro bushings. Jeff was not aware of Jim ever getting the gyro on his autopilot replaced or overhauled.
 - Jeff advised Jim on some occasions to fly with his feet to steer and the trim for pitch as the aircraft is slippery and is very challenging to keep altitude within 100 feet unless this technique is used.
 - Jeff and Jim also discussed several times that the descent rate should be kept below 500 FPM on an approach

Let me know if I can be of any other assistance.

Thanks,

Dan Sindt

Aviation Safety Inspector – GA OPS

MSP FSDO – GL-15