



Record of Conversation

Date/Time: September 4, 2020 at about 14:00 EDT (10:00 ADT)

Mr. James (Jim) Geeslin

Location: Telephone

Participants: NTSB: Brice Banning, Michael Bauer, Gregory Borsari, FAA; Matthew Cary

Representation: Mrs. Geeslin

NTSB Accident Number – ANC20LA074AB, Piper Cub PA12, Registration N2587M

On September 4, 2020 beginning at about 12:00 EDT, Mr. James Geeslin agreed to speak via telephone and to have notes taken, which follow. These notes are not a verbatim transcript. In attendance was Mrs. Geeslin.

After introductions were completed and a brief explanation about the NTSB investigative role, the interview commenced.

Jim can you start off with by giving us your full name? James W Geeslin Jr. And I do go by Jim. Asked if he had any FAA licenses and if so, tell us what you have. I have a private pilot single engine land and sea rating and an A&P mechanic license. Asked about FCC and Jim responded that we had to carry the radio license in the airplane. And I do have one. Asked to briefly describe his background with regard to maintenance. Jim started in aircraft maintenance around 1978. He worked for an FBO. They did general aviation aircraft maintenance, and they had a DC3 at one time. I obtain my license through my experience there and qualification through one of the King ground schools. The practical was in Seattle. I got my license back about 1981, 82 maybe. Asked if he worked primarily general aviation maintenance, Jim responded that was pretty much it. He added that about the mid 1980's is when he went into the oil field. He added that he did not make a living working aircraft maintenance full time. He added he only works aircraft maintenance as a hobby and that he does not do any commercial work at all. If I do any aircraft work it is more as a mentor and my specialty is sheet-metal and fabric work. If a friend is rebuilding a Cub I will go and make sure he is getting started right. If he needs help with bending some metal I will help him out as I have a brake and a shear. Most of the work if there is any compensation it is barter. All of my flying and maintenance since the mid 80's is more of a hobby.

Asked who he works for now in order to make a living Jim responded that he doesn't, that he is retired. He added that he retired in 2013.

When asked how long he helped out on Mr. Knopp's airplane he said it was a bout a two to three year process and that he was there when he decided to redo is PA12. Asked how he was to work for? Jim said that he worked with Gary who was had an excavating business. That I needed some ground cleared and he needed some fabric work done.

Asked where the airplane was worked on? Here in Sterling at the airport in my hangar. When asked about needing any materials or supplies and where do you get them from, Jim said that the small stuff generally comes from Aircraft Spruce. He added if they needed a sheet of aluminum or an aircraft part that generally comes out of Stoddards out of Anchorage. Asked if while helping out if he had access to Piper manuals. He said he has a copy of 43.13. Jim asked if we meant the Piper build manuals and we clarified that we meant the instructions for continued airworthiness such as maintenance manuals and illustrated parts catalog. He said he does have an aircraft parts catalog that the suppliers provide. He added that as far as maintenance manuals or logbooks he had never seen them around.

Asked about tooling such as torque wrenches whether he had any, he responded yes he does. Asked if the calibration gets checked periodically? Not since the 80's when I worked at the airport. He added, the only thing he had that could be calibrated would be an inch pound torque wrench.

Asked if the FAA ever came around when you were working on the airplane, he said no. Asked if remembers the last time he worked on the airplane and what he did on the airplane? He said it had been flying for two summers and that he moved the airplane. Jim said he had not done anything with it since he left Sterling with it.

Asked what maintenance work he helped out with while the aircraft was at Sterling Jim said, that he helped put the 31 inch bush wheels on it.

When we explained that one item we are working on is a visual study to determine what the pilot could or could not have seen. Any obstructions from the cockpit and what we learned so far is that there were modifications done to the airframe. From the original PA12 we would like to know what you assisted with or understood about those modifications. And if possible, the reason for the modifications. In particular the aircraft had a PA widebody fuselage. Can you give us some background on that? Gary's original PA12 was built in 1947 and he wanted to upgrade it. He added that you can buy a PA12 from some manufacturer back east, but I do not know who. It would be like an original fuselage and not set up for flaps. It does not have the skylight or the larger cargo door, the items we like to have on the Alaskan's Cubs. Jim added that the option since he wanted to go experimental with the widebody Cub was from airframes in Birchwood and move on with his equipment which is mostly interchangeable and move it over to this new fuselage.

Asked if there were any modifications to the cockpit panel excluding any of the mounting of the avionics equipment. Clarified that interested in the cockpit area for the windows. Jim said that the original PA12 had a rounded top windshield and that everybody has gone to a square top which gives you more glass, more visibility. Jim was not sure about the skylight and he thinks the original PA12 did not have a skylight, that it just had a headliner. This airplane had a full skylight. He added he thought it went all the way to the rear of the passenger compartment. Jim added he thought it would have added better visibility then the original PA12.

When asked about the PA12 windscreen having a more rounded top and people are going to the square top he replied that is right. Jim added that Piper originally windscreen was rounded and

that you rarely see them anymore, that everyone is going to the square top. He added that it was a square top when he got it and when he was finished with it.

When asked about the cockpit not being the standard cockpit and that it was more of a Garmin glass cockpit and who installed the avionics Jim said, he had that done by Peninsula Aerotech over in Kenai. Jim added that it was complete package and that it was the first time he had ever see one.

Asked if the rest of the windows in the aircraft were standard for a PA18 would have come with? Jim said that the PA12 windshield was the same as the PA18. Asked if the windshield was brought over from the PA18 he said that he had all new glass.

Explained that the understanding is that the aircraft was the original PA12 wings before the fuselage was added. Jim said that was correct.

Jim was asked if he helped with putting the wings on the fuselage and if any modifications needed to be performed in order to fit the PA18 widebody fuselage on the PA12? He said that there were not. He added that he thought any piper wings would fit each fuselage and that the spars are all thirty inches apart. They would all bolt on. He added the difference would be the lift struts. He was not sure if Gary's lift struts were standard PA12 or PA18 lift struts. They also came from Airframes.

Asked if anyone else assist with the work on the aircraft during the rebuild, or the upgrade of the aircraft he said, other then the person he had do the upholstery and interior material was done by a company in Wasilla. The actual work done was by Gary and I would help him out when he would stumble.

Asked if he knew what type of powerplant was int the aircraft, he responded that he put in a 180 horse O-360.

After the modifications were done, was he pretty regular at flying the aircraft? Jim said he did not know if could really answer that accurately. He tried to fly often when it was parked at my hangar. Being a legislator, he was gone for nearly six months down in Juneau. I know his intentions were to fly a lot, he talked about wanting to go here and there that were long distances away, but I never looked at the hobbs to see how many hours he had on it. Whatever was on that G3X is what he had since it flew.

Asked if had the aircraft as a PA12 for awhile and then decided to upgrade it or obtained it and upgraded? Jim said he had it as a PA12 but not did not know how long before he decided to upgrade it.

Asked for clarification of the wing as to your best assessment of the wing to the fuselage. Jim said the wing was a stock PA12 wing with flaps as an addition. And he had 30-gallon fuel tanks. The flaps and the fuels tanks are the only modification he knew about regarding the wings.

Asked to talk about the logbooks as we have been trying to find them Jim was asked if when he

helped on the modification if he documented that work. Jim asked for clarification regarding any modifications. After clarifying he said no, he never saw any logbooks while he was helping out. Asked if he could tell us what they looked like he said no, he did not see any paperwork, just the sheet metal and fabric that was worked. He added he was going experimental with the airplane.

Asked if the airplane was placarded or labeled as experimental, he said that was true. Asked if he helped out with the removal of the standard airworthiness certificate and the application for an experimental certificate, he said he did not. Gary had that airplane stripped out to bare airframe and if the data plate was still in it, he did not know. It was basically a bare airframe and he wanted some help with the fabric and build an interior.

When asked if he helped out with ensuring AD compliance, he said, no just helped out with the sheet metal and fabric.

Asked if could tell us what condition the airplane was in the last time that he saw it Jim responded that it was in very good condition.

For clarification Jim was asked if he ever saw the logbooks or provide any write-ups that he could put into the logbooks? Or any of the sheet metal or fabric work you performed? No, he just would provide the paint codes and fabric weight which he generally would just write that on the inside of the cargo door. He added that he has not used his capacity as an A&P mechanic in years. Including when he was at the FBO as they had an IA there.

When asked if we understood correctly that you have not seen the aircraft in a couple years he said, no not true, it had not been in my hangar in Sterling for a full year that I know of but we go on flying adventures and I think the week before I took my airplane, he took his and there was one other plane as well. So, I did see the airplane the week before.

When was the last time you worked on it? It had to be the summer of 2019. I think we put the tundra tires on it either May or June of 2019.

Asked if he was aware of anyone else who may have worked on the airplane he said, no it was relocated to Soldotna and if anybody did anything, I am not aware of.

Jim was asked if he knew if the owner knew about annual inspection or annual condition inspection requirements with regards to his aircraft, he said that as experimental that a condition inspection would be required yearly. He did not forget much, he was a smart guy. I would have thought he grasped that. He added that when he would help out a DAR-T¹ would come down from Wasilla and look these planes over. They would give us the airworthiness instructions and I did tell him about that. So, I believe he was aware of that and it does need some kind of inspection and approval for the paperwork. Asked if he could share the name of the DAR from Wasilla he said Rodney Russell. He added not to misunderstand that Rodney had not seen this airplane, but that it was ready to be inspected.

¹ Designated Airworthiness Representative (DAR) is an individual appointed in accordance with 14 CFR §[183.33](#) who may perform examination, inspection, and testing services necessary to the issuance of certificates. There are two types of DARs, manufacturing (DAR-F) and maintenance (DAR-T).

He was asked about the powder coating company that the owner used and he said he believed it was Advanced Powdered Coating in Wasilla.

The aircraft had a number of N1904T on the exterior. Do you have any understanding or the reason for that "N" number versus that the PA12 was under a different "N" number? Yes, they were different. I believe he originally planned to rebuild the PA12 in addition to having this airplane. He added when he does fabric work, he tells people to apply for the "N" number early on so it can be painted onto the fabric. So that is where the 1904T came from. He requested that "N" number and received it. However, I guess he only applied for it and had not registered it. He was going to preserve the original number, N2785M. He was hoping someday to rebuild that one. But at that point the new fuselage seemed to be the way to go with all the issues the 1947 airframe had.

Asked if he wanted to comment regarding anything safety wise with what he knows he responded that yes, he is concerned with all these modern cockpits and displays and everything that people are not looking outside as much anymore. With ADSB and everything you kind of fall into a false sense of realization or attitude and I do not know if it has anything to do with this accident. With so much information inside the airplane I just don't know if people are looking outside.

Jim was asked if he knew if Gary had an ELT installed? He replied yes, I think he did. He added it would have been mounted under the extended baggage floor of the upper baggage. Asked if it was orange in color, he said either yellow or orange and that the newer ones are orange. He added that he did have the remote switch and that was all hooked up.