

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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AIRBUS HELICOPTER CRASH *

GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK * Accident No.: CEN18FA391

SEPTEMBER 28, 2018 *

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Interview of: AIDEN PEPPERD

Passenger

Wednesday,
November 7, 2018

APPEARANCES:

JOSHUA LINDBERG, Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

NOREEN PRICE, Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JAMES BLAIR

ERIK WEIR

JEFFREY C. KING, Esquire
K&L Gates

LINDSAY PEPPERD
(Aiden's mother)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. LINDBERG: This is the beginning of the interview of
3 Aiden Pepperd by Josh Lindberg with the NTSB. We have Noreen
4 Price with the NTSB present. And if you could state your name?

5 MR. BLAIR: Jim Blair.

6 MR. KING: Jeff King of K&L Gates.

7 MR. WEIR: My name is Erik Weir.

8 MS. PEPPERD: Lindsay Pepperd.

9 MR. PEPPERD: Aiden Pepperd.

10 MR. LINDBERG: And, Aiden, you have representation with you;
11 is that correct?

12 MR. PEPPERD: Yes, sir.

13 MR. LINDBERG: And everything from this point will be on the
14 record. Do you have any questions before we get started?

15 MR. PEPPERD: I do not.

16 MR. LINDBERG: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF AIDEN PEPPERD

17
18 BY MR. LINDBERG:

19 Q. So if you could in your own words, wherever you want to
20 start, tell me about the accident flight or anything that you can
21 remember from that day.

22 A. That day. So we started at a lodge in Canada called Bell 2
23 Lodge, and that's where we stayed the night. And they had -- it's
24 a -- it was a ski resort, so we were able to land the helicopter
25 there and get fuel.

1 So we took off there that morning and flew to Juneau and got
2 customs and refueling. And then after that we took off and headed
3 out to the coast. And we're flying along the coast and our next
4 stop or our next fuel stop was going to be Yakutat. And right as
5 we hit the coast, about 3 minutes after we hit the coast and we're
6 flying along the coast at about 500 feet, we had seen some cool
7 beaches and somebody had said, oh, well, why don't we go down and
8 -- or go and find a beach to land on and stretch our legs.

9 And so my brother and I were in the back, back bench seat. I
10 was on the far left and he was on the far right. My dad was in
11 the front right, the pilot seat. And then, Mr. Dave King, he was
12 in the left seat up front, the co-pilot.

13 And then so we were -- my brother and I were listening to
14 audiobooks, so we had -- we were muted out, so we couldn't hear
15 their talking, so that if they did talk it wouldn't mute our
16 audiobook. So they muted us out to -- so we couldn't hear their
17 talking, but we could hear our audiobooks.

18 So they unmuted us and said, hey, we're going to -- do you
19 guys want to go and land on a beach and stretch your legs and
20 stuff? So I said, yeah. And so they kept flying and they muted
21 us again. And about a minute after they had re-muted us, Mr. King
22 pointed over at this big, long straight beach. And we were about
23 -- oh, at the time, we were probably 600 yards away from the shore
24 flying over the water at about 500 feet. And he had pointed over
25 at this big, large beach -- big straight beach, I mean.

1 So the helicopter -- and, again, I couldn't hear. I didn't
2 see their mouths moving as if they were talking, but I couldn't
3 hear them. All I saw was them point over to the left -- or to the
4 right, I mean. And the helicopter started turning to the right in
5 a controlled turn. I did not hear anything in the motor, it was
6 all nice and smooth, and I didn't think twice of anything because
7 I knew we were going to land somewhere, so I just figured this was
8 the beach we were going to land on.

9 But then right at when we had turned about, say, 30 degrees,
10 you know, we were flying parallel to the beach and we had turned
11 30 degrees to the right, and we're descending, I saw my dad -- oh,
12 and, again, Dave -- Mr. King, he was -- his hands were in his lap
13 and didn't -- he was very, he was -- didn't move at all. And my
14 dad was in control and Mr. King had all the control -- I mean, he
15 had complete dual controls.

16 So we had started -- we had turned and got -- when we were at
17 30 degrees clockwise, we started -- I saw my dad pull up on the
18 collective and turn the throttle off, which increased the pitch on
19 the blades and took the power away from the rotor system, which
20 made it stop -- which made it start instead of stopping. And then
21 we started falling really fast. And like I said, neither Mr. King
22 or my dad, they both -- he did that like it looked like a machine,
23 it was very -- it was -- Mr. King, both hands were in his lap the
24 whole time -- or at this time. And for the couple seconds as we
25 were falling, they both sat there completely motionless with all

1 the -- and I never heard anything in the motor, never saw any
2 birds or anything hit the -- nothing, it was all, it was all very
3 machine like, smooth and controlled, although we were falling.

4 And then like a second and a half before we hit the water,
5 they both snapped out of it and my dad was -- my dad's hand was
6 already on the collective, so he was able to fix it faster than
7 Mr. King. Mr. King, his hands came out of his lap. And my dad
8 shoved the collective down and then yelled "No," and then we hit
9 the water and I blacked out.

10 Q. Who was it that yelled no?

11 A. My dad.

12 Q. And could you tell what he was yelling no at?

13 A. I'm just -- fall -- you're just falling out of the sky and he
14 snapped out of it, "No," you know, like that.

15 Q. Like he was surprised?

16 A. Like he was surprised, yeah.

17 Q. And you heard him yell no over the intercom or over the
18 speakers or --

19 A. Just over the sound, you know, because, remember, I couldn't
20 hear him because I was muted out?

21 Q. Right. Okay.

22 A. He yelled no loud enough that I could hear it through my
23 headset.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Not through the system.

1 Q. So take me back to as you're talking about finding a place to
2 stretch your legs on the beach. Was it a conversation back and
3 forth between the pilots in the front and you in the back of a
4 decision-making process or --

5 A. Yeah. It was all four of us.

6 Q. Okay. And was there any particular reason it was that beach
7 or was it just time to stretch?

8 A. No, we were -- it was -- I had no idea which beach, we just
9 said -- he just said, we'll find a cool beach to land on. You
10 know, let's find one, well, that's cool, and then go land on it.
11 So when he pointed -- when Mr. King pointed, I just thought that
12 was the one we were going to go land on.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But no beach in particular, no reason. It was just to
15 stretch our legs and take a break and --

16 Q. Yeah. So other than that, other than to stretch your legs,
17 you really had no reason to stop because you were headed to
18 Yakutat?

19 A. Yep.

20 MR. LINDBERG: Okay.

21 MS. PRICE: Was it picturesque? Do you think you would have
22 taken a picture or anything?

23 MR. PEPPERD: Yeah, we would have taken some pictures, but, I
24 mean, not, oh, we have to take a picture, we must land.

25 BY MR. LINDBERG:

1 Q. So there was no rush to land or anything?

2 A. No.

3 Q. There was no real reason other than time to stretch?

4 A. Right. Yeah.

5 Q. And is that something that you had done before on the
6 previous flights on the way up, just whenever you want to stop?

7 A. Lots of times, yeah.

8 Q. Yeah. Did anything about that situation of finding a spot to
9 land and then turning towards it, did any of that -- was any of
10 that different than any of the previous times?

11 A. What part again?

12 Q. As you're talking about let's find a place to set down and
13 stretch, was that any different than any of the previous flights
14 when you had done that same --

15 A. No. You know, the other time, you know, we'd do the same
16 thing, hey, we'll land here or we'll land somewhere up here, eat
17 lunch, or something like that. Or whatever, or to stretch again
18 or something like that. But it was the same deal.

19 Q. Okay. Who was it that was controlling the mic or at least in
20 your headphones when they muted you and when they didn't? Was
21 that --

22 A. It was just a switch in the middle of the dash, so they were
23 both, they were both --

24 Q. Either of them. Okay. At one point there was a photo like
25 somebody passed an iPhone forward to Mr. King, was that you or was

1 that your brother, right -- maybe minutes before the accident?

2 A. I don't -- I mean, I -- I don't remember that.

3 Q. Okay. Do you have a photo on your phone that shows like
4 three or four guys holding fish or holding something that you
5 caught?

6 A. We didn't. We didn't catch anything. But if I had anything
7 on my phone you'd have to go swim in the ocean to find it.

8 Q. Okay. Well, I didn't know if you remembered, you know --

9 A. No.

10 Q. -- something that you might have had that you were maybe
11 showing or -- either you or your brother were showing Mr. King?

12 A. Well, yeah, we didn't -- we never caught any kind of fish or
13 anything.

14 Q. Okay. All right. Before you stopped and you had -- you were
15 muted, you were listening to your audiobook, could you hear
16 anything over the top of your audiobook as far as communications
17 from the front, or was it just your audiobook, you couldn't really
18 hear anything else?

19 A. It was just my audiobook and I did not -- it didn't -- I
20 didn't see them like having a conversation. They were just --
21 they were there flying, just looking out the windows. You know, I
22 can see -- you know, I can see their mouth, so if they moved they
23 were obviously talking.

24 Q. Sure. Yeah.

25 A. But they might -- they -- I don't know, they -- I'm sure they

1 said a couple words, but it's not like they were having a massive
2 conversation by any means.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. When you say, can you hear anything over my audiobook?

5 Q. I mean not on the speaker in your headset --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. -- but I mean outside of that, were their voices at all loud
8 enough that you could hear it? Like when you heard the no at the
9 very end, did you hear any -- couldn't hear anything above that?

10 A. No. They were not yelling in the front seat.

11 Q. Okay, okay. That's what I'm getting at. And your brother,
12 was he also wearing a headset?

13 A. And he was also listening to an audiobook.

14 Q. Okay. Same one as you, I guess?

15 A. No, not the exact same one. We were listening to different
16 ones.

17 Q. Oh, separate. Gotcha. All right.

18 A. He's a couple chapters behind me.

19 Q. Just trying to catch up. There was a phone on the pedestal.
20 Someone had their phone plugged in, an iPhone plugged in on the
21 pedestal. Do you remember whose phone that was?

22 A. When you say pedestal, do you mean the dashboard?

23 Q. Yeah, just underneath the -- between the two, like right next
24 to the --

25 A. Like the center console?

1 Q. Yeah, center console.

2 A. Yes. That was my dad's phone.

3 Q. There was something that they kept pulling up on that phone.
4 Did you ever get a look at what they were looking at or it was --
5 it was in a text message; it looked like a photo of something that
6 they kept looking at throughout the flight. Do you know what they
7 were looking at?

8 A. Did you say same photo? Or same thing or --

9 Q. I'm sorry? No. It was something different. Well, it could
10 have been -- each time they were looking at it, it could have been
11 the same thing. It looked very similar.

12 A. You know, he used his phone to text random people, but he --
13 I don't, I don't know. Going back to that -- a question you had
14 asked. Did you say -- when you said we had handed a phone up to
15 Mr. King, was it for sure Mr. King on the left, not my dad?

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. Oh, okay. I was going to say, my brother -- my dad would
18 unhook his phone and hand it to my brother and he was -- because
19 my brother didn't have a camera, he likes to take pictures, so he
20 did -- they did that a couple times. But I just remembered that.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But, no, I do not know what exactly they were looking at on
23 the phone.

24 Q. Okay. Do you remember maybe the night before the accident
25 flight your dad was calling back to the factory, the Airbus

1 factory, to help him get the Garmin connect to work?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Do you remember that whole process? Were you involved in
4 that at all?

5 A. Yep.

6 Q. Can you tell me about that?

7 A. So along the flight there -- well, let's take a step back.
8 So there is a thing where it allows the Garmin pilot app on his
9 iPad to take the flight plan off his iPad and display it on the
10 screen in the helicopter. So he was trying to figure out how to
11 get that working and along with (indiscernible) flight. And he
12 had ordered -- but, I guess, he figured out that he needed a
13 little SD card plug-in to -- into the thing to get it to work. So
14 he ordered that and it arrived in Colorado while we were there.
15 And so he plugged that in and he still couldn't figure out how to
16 get it to work, so then he called them.

17 Q. Okay. Do you know if that got resolved at all?

18 A. That was one of -- I don't think so. I don't think so. I
19 think he was still working on it. That might have been one of the
20 things he was looking at on his phone.

21 Q. Okay. From the time you guys took off in Grande Prairie
22 until after Juneau, how much, if any, was Mr. King flying the
23 helicopter, was he in control of the helicopter?

24 A. It wasn't a whole lot because my dad was done time. If it
25 was, I mean, it was like maybe 30 minutes around the whole time.

1 But if it -- if when he did take control, he -- it was -- you
2 know, my dad was trying to figure out how to get the Garmin
3 connect to work or something like that.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So it wasn't very much, no.

6 Q. And was he -- during the accident flight was Mr. King
7 manipulating the controls at all as the pilot in command?

8 A. What --

9 Q. Was he the one -- a lot of times when you're flying there's a
10 transfer of controls.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. Maybe your dad was flying at one point and he said, Mr. King,
13 can you take --

14 A. Take it over, yeah.

15 Q. -- the controls for a second? Now he would be the pilot
16 flying the helicopter. Was that happening during the accident
17 flight at all or was it just your dad?

18 A. It was just my dad.

19 Q. I know in the training courses, especially the ones you were
20 sitting in on, you obviously learned how to do an autorotation and
21 you understand the aspects of that. During the flights, any from
22 Grande Prairie till the accident, were you guys practicing or were
23 the pilots practicing autorotations at all throughout?

24 A. Not at all.

25 Q. Not at all. So it wouldn't have been something that was

1 going on right before the accident?

2 A. You know, and if they would -- if they would have, they would
3 have said, hey, boys, we're going to practice this. No, it
4 wouldn't have.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Plus, yeah, it's just -- you don't practice an autorotation
7 in those circumstances.

8 Q. Sure. When you gave the interview with Trooper Ohms (ph.)
9 immediately after the accident, you said something like your dad
10 looked like a 2-year old. Can you explain that?

11 A. So actually the whole -- like when I had got -- when I had
12 gotten out of the hospital, somebody said, oh, yeah, that
13 interview with so-and-so. I was like, what? I didn't -- I don't
14 remember, I don't remember any of that.

15 Q. Oh, okay.

16 A. But I do remember referring to someone as my dad looking like
17 a 2-year-old. But, you know, being still sort of in shock, you
18 know, I couldn't figure out any other better way to explain it.
19 But --

20 Q. Sure.

21 A. -- the way that I had explained it to you, where they're, you
22 know, both -- he just reached down, went like that, and -- but
23 then -- that is the best way I can explain it.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. Is there any way else you'd like me to explain it?

1 Q. No, no. The first way was very good, and that really was
2 helpful. When they were in that circumstance where maybe -- right
3 before you said they snapped out of it, did it look like there was
4 anything interfering with the controls at all?

5 A. Uh-uh.

6 Q. Nothing in the way near the collective at all?

7 A. Uh-uh.

8 Q. Nothing by the cyclic? Nothing by their feet?

9 A. They were very, very diligent to make sure all of that was
10 good, any charger cords -- due to that A-Star crash where the kid
11 pulled up on his backpack and that strap caught it. So they were
12 very, very diligent to make sure nothing was in the way.

13 Q. Okay. Good.

14 A. The only thing in the way was his hand, which was on the
15 stick.

16 Q. How about seatbelts? Who was wearing seatbelts, do you
17 remember?

18 A. All of us.

19 Q. Everybody?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. And they were all -- what were they, five point?

22 A. No, they were just -- it was like a car seatbelt.

23 Q. Okay. In the back and in the front, how were those?

24 A. In the front it was a four point.

25 Q. Four point. And so you and your brother in the back had

1 your --

2 A. Car seat.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And the other guys just had a, you know, across the waist and
5 then two shoulder straps.

6 Q. So I'm interested in -- I don't want to keep referring to the
7 interview that you did with Trooper Ohms since you just told me
8 you don't remember it, but can you tell me, do you remember
9 anything after you woke up after the accident?

10 A. Everything.

11 Q. Okay. Can you tell me about that?

12 A. So when I woke up, I was floating in my chair and I had -- we
13 had had a small YETI, little cooler, you know, about, what is
14 that, a foot -- I'm saying it for the recorder -- a foot by like
15 15 by 6 or something like that. So it was small. And just
16 sitting on the chair next to us with -- had our jerky and snacks
17 and stuff in it.

18 Q. Between you and your brother?

19 A. Between my brother and I, yes. And but the odd thing was,
20 when I woke up I was sitting in my seat floating, my head was
21 resting on one of the blades, and I was buckled in still, and my
22 -- and that cooler was strapped around me like a messenger bag,
23 which was odd. But I immediately shucked it off because I knew I
24 was going to be too weak and it would be dangerous to try to swim
25 -- try to get back to shore with that around my neck, even though

1 it had good things in it.

2 Q. Hindsight.

3 A. I know. But when I woke up, I noticed my head was starting
4 to slip off that blade, and I caught myself and I was so weak I
5 was just barely able to reach up and unbuckle my seatbelt. And I
6 -- the seat slid out from underneath me, and it was about 6 foot
7 -- there's about 6 feet of water, and I'm like 5'9" or something
8 like that. And I wasn't able to swim back due to my injuries, so
9 I was -- but I was able to like pogo stick back, timing the --
10 timing right with the waves.

11 And when I got to shore I was too weak to do much, so I just
12 face planted in the sand and laid there for 10, 15 minutes. And
13 then rolled over and sat up, and my vision was going blurry and --
14 but then I had seen -- I saw that that little cooler had floated
15 ashore and was on the edge there, obviously parts and pieces
16 everywhere. And then so I had crawled up about 15 feet up the
17 beach and sat on a log, and I sat there for quite a few hours.

18 Then it started to rain and so I went and decided I was going
19 to go see if I could find that -- go see if I can get that, that
20 cooler, but when I went down there the cooler was nowhere to be
21 found. All I could find of good value was half -- my brother's
22 half drunken water bottle and a bag of Jimmy John's chips and our
23 bathroom bag with a toothbrush and toothpaste and stuff.

24 And so I grabbed that and crawled back up into the edge of
25 the trees there. If you know Alaska, the coastline is obviously

1 very wet and most of the time windy, so the trees there are not
2 too tall and the only ones that grow necessarily are evergreens.
3 So they're -- and they're very, very thick. So I crawled 10 feet
4 up into the edge of the trees there and curled up in a ball there
5 and for the -- for quite a few more hours.

6 And then at about 8 o'clock, I -- oh, and I did not have my
7 watch because it had -- the inner part had come out of the rubber
8 and it was lost, so I did not have a watch. But I was -- I'm
9 guessing it's about 8 o'clock due to when the Coast Guard came and
10 picked me up at 10:20 something. So around 8 o'clock a private
11 pilot Pilatus flew over about the same height going the opposite
12 direction over the -- or flying up the coast. Had no idea I was
13 there, because it was starting to be a little foggy.

14 But then -- and so then I decided I had to crawl back out of
15 the trees and go and write something in the sand and let them
16 know. So I wrote about 10-foot tall SOS letters in the sand and
17 then I went back up in the trees. And then about an hour later
18 the Coast Guard flew over the trees, not over the beach, heading
19 towards -- in Yakutat's direction.

20 But then about another hour later I heard them slow -- I
21 heard a helicopter slowly coming up the beach and I could see a
22 light flashing through the fog. And so I heard him slowly coming,
23 so I -- you know, the first time they flew over I didn't even move
24 -- I didn't get out of the, out of the trees because I knew they
25 weren't looking at the beach.

1 But then I heard them slowly coming, so I ran out on the
2 beach and -- but they were -- weren't searching the beach, they
3 were searches the edge of the water. And they saw the -- I saw
4 their light scanning and then they saw all the parts and stuff, so
5 -- but then they kept scanning, and they flew past me going over
6 the water. Then they got to the end of the beach and turned
7 around and then started scanning the beach, and that's when they
8 saw me standing there waving and stuff. They picked -- then they
9 picked me up and took me to Sitka.

10 Q. Okay. So when you came to and your head was resting on one
11 of the rotor blades, how -- you said you were about 6 feet into
12 the water or least the water was 6 feet high.

13 A. Six feet deep.

14 Q. And you're guessing that based on your height and --

15 A. Right.

16 Q. -- how much above you it was? What part of the helicopter
17 did you see while you were out there? What were you next to, if
18 anything?

19 A. I don't know, I don't know what I was next to, but the main
20 part that I saw floating out there when I got back to shore was
21 the picture of that -- the main part that's on -- where was that?

22 Q. The report that I put out?

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Yeah. So basically just the fuselage and the metal?

25 A. Right. Upside down that -- with the skid floating out --

1 that.

2 Q. That one?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Yeah. So that's what you saw when you were on the beach
5 looking back towards the water?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Did you see any other big pieces besides that?

8 A. No, because the beach was kind of in -- it wasn't very tall.
9 You couldn't look -- you know, it was almost, not below but it was
10 very flat, so I couldn't see -- so that's the only one. I didn't,
11 I didn't see see this part. All I saw was the top of a skid.

12 Q. Um-hum. Yeah, because when we got there it was tipped over
13 on its side.

14 A. Right. And it was about 100 yards out in the water.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And that was -- you know, it wasn't in front -- I'll tell
17 you, I do know that that wasn't in front of me when I woke up.
18 You know, I woke up facing the beach and it wasn't in front of me.
19 It was somewhere right behind me somewhere.

20 Q. Okay. So maybe you woke up somewhere in between the wreckage
21 and the beach?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. But I was close to it, because there was parts all around me.

25 Q. Yeah. Do you remember seeing the tail boom, tail rotor or

1 any part of the tail rotor at all?

2 A. Uh-uh.

3 Q. Okay. And -- all right.

4 A. You know, and the -- as much -- I was doing as much as I
5 could to use whatever thinking I could in the condition that my
6 brain was in. And the only thing I was searching for was, you
7 know, bodies not -- so I wasn't --

8 Q. Not (indiscernible) --

9 A. -- I wasn't paying attention. I was watching for someone to
10 just pop up, but --

11 Q. Sure. How about the tide? As the tide was coming in and
12 out, was there a big change in where the waves ended up throughout
13 those hours that you were out there?

14 A. I don't know. I just -- I did notice some change, but it
15 wasn't a whole lot. Like maybe, maybe 5 feet or so.

16 Q. Okay. Could you tell if the -- that part of the wreckage had
17 moved at all in the water laterally? Couldn't tell?

18 A. (No audible response.)

19 Q. And how about right as you're flying down the coastline, what
20 were the weather conditions at the time?

21 A. The weather conditions were high. The clouds were not low at
22 all at the time; they were really high. The wind was mostly calm,
23 like hardly -- like probably maybe 4. I mean, it wasn't affecting
24 our airspeed like at all. So the weather conditions were really
25 good for as far --

1 Q. Okay. So you said the clouds weren't low, they were high.
2 But were they covering so that there was -- was it still sunny
3 outside or --

4 A. It wasn't sunny. It was -- you know, we couldn't see the sun
5 but it was --

6 Q. Kind of overcast?

7 A. It was overcast.

8 Q. Okay. Any precipitation at all?

9 A. Not at the time, no.

10 Q. Any precipitation from Juneau up until that point?

11 A. From Juneau to that point, no.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But there was before Juneau and there was while I was on the
14 beach.

15 Q. Okay. What kind of precipitation before Juneau?

16 A. Just -- not very, not very hard. Just a little drizzle.
17 Just enough to put splatters on my windshield.

18 Q. Okay. When you got to Juneau that morning, what did you guys
19 do at the airport?

20 A. We -- well, we landed and due to customs -- the customs rules
21 with customs, you can't get out or do anything when you land. So
22 we just sat in the helicopter until customs drove up, and then
23 they gave us the thumbs up to fly to the other side of the -- fly
24 over to the other side of the airport and get fuel.

25 So we got fuel. I think my brother went to the bathroom

1 there in the place there, and I got a drink and we got back in the
2 helicopter and took off.

3 Q. Okay. During any of the flight -- do you need something?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just seeing if he needed a drink.

5 MR. LINDBERG: Okay.

6 BY MR. LINDBERG:

7 Q. During any of the flights from Grande Prairie was there any
8 what you might think was flight instruction going on from
9 Mr. King?

10 A. No. My -- you know, because this was a -- he was -- he flew
11 older A-Stars and so most of the systems in this A-Star, since it
12 was brand new, he wasn't -- my dad was up to speed on all the
13 systems more than he was. But just the general, you know, flying
14 instruction, there was, you know, a little tweaking here and
15 there: Well, when you take off you need to try to let the
16 helicopter -- let the torque of the helicopter -- let the torque
17 of the rotor system turn you around rather than helping with it.
18 But just little tiny stuff like that. But -- little bits here and
19 there but nothing major.

20 Q. So how did you know that Mr. King wasn't as up to speed with
21 those systems? What made you think that?

22 A. You know, it's like my grandpa and -- or even my mom with --
23 no offense -- technology these days. But, you know, like my dad
24 -- like this helicopter had autopilot in it, his didn't. You
25 know, he asked a lot of questions. Mr. King asked my dad a lot of

1 questions: Oh, that's really cool; they really did -- they really
2 upgraded that since mine; show me again how that works. Or
3 something like that, you know. There was a lot of that going on
4 because his helicopter's pretty simple.

5 Q. Yeah. So it was just a lot of back and forth discussion
6 about --

7 A. You know, my dad's helicopter. Obviously, if you knew my
8 dad, he always had all the bells and whistles.

9 Q. Yeah. I saw the photos. Yeah, it looked very nice. So did
10 Mr. King specifically talk about his helicopters and how old they
11 were or anything like that, any of the differences?

12 A. Not really, because all of us that were in the helicopter had
13 been in his helicopter, so --

14 Q. So you knew it?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. So you had flown in his helicopter when? This
17 previous summer?

18 A. This previous summer when we went from Palmer to Fairbanks
19 and back.

20 Q. Okay. And that was just one flight that you had shown with
21 him?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. No others?

24 A. No others.

25 Q. And what was the point of that flight?

1 A. To, one, to build time for my dad and, second, my dad needed
2 to go to Fairbanks for the ribbon cutting of his new power plant
3 out there that he built.

4 Q. So you were just tagging alone?

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. You know, being homeschooled all my life, I did a lot of
8 tagging along.

9 Q. Sure. Yeah. Were you involved in any of the other ground
10 training or anything else that might have been going on between
11 Mr. King and your dad at Mr. King's facility?

12 A. You know, the only time I ever did anything at his facility
13 was that trip, but there really wasn't any ground training or any
14 necessarily training because my dad had already been flying with
15 him for a couple months, so it was -- then he showed up. I mean,
16 my dad was training with him but it was -- it wasn't necessarily
17 training anymore, it was just practice by now. So -- does that
18 answer your question?

19 Q. Yeah, it does.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. Thank you. How about any of the training that you were
22 involved in or sat in on at the Airbus factory?

23 A. I didn't sit in any training at all with the Airbus factory.
24 That's actually why I went and did the -- my brother and I went
25 and did the simulator because we had nothing to do because we

1 weren't allowed to be in there -- in the helicopter at all. But
2 before when he went -- you know, because he trained -- when he
3 first started training for helicopter, he was training on a
4 Robinson R44. And so when he did the transition training from a
5 R44 to a turbine H125, he went down to Texas in -- was that June?
6 When was that? Somewhere --

7 MS. PEPPERD: May?

8 MR. PEPPERD: May or June, something like that, he went down
9 to Texas and -- to get his transition training from -- to the
10 H125. That and the 45 minutes that we weren't allowed to be in
11 was the only training he got from Airbus, and I wasn't -- we
12 weren't allowed to be in it anyway.

13 BY MR. LINDBERG:

14 Q. Okay. So you didn't participate in any of that Airbus
15 training?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. What training did you sit in on, if any, with your dad?

18 A. I sat in with him when he was in doing the R44 stuff. He --
19 we spent like an hour or so practicing different kinds of
20 autorotations at the Wasilla Airport in the R44.

21 Q. Okay. Who was his instructor then?

22 A. Dusty Little.

23 Q. Yeah. Okay.

24 A. But, you know, like I said before, when they -- on every --
25 you know, they said -- before we took off he said, all right, this

1 flight is going to be, we're going to be practicing autorotations.
2 But still after we got up, it was, all right, we're going to
3 practice an autorotation 1, 2, 3. I mean, it was -- every single
4 time. We did it like 15 times. So it wasn't any surprise or
5 anything like that.

6 Q. Right. You were always aware of what was happening next. So
7 you never got that feel during the flight from Grande Prairie?

8 A. Right.

9 Q. None of that was going on?

10 A. Uh-uh.

11 Q. Okay. Do you know, did Mr. King talk about at all being a
12 CFI, certified flight instructor? Do you know if he was or not?

13 A. I'm not -- I won't say I don't know and I won't say, yes.
14 But I am pretty sure he's a flight instructor because of all the
15 time that he spent.

16 Q. Okay. Well, I know the answer to it so you don't have to
17 commit to it one way or the other.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. But I just want to know if he came out and said it at all,
20 you know, if that was something that he discussed?

21 A. Right. He, you know, he didn't say I'm a flight instructor,
22 you know, anything like that.

23 Q. Sure.

24 A. You know.

25 Q. I heard, and I think that you were around at the same time

1 when your dad was taking delivery of the helicopter and there were
2 people taking photos and --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. During that time was Mr. King involved in all of that? Was
5 he around?

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. And was he looking at the helicopter at all?

8 A. He was -- you know, we were just walking around in this white
9 hangar looking at a brand new helicopter, taking pictures --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- and stuff like that. You know, we were -- but, yes, he
12 was involved.

13 Q. How was he acting around the helicopter? Was he like
14 inspecting every little detail? Was he on the other side of the
15 hangar? What was he up to?

16 A. As an older guy with an older A-Star that -- none of his A-
17 Stars were brand new when he bought, he was just -- he was super
18 excited. He wasn't inspecting any details. He was just in
19 helicopter heaven, I guess.

20 Q. Sure. Yeah. I can imagine that he would be. So did he
21 express any kind of concern about flying a brand new, really nice
22 helicopter that he'd --

23 A. No. He couldn't wait.

24 Q. Yeah. He was just excited?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Did it seem like there were any reservations at all
2 for the flight, any worries from either pilot about taking this
3 flight?

4 A. No, they were all good to go and super excited about it.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Dad was talking about it for a month before we did it.

7 Q. Yeah. I can imagine. How about from each leg that you took,
8 were you doing long days, sleeping a little, sleeping a lot? How
9 were your days? When were you waking up, that kind of stuff?

10 A. You know, we'd get up at 6:30 or something, and leave as soon
11 as it was light out every morning. But we would stop at a
12 reasonable time, 4:30, 5, or something like that, enough time to
13 settle in wherever we were stopping and get dinner and have a good
14 night's rest. But --

15 Q. How many stops do you think you made along the line?

16 A. At least 10.

17 Q. Okay. And did it seem like either pilot was ever fatigued or
18 not ready for the flight that day, any of the flights?

19 A. No. We were all --

20 Q. Always well rested and --

21 A. Always ready to go.

22 Q. Ready? Yeah, just excited?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. The morning of the accident, you guys took off from
25 Petersburg; is that where it was? Or from the Bell 2?

1 A. From the Bell 2 Lodge, yeah.

2 Q. The Bell 2 Lodge in Canada?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And do you remember about what time you took off there?

5 A. I think we took off -- it was in the 7 o'clock hour or --
6 somewhere in the 7 o'clock hour.

7 Q. And that's when you flew straight to Juneau?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Customs, fuel, take off --

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. -- for the accident flight? And you said as you were flying
12 along on that accident flight your dad was the pilot, he was the
13 one in control?

14 A. Um-hum. Yep.

15 MR. LINDBERG: Okay. That answers all the questions that I
16 have. Anything else that you'd like to say while we're still
17 recording?

18 MR. PEPPERD: I don't think so.

19 MR. LINDBERG: Okay. Sure -- Noreen.

20 MS. PRICE: Yeah. Thank you for talking with us today. I
21 have one quick question.

22 BY MS. PRICE:

23 Q. Back to the accident flight. You said both pilots were in a
24 trance. So for that moment in time after your father cut the fuel
25 and the helicopter was descending quickly, right -- is that what

1 you said?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Did you want to say something?

4 A. It was the throttle.

5 Q. The throttle, right.

6 A. The fuel was up here.

7 Q. Yeah. I meant to say throttle. Thank you for correcting me.

8 And they were in a trance. Did you know something was wrong at

9 that time or --

10 A. Oh, I knew something wrong was because my phone that was
11 playing the audiobook went off my knee and stuck to the ceiling.

12 Q. And at that time neither pilot was reacting to what was going
13 on, correct?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay. But you knew something was wrong?

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 MS. PRICE: That's all I have. Thank you so much. I
18 appreciate it.

19 MR. LINDBERG: Thank you very much, Aiden.

20 MR. PEPPERD: Oh, you're welcome.

21 MR. LINDBERG: The time is 4:54 and this is the end of the
22 interview.

23 (Whereupon, at 4:54 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: AIRBUS HELICOPTER CRASH
 GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK
 SEPTEMBER 28, 2018
 Interview of Aiden Pepperd

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN18FA391

PLACE:

DATE: November 7, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Cheryl Palmer Donovan
Transcriber