



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

Record of Conversation

Who: William Lardent, Chief Instructor, Wings of Eagles Flight School, Smyrna, TN

When: June 9, 2021

Re: NTSB Investigation of N66BK, Smyrna, TN

In a telephone conversation, Mr. Lardent stated that he had about 10,000 hours in jets and about 3,000 hours in a CE-500 series airplane. He knew Joe Lara from when he conducted his multiengine flight training at the flight school.

Mr. Lardent said that he flew with Mr. Lara several times (about 25 hours total) after he got his CE-500 type rating. They enjoyed flying together and it helped get Mr. Lara feel more comfortable flying the airplane. He wasn't providing instruction.

Mr. Lardent said that Mr. Lara was "always behind the airplane." When asked to explain, Mr. Lardent said, "The airplane was moving faster than what he could keep up with and [he] would miss things." Mr. Lardent said Mr. Lara was not a professional pilot, and he did not like to fly fast.

Mr. Lardent described Mr. Lara as a safe pilot (excellent using the checklist), but he was still "new" to it and had trouble multi-tasking and maintaining situational awareness. Mr. Lara could not visualize in his mind where the airplane was in time/space unless he saw it on his iPad. Mr. Lara wanted to fly to bigger cities like New York and Las Vegas, but Mr. Lardent told him he was not ready because those areas were congested and you "had to be on your game" to operate in those fast-moving environments. Mr. Lara also struggled with the airplane's autopilot. The GNS did not communicate with the autopilot in a modern way or in a way that Mr. Lara was used to from flying his Mitsubishi MU-2 twin turbo prop airplane. Mr. Lardent said the autopilot required thought and steps to operate, and it frustrated Mr. Lara. He told Mr. Lardent that he would prefer to just hand-fly fly the airplane.

Mr. Lardent said he had to take the controls of the airplane away from Mr. Lara when he was about to bust an altitude during one of their flights together. Mr. Lardent was a former air traffic controller and he knew that if he busted an assigned altitude, both Mr. Lara and the controller would be in trouble.

Mr. Lardent said that Mr. Lara was very familiar with the departure procedure (090 degree right turn and to climb and maintain 3,000 ft) for runway 32 at MQY. He was confused as to how Mr. Lara, who had departed that runway many times, could have become disoriented.

Mr. Lardent also said that it is very easy for a pilot in that airplane to mistakenly turn off the avionics master switches versus the ignitor switches after takeoff, because they are positioned right next to each other. Mr. Lara had accidentally done this twice on flights they had together. Mr. Lardent suggested that it was possible that Mr. Lara may have done this during the accident flight because you could hear the ignitors were still on during the last ATC transmission. Mr. Lardent also offered that if Mr. Lara did accidentally turn off the avionics master switch, the airplane was equipped with back-up instruments for him to reference. Mr. Lardent also added that "he thinks" he could hear the airplane's overspeed warning in the ATC audio in addition to the ignitor feedback. He said Mr. Lara never over sped the airplane in the 25 hours they flew together.

Mr. Lardent said that Mr. Lara had texted him on the morning of the accident at 0737 and asked if he was in town. Mr. Lardent did not respond but drove to the airport around 0930 and saw that N66BK had been pulled out onto the ramp. He thought the airplane had been in maintenance, but he was not sure for what reason. Mr. Lardent thought maybe Mr. Lara had a question about the maintenance/airplane/flight and that is why he texted. Mr. Lara was not at the airplane at 0930, but if he was, Mr. Lardent would have stopped and talked to him. Mr. Lardent was concerned that the airplane would be over gross with 7 people and full fuel, and he would have addressed that concern with Mr. Lara had he seen him.

Mr. Lardent spoke with the ramp agent that assisted N66BK prior to the accident flight. The ramp agent told him that Mr. Lara was in the front left seat. Mr. Lardent could not imagine Mr. Lara letting Brandon Hannah fly, even though Brandon was a "sharp, super-sharp" pilot. Mr. Lardent had flown with Mr. Hannah at the flight school.

Regarding Mr. Lara's CE-500 initial training at Flight Safety, Mr. Lardent did not know the details Mr. Lara had never mentioned it. Mr. Lardent heard third hand that Mr. Lara either "failed out" or that he just went there for the training versus getting a type rating.

End of Interview