

Mitchell Rasmussen
Air Safety Investigator
AS - ANC

Date: 05/23/2024

Subject: ANC24LA035, Student Pilot Interview

Contact: Cody Harkins, Student Pilot / Accident Airplane Owner

Mr. Harkins stated that he approached a local pilot, Katie Waito, and her boyfriend, Dan Williams, in their hangar at Afton airport in Afton, WY to ask about available hangar space at the airport. The couple and Mr. Harkins began a conversation about aviation. The couple showed the Mr. Harkins Ms. Waito's airplane, a similar model, and Mr. Williams recommended that Mr. Harkins and Ms. Waito go flying in Mr. Harkin's airplane, a Piper PA-22-150. Mr. Harkins stated that he then told the couple that he wasn't legal to fly, he was a student pilot and did not have his tailwheel endorsement and had just flown the airplane in with a ferry pilot. Ms. Waito told him that this was fine. Mr. Harkins stated that he had insurance on the airplane and asked Ms. Waito if she had the required hours stated in the policy, and she replied that she did.

Mr. Harkins stated that they performed a preflight on the airplane and he handed Ms. Waito the keys to the airplane. According to Mr. Harkins, Ms. Waito stated that she wanted to fly from the right seat. Mr. Harkins didn't think that this request was abnormal, as visibility is better from the right side in the PA-22-150 and it is easier to get into and out of the airplane from the right side, as that is where the door is located. According to Mr. Harkins, the brakes installed in the accident airplane are only operable from the left seat. Mr. Harkins agreed to sit in the left seat during the flight but stated that he, again, told Ms. Waito, "You are the pilot, I'm not legal to fly this thing."

Mr. Harkins stated that Ms. Waito directed him to turn the master switch on and hit the starter. He did so and then Ms. Waito said that she had the airplane, put her

hand on the throttle and taxied the airplane to the runway. During the taxi, Ms. Waito asked Mr. Harkins to apply brakes for her, as they are only operable from the left seat in the accident airplane. Mr. Harkins did so and stated that he then initiated a verbal transfer of controls back to Ms. Waito after applying the brakes.

Mr. Harkins stated that, after entering the runway, Ms. Waito applied full power and began the takeoff roll. He stated that she was a little "squirmy" on the controls. They lifted off and then pulled to the right, bouncing through a taxiway and hitting a 9-foot chain link fence followed by a barbed wire fence. They then hit a hill and the airplane flipped onto its back. Mr. Harkins stated that Ms. Waito then cut the mixture and they both hopped out. Mr. Harkins stated that Ms. Waito then said, "I'm not the pilot, I wasn't in the airplane, I know that this is a [expletive] thing to do, but I can't have another accident on my record."

Mr. Harkins stated that, afterwards, Ms. Waito and Mr. Williams suggested that they flip the airplane over and hangar it, saying that it was a normal thing to do. The student pilot then called 911 and stated that there was some discussion between the couple over what name to give to the dispatchers. He also stated that the couple returned to their hangar after the call was made, but before first responders arrived.

In a follow-up email with Mr. Harkins, he reported that, during a postaccident inspection of the airplane, he found that the elevator trim was set to the full nose-up position.

Mr. Harkins stated that there were no mechanical problems with the airplane; the throttle and rudders were working.