



## Memorandum of Record

**Dan Baker**  
**Senior Air Safety Investigator**  
**Central Region**

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**Date:** 10/28/2019

**Subject:** CEN19LA308, Police Witness Statements and Notes

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The following statements and notes were extracted from the Whitehall Police Department Incident Report concerning the accident of N9492U on September 9, 2019.

### CONTACT WITH WITNESS (LOUIS JAEKEL)

*JAEKEL advised she lives at [REDACTED] and was outside of her house washing the windows [REDACTED]. She advised she heard the plane fly over and its engine sounded as if it was wide open and then it hit the water tower and fell to the ground.*

### CONTACT WITH WITNESS (DANIEL WILKS)

*I was then contacted by WILKS he advised he was at GOODWILL (PETERSON and UNDERWOOD DR) approximately 3/4 of a mile from the crash site. He advised he observed the plane fly just above the trees at the cemetery heading west. He advised the engine was running and he thought the pilot may have been trying to land in white lake as low as he was. He then saw the smoke and drove over to the water tower.*

### NOTES

*OFC. BOLLES advised that he had made contact with a female subject, JANICE LAIRD, at [REDACTED] who was identified as JAMES'S wife. Further OFC. BOLLES advised he also made contact with a male subject who identified himself as JAMES'S son. JAMES'S son indicated that his father was to meet him at noon for lunch but never showed up. He also advised OFC. BOLLES that he had observed a news story on Fox17 News that showed images of the plane that had crash into the water tower in Whitehall and believed from the images that the plane belonged to his father.*

*OFC. BOLLES advised that he also learned that JAMES had not told anyone that he was going flying today but it was not uncommon for him to go fly his plane without telling anyone. The family specifically told OFC. BOLLES that JAMES had flown his plane the previous day in the*

[Type text]

*evening and had not told anyone he was going flying. Further OFC. BOLLES advised that he had learned that JAMES flew out of the Fremont Municipal Airport and that his plane was stored there. He then advised me that DEPUTY JACOB ASHKER had assisted at the scene on Ewing Rd. and that DEPUTY ASHKER was going to respond to Fremont Municipal Airport to check for JAMES'S vehicle and to verify that JAMES'S plane was not on scene at the airport.*

*While continuing to talk with OFC. BOLLES he advised me that another deputy from the Muskegon County Sheriff Department, DEPUTY EDWARD VANAS, had informed him that a couple days prior the Muskegon Couty Sheriff Department had taken a report (MCSO Report # 2019-05142) where JAMES was suspected of poisoning his neighbor`s chickens. DEPUTY VANAS passed along this information to OFC. BOLLES as general information about JAMES'S state of mind in the days prior.*

*After speaking with OFC. BOLLES and I passed along the information received to CHIEF SQUIERS, I began taking additional scene photos (Note: OFC. BOLLES had already taken numerous scene photos). Once I photographed the scene from multiple locations, I was updated by White Lake Fire Authority staff that Fire Fighter JOHN ACHTERHOFF would be bringing his drone to the scene to photograph the scene from above and inspect the tower.*

*Next I began canvassing the residential area near the scene in an attempt to locate witnesses to the incident. Near the intersection of Sophia St. and Hall St. I made contact with JEREMY WATTS. JEREMY advised me that he had witnessed the crash and some precrash flight behavior of the plane. JEREMY advised that he was standing on the street near the mail boxes for 309 Hall St. when he noted the sound of an airplane engine. He advised it noted the sound appeared to indicate the plane was flying low. JEREMY stated that he observed as the plane almost flew directly over his head in SW direction. He observed as the plane flew directly into the water tower, striking the water tower first with it`s propeller.*

*Further JEREMY advised me that the plane did not catch fire from the initial impact with the water tower but caught fire after falling and impacting the ground/fence below the tower. After catching fire JEREMY advised that their was heavy flames and smoke.*

*I then asked JEREMY to describe the plane he witnessed strike the tower. He advised the plane in question was red, white and blue in color with a single propeller/engine. I then asked him to tell me about the planes flight precrash. JEREMY advised the plane sounded loud because it was low and he did not note any engine issues (ie strange noise/smoke). He then advised prior to the crash the plane was on a straight level path/flight towards the tower. It never deviated and flew directly into the tower. JEREMY added the plane was just above the tree tops in the area. After speaking with JEREMY for several minutes I thanked him for the information and contact with him ended.*

*Following contact with JEREMY, I made contact with ELIZABETH MICHAELSEN who resides at [REDACTED]. ELIZABETH advised she too had witnessed the crash of the plane into the water tower. She advisd the plane was traveling in a SW direction just above the trees in the area. ELIZABETH advisd the plane was traveling straight and level the entire time and never*

*deviated from its flight path as it impacted the tower. She also advised it appeared to be traveling "fast".*

*Next I made contact with LOIS JAEKEL who resides at [REDACTED]. LOIS advised that just prior to the crash she was outside on the east side of her apartment washing windows when she noted the sound of a plane. LOIS advised she turned around and looked to the east and observed as the plane traveled in a SW direction towards the water tower. She advised it sounded like the engine was "wide open" and noted it was flying just over the tree tops. LOIS advised that she observed as the plane maintained a flat level flight and crash directly into the water tower. She did not observe any deviation in flight that would have indicated the pilot was attempting to avoid the impact with the tower.*

*After observing the crash of the plane into the tower, she advised she ran around the front of the apartment building in an attempt to locate someone to call 911, as her phone was inside. LOIS stated she was not able to locate anyone out front and ran out the Warner St. and flagged down a passing vehicle. She advised me that she immediately recognized the driver as a Fire Fighter from Montague Fire Department DENNIS ROESLER. She then advised him of the incident and pointed him to the scene.*

*While continuing to talk with LOIS she acknowledged she had moved some crash debris (tires) out of the roadway and piled them together because she thought it would help first responders get into the scene. She then apologized for doing this and I thanked her for letting me know of this. I then thanked LOIS for the information. Contact with her ended.*

Det. Lt. Brandon L. Mahoney #2