



NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Lynn Spencer
Aviation Investigator
Eastern Region, Office of Aviation Safety (ERA)
National Transportation Safety Board

Date Interviewed: 9/25/2019
Person Interviewed: Donna Phaneuf
NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA265

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the above-named individual:

- Mrs. Donna Phaneuf provided a 72-hour look-back from the date of the accident. She noted that her husband was very healthy and took a statin for cholesterol, and acetaminophen for some arthritis in his back. He took two acetaminophen the morning of the accident.
- On Sept 3, they went to breakfast then went to MedFit, an exercise business in Spanish Springs. She stated that she needs to go there since having a triple bypass, and that her husband would go with her and work out also. The exercise is monitored, and blood pressure is taken before and after exercise.
- She stated that Thursday was very busy. Mr. Phaneuf typically drove her everywhere, and they had an exercise session at MedFit, a dental appointment for her in the afternoon, a 5 pm pedicure appointment for both of them, then carry-out Chinese food for dinner.
- Mr. Phaneuf was due to be at Love Field to practice a flyover formation on Friday morning, and Mr. John Carlile had advised him to be there at 0930.
- He slept well and woke up at 0830 and was in a rush to get over to the airport, which was about a 20-minute drive. Because he did not have too much time, he ate a muffin and drank a glass of juice on the way.
- She was out at their airport house the day Mr. Phaneuf replaced the canopy latch (August 29), which she stated was different from the original latch: the replacement had some type of wiring on it that it didn't need to have. She stated that Mr. Phaneuf worked at least 5 hours on the latch. When Mr. Phaneuf demonstrated the latch to her, the way the latch turned seemed complicated to her. She did not understand the way it turned.
- She stated that Mr. Phaneuf had never had any problems locking the canopy, but the handle had become bent. Mr. Normark had come down to assist with the latch but the work was already completed by the time he arrived.



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- The accident was on her 80th birthday. That evening they were going to all be celebrating her birthday in Lady Lake. She had told him to keep her posted that day, but he did not.
- She added that her husband was a jet fighter pilot (30 years in the Air Force) and a racecar driver. She stated that she knew he had over 6,000 flight hours but was not sure if he had 10,000 hours. She added that he was always safety minded.



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Date Interviewed: 9/7/2019, 1517 EDT
Person Interviewed: Ron Normark, Pilot witness
NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA265

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the above-named individual:

- Mr. Normark stated that he and the accident pilot (Mr. Phaneuf) and other pilot witnesses had a formation flight planned for 9/11 that they were scheduled to practice on the day of the accident.
- Mr. Phaneuf arrived at the pre-brief and informed the three pilots that he couldn't get his engine started.
- Mr. Normark and the other two pilots did the formation flight practice without Mr. Phaneuf and met afterwards to debrief the flight.
- Mr. Phaneuf arrived at the debrief and Mr. Normark and the other two pilots, one of whom was an A & P mechanic, offered to assist Mr. Phaneuf in determining what the issue might be.
- They pulled the top spark plugs and found two to be sooty and two to be wet, and they observed that the plugs had not been properly torqued.
- They applied anti-seize solution to the spark plugs, cleaned them, and re-inserted them, and the engine started right up.
- Mr. Normark stated that he left to take a fifteen-minute break and went home to cool off and drink some water.
- He returned as Mr. Phaneuf was replacing the engine cowling and estimated that Mr. Phaneuf had been outside for about an hour in total.
- They ran it without the top cowling to ensure it was running okay.
- He stated that he signaled to Mr. Phaneuf to check the A & B ignition, and noted that Mr. Phaneuf seemed slow to respond, which he thought odd.
- He told Mr. Phaneuf, "You got it out, you might as well fly it!"
- He stated that Mr. Phaneuf took off from Runway 27 and the engine sounded normal.
- He did not see Mr. Phaneuf go around the pattern.



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- Mr. Phaneuf had indicated to Mr. Normark that he had $\frac{1}{4}$ tank of fuel.
- He reported that the only maintenance issue he had been aware of was a broken handle on the canopy: when it turned it would not lock. Mr. Phaneuf had recently let him know that it had been fixed. He had not seen it being fixed, but Mr. Phaneuf mentioned that he had fixed it.



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Date Interviewed: 9/7/2019, 1537 EDT
Person Interviewed: Don Bartlett, Pilot and A&P
NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA265

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the above-named individual:

- Mr. Bartlett had been asked to fly in the formation flight planned for 9/11 and had not previously met Mr. Phaneuf.
- He stated that Mr. Phaneuf called Mr. Carlile to inform him that his airplane engine would not start.
- They flew without him for about 45 minutes.
- After the flight, during the debrief, Mr. Phaneuf arrived in a golf cart and said that he likely flooded his engine, and the group decided to go assist him.
- Mr. Bartlett noted that the spark plugs appeared new, and one was wet. He noted that none of them seems appropriately tightened.
- They cleaned off and re-inserted the spark plugs and the engine started and was just slightly rough running.
- Given the loose top spark plugs, they decided to check the bottom spark plugs.
- They cleaned and re-inserted the bottom spark plugs and the engine “started right up.”
- They put back on the top cowl and he told Mr. Phaneuf, “Start it and do an ignition check.”
- Mr. Phaneuf started the engine while they held up the canopy.
- The engine responded correctly to the idle ignition checks, and he instructed Mr. Phaneuf to do a full static runup, which appeared excellent.
- Mr. Bartlett advised Mr. Phaneuf to turn off and restart the engine without using the choke. Mr. Phaneuf did so with no anomalies noted.
- Mr. Phaneuf thanked them and they left. He recalled commenting to the others that Mr. Phaneuf was in the sun most of the day.
- He heard Mr. Phaneuf do another engine runup before taking off some time later.
- He estimated Mr. Phaneuf’s takeoff a little after 1 pm; said that it takes a long time to put the cowling back on.



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Eastern Region, Office of Aviation Safety (ERA)
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Date Interviewed: 9/7/2019, 1550 EDT
Person Interviewed: John Carlile, Pilot
NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA265

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the above-named individual:

- Mr. Carlile indicated that Mr. Phaneuf was pilot #4 in the formation flight planned for 9/11.
- He stated that Mr. Phaneuf showed up at the pre-briefing because he could not get his airplane engine started, and Mr. Phaneuf indicated that he had tried 6-8 times to start it.
- They went flying without Mr. Phaneuf, who arrived for the flight de-brief.
- They offered to assist him in getting his engine started.
- After they worked on his engine sparkplugs, it started up.
- All four pilots installed the lower cowling, which took at least 20 minutes.
- After the lower cowling was installed, and before the top cowling was installed, Mr. Phaneuf started the engine and ran it for a minute or two.
- The top cowling was reinstalled then Mr. Phaneuf started and ran the engine again, this time to include high power settings.
- After performing the engine run-ups, Mr. Phaneuf stated, "Since I have it out, I may as well take it for a flight around the pattern" as the others were preparing to leave.
- Mr. Carlile was not sure how long it was before Mr. Phaneuf took off and did not see or hear his takeoff.
- Mr. Carlile did not know that anything had happened until he heard that there was an airplane crash on the news.

To Whom It May Concern at the NTSB

From Judie Betz

Subject: Info regarding my friend, neighbor, and fellow RV12 pilot Bill Phaneuf

Date: 9/15/19

About 1:40 in the afternoon on Friday, September 6, 2019 I drove my car north on my street (158th Court) in Love's Landing Aviation Community in Weirsdale, FL. I was on my way to a 2:00 haircut appointment and passed Bill Phaneuf on his hangar pad with his RV12. With him were 3 other neighbors (John Carlile, Don Bartlett, and Ron Normark). They all seemed to be doing something to/on/in the airplane...if I were not in a hurry I would have stopped to see what was going on.

I returned to Love's a few minutes before 3:00; Bill's plane was no longer out front on the hangar pad, although his golf cart and car were in front of the hangar and house respectively. As I entered my garage several houses to the south Donna Phaneuf texted me from their home in The Villages, about 30 minutes away...she said Bill was at Love's and she was unable to reach him. I offered to go see what was going on, and drove back to their house. I figured he was in the hangar tinkering, and maybe his phone was in the car or something. I was prepared to tell him he was in trouble if he didn't call Donna! However, Bill was not in the hangar and neither was the plane.

I stepped outside wondering where Bill was. I called John Carlile, as I had seen him there with Bill an hour or so earlier...John said they had gotten the plane to start (Bill's problem with the plane was just that it was flooded) and Bill was going to fly it around the pattern since it was now running. John was surprised that he was not back yet...thought he had taken off about 20 minutes or so after I went by. That would make him be gone about an hour...way too long for once around the pattern.

Meanwhile Donna Phaneuf continued to text me to see what I had discovered when checking on Bill...I did not respond as after looking for Bill in the hangar, and calling John Carlile to see when he had departed in the plane, I also noticed 2 helicopters flying around to the SE...not in our pattern/airspace, but close enough for me to see them. They kept circling, then both stopped, one to the SE and the other a little further south, and both just hovered...what I would expect to be marking a spot. About this time a neighbor texted me and wanted to know if I had received a text alert on my phone stating there had been a plane crash in Lady Lake (FL)...which is very near to us...I had not received such a text. Then a local handy man who worked for many of us at Love's Landing (including both me and the Phaneufs) (Jim Walsh) came by looking for Bill...he was concerned when I said he was missing...he called the Lady Lake Police Dept. and reported a missing plane out of Love's Landing that was over-due and had not returned. Next a neighbor and his wife (Art and Marge Schiavone) pulled up to the Phaneuf driveway and said Bill had died in a plane crash...they showed me a photo on Marge's phone (I do NOT know where she got that...from the crash site? From TV? From the Internet???) but I could see a very bad crash site, looking like a plane had gone straight in, and with all I could recognize was a familiar logo (a stylized letter E or F?) from Bill's plane tail.

Of course Donna was still trying to reach me for a response...which I was starting to realize was probably not what she wanted to hear. Before I called her back (and I had already been in touch with the Carlilres and said I was going to head to her home in The Villages as I did not want her to hear what I was now sure would be bad news alone) John had offered that he and his wife Janette were nearby at

THEIR Villages home and would go get Donna and bring her out to Love's Landing so she would not be alone. They did so and about 30 minutes later arrived at the Phaneuf property at Love's.

About this time I received a call from the Phaneuf's son, Mark Phaneuf, who said his mother had interrupted him at an ICAO meeting in Montreal and was worried about her husband/his father Bill and she had contacted me to check and I had not gotten back to her. I hated to do it but knew I now knew enough beyond a gut feeling that something was very wrong. I answered Mark's call and told him what I knew (approximate departure time, plane had been worked on earlier, resolution of problem probably flooding, plane made successful start-up, taxi, departure for once around the pattern. And still not back; way overdue)!

I have since learned about several potential issues. And cannot be sure when I learned about them so if I did or did not mention them to the investigators (Lynn and Doug) I will do so now.

1. Bill had replaced the canopy latch recently. I really know no details...but another Love's resident recently purchased an RV12 about the same age and his latch released on takeoff...never a real problem safety-wise as wind flow kept it down...but tough for him to pull back down and latch and this pilot probably 50 pounds heavier, 20 years younger, and a foot taller than Bill...might have been an issue if new latch came loose somehow. Or not...just a thought.

2. The plane was probably low on fuel, as he apparently told John Carlile and Ron Normark that he only had $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tank so would just go around the patch once (certainly plenty if all was working correctly...the plane only burns 5/hour). The fuel tank in the RV12 (which is inside the cabin, rather than in the wings as is traditional) is marked with a red (no fly) zone= $\frac{1}{4}$ tank! Bill had a tank, pump, hose etc. in his hangar for the no ethanol fuel that he used...but had not purchased any new fuel for several months. He had NOT been flying much lately.

3. 9/6 was a VERY hot day (in a series of hot days)! I think something like 97 degrees and a heat index of something like 103 degrees. Bill came out to Love's in the morning and got the plane out to fly with a group flight after a 9:00 briefing. Unable to get the plane started, he took his golf cart to the briefing at 9:00 and said if he could get the plane going would join up. So he was out in the sun an hour or so, then another hour or so while flight was gone 45 minutes, came back, debriefed. Then another couple of hours when the planes returned, saw Bill still working on his plane, and stopped by to help. Once they all got the plane running, those three (Carlile, Bartlett, and Normark) all retreated to air conditioning and water...except Bill. I was not there so can only speculate...but that was a LOT of time in the hot sun and probably with no water or food!!

Sorry to be so long with this...really do hate thinking about it but it is ALL I think about! I keep hearing so *many rumors from so many uninformed (and maybe some who ARE informed) people...very hard to sort out what I (and ONLY I really remember). That is partly why it has taken me so long...have been trying to cull out stuff that really was not in what I first told you (Lynn) in our first conversation on the phone on the evening of Saturday 9/7...and again what we covered in my hangar on the late morning of Sunday 9/8 (Doug and Lynn).*

If you need more info please just ask! You two were wonderful to work with! I will help any way I can!!

Judie

From: [Green Max](#)
To: [Spencer Lynn](#)
Subject: ERA19FA265 - Lady Lake, FL - TDA Follow-up 09-24-2019
Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2019 1:50:13 PM

Lynn-

Mr. Phaneuf provided me with the following statement about the canopy latch:

"...As far as I know dad did the canopy latch replacement himself. Ron Normark who lives at 97FL and was interviewed by Lynn may have stopped by during the repair and could maybe provide additional information. I know dad ordered the latch kit from Van's Aircraft and he told me about it when he received the latch. He ordered the kit because the latch had gotten bent when he had the aircraft at Leesburg (KLEE) for the ADSB upgrade installation in February 2019. He's not sure how it got damaged but that's when he noticed it and ordered the kit to replace the bent latch. I did come across the paper plans for the latch while going through his office in FL. He said the installation went fine and all worked like normal after the install. That's all I know about it..."

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you,
m

Max Green
Emergency Operations Coordinator

[REDACTED]

From: ROC
To: Spencer Lynn; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Lady Lake, FL. Vans RV-12 (N767FS) crashed, 1 POB, fatal. IIC: L. Spencer & D. Brazy Responding, MR: K. Holloway.
Date: Wednesday, September 11, 2019 9:32:25 AM

From: Woody Miller [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2019 9:15:55 AM
To: eyewitnessreport [REDACTED]
Subject: N767FS

After speaking with Judie Betz she said that you wanted to know what runway Mr. Phaneuf was using. I saw the aircraft depart runway 27. It was making power and climbing briskly. It had approximately 400 to 500 feet at the departure end.

Sincerely,

Woody Miller
[REDACTED]

From: ROC [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 6, 2019 7:42 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Lady Lake, FL. Vans RV-12 (N767FS) crashed, 1 POB, fatal. IIC: L. Spencer & D. Brazy Responding, MR: K. Holloway.

At 1:22 PM EDT, Lady Lake, FL. Vans RV-12 (N767FS) impacted a field under unknown circumstances. 1 POB, fatal. L. Spencer (ERA) & D. Brazy (ERA) Responding. MR Support: K. Holloway. Srce: D. Diaz (ERA) FOUO DO NOT FORWARD OUTSIDE NTSB
<https://www.wftv.com/news/local/1-person-dies-in-plane-crash-near-lady-lake/983532142>