



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: March 9, 2022
Person Contacted: Mark Alan Craig
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22LA125

Narrative:

Mr. Mark Alan Craig was contacted by phone on March 8, 2022, at 0900 EST. He was contacted at [REDACTED]. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the interview, he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He was also advised at the beginning of the call that any personally identifiable information (PII) would be redacted.

He provided a home address of [REDACTED] Pinehurst, NC [REDACTED]. His date of birth is [REDACTED]. He was issued a third-class medical certificate with a limitation to wear corrective lenses on December 21, 2021. At the time of the accident, he was wearing his glasses, which had transition lenses. His pilot certificate number is [REDACTED]. He holds a private pilot certificate with airplane single engine land, and instrument airplane ratings, that was last issued on March 30, 2018. According to electronic pilot logbook, as of three or four days ago he had a total flight time of 1468.6 hours¹. He started flying in Utah in 1985, which included flying right seat in the company airplane. In 1987 through 1988 he received instruction in Utah, Alabama, West Virginia, and Maryland. From 1989 to 1993 he was an active VFR pilot. About that time, he started his business and stopped flying until 2015². He resumed introductory flight instruction at page field (FMY) located in Fort Myers Florida. He resumed instruction in Pinehurst North

¹ He indicated during the call that this time did not include his early flight time from 1990 through 1998.

² His logbook entries started February 20, 2016.

Carolina in 2015 and bought the Cirrus aircraft. While there, he received instruction and obtained his instrument rating. In 2015 he flew approximately 200 hours a year, which increased to approximately 310 hours in the last couple years. He indicated that they own a farm about 350 nautical miles north of Pinehurst North Carolina.

He was asked the following questions-

When did you buy the Cirrus?
April 2017³.

How many flight hours make and model?
724 flights. He has about 100 hours in a Cessna 172, and 1368.6 hours in the accident airplane.

Had he had any issues with the aircraft radios?
No.

At this stage of the conversation, he was asked about the maintenance records and indicated he sent the permanent records to the insurance company; however, he did have copies and will email them to NTSB.

What was the name of the insurance adjuster?
Sompo International.

Where is the airplane-based?
It was hangared at the KSOP airport.

Explain the passenger age?
He was either 16 or 17 years old, named Gabriel Reed

Explain why the passenger was on board?
He recently had work performed to the airplane which included removing a connector for the wiring of the fuel flow transducer which runs through the firewall. He had experienced problems with fluctuating fuel flow, and because of that had trouble using the gauge to lien the fuel to air ratio. They eliminated the connector near the firewall and connected the wires. Because of the work that was performed he was unable to check the performance of the system while on the ground and needed to be done in flight. The mechanic had asked him to test fly the airplane in the traffic pattern around the airport, and also asked if one of his interns could go along with him. After some discussion it was agreed for the passenger to go along on the flight. Mr. Craig indicated that it was only his second time meeting the young person. Since it was decided for the passenger to go along, he decided to fly to the Harnett Regional Jetport Airport (HRJ), Erwin, North Carolina. Once there, he planned to get fuel and then fly back to the Moore County Airport (SOP) Pinehurst North Carolina. Prior to departure from SOP and also while enroute to HRJ, he briefed the passenger about the airplane.

He was asked to explain the flight from SOP to HRJ?

³ According to FAA records, the pilot purchased the airplane on April 12, 2018.

He departed approximately 1630 and arrived at about 1705. The flight was uneventful and was flown VFR. During the flight he had no problem with the aircraft radios. HRJ is an uncontrolled field with runways 5/23, which is the same as SOP.

Did you talk with anybody while approaching HRJ?

No. He did make routine radio calls when he was 10 miles, 5 miles, 3 miles, 2 miles, 1 mile, and then while on short final on the common traffic advisory frequencies (CTAF)⁴. He arrived at HRJ from the southwest and crossed over the airport midfield for a left downwind for runway 23. He did notice someone in the traffic pattern and remembered the pilot of one airplane was talking and the pilot of another airplane was not talking, but that was not unusual.

Did you add fuel while at HRJ?

He used the self-service pumps and added about 23 gallons of fuel which was split equally between the left and right fuel tanks. He had a flight mission the next morning with Mercy Flight to Dothan Alabama. On the weekend coming up he had another planned flight to Arizona.

He was asked to explain the flight from HRJ to SOP?

Prior to departure he checked the airplane's fuel sumps, put away items in the baggage compartment. After using the restroom Gabe got into the airplane and then he boarded the airplane and shut the door. He explained the checklist in more detail and made his radio calls on the CTAF then taxied via alpha taxiway to runway 23 because the wind was from the southwest at 7 to 10 knots, which it had been all day, however it was from 190° at HRJ. During the run-up he performed the engine checklist and made his announcement on the CTAF that he was departing. He departed HRJ at about 1730 EST and flew runway heading to 500 ft above ground level (AGL), then turned to 270° and climbed to 3000 ft. He hand flew the airplane the whole flight. Prior to the boundary of Fort Bragg, he turned to 300°. When the flight was 10 miles away from SOP he turned to heading of between 235° and 240° and with the airport in sight he made a radio call on the CTAF⁵. He began descending and also was demonstrating to Gabe ways to get weather either from ADS-B or the multifunction display unit (MFD). He then looked over to Gabe who was "sound asleep." He flew a straight approach to runway 23 at SOP, used the checklist, and made all appropriate radio calls on the CTAF. He did not hear any communication on the CTAF but that was not unusual. He made a very stable descent and then once close to the airport between 2 to 3 miles he visually noticed an airplane holding short of runway 23. He looked down the runway and also saw a helicopter at the opposite end and noticed that the helicopter was moving to the east. The sun which was setting was about 10° off his flight path. Because of that he had both Rosen sun visors down adding that the sun in his eyes was "definitely a factor." He did not hear the helicopter on the selected CTAF frequency, and also added that he attempted to turn on the runway lights using the CTAF frequency, but he was unable. He did not understand at the time why he could not turn on the runway lights. He made a radio call on the CTAF that he was on short final approach, passed over the airport property fenced and looked to his left and noted several hundred feet above his altitude a military helicopter. At that moment he thought the best thing to do would be to continue the flight which he did. He added that he had never seen a helicopter in that position before flying parallel to the runway. Usually, a military aircraft would depart to the east. He continued his descent to runway

⁴ The published CTAF was 122.7 MHz.

⁵ The published CTAF was 123.05 MHz.

23 and when the flight was about 15 to 20 ft AGL the flight encountered, “very strong turbulence” which caused the left wing to drop. He recovered from that and then at that time Gabe became awake. The flight continued and when between 5 and 10 ft AGL he encountered another round of “very strong turbulence” which made the right wing contact the runway. The airplane went to the right and skidded into the grass. Neither occupant were injured. He recalled speaking to someone from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and also the National Transportation Safety Board⁶.

He was asked the following questions-

What seat were you in?

Left seat.

What restraint were you wearing?

The full seatbelt and shoulder harness. The dual shoulder harness and seatbelt were worn tight.

What was your injury?

Nothing.

Explain what restraint the passenger was wearing?

He was wearing the full seatbelt and shoulder harness. He was a very thin person. After getting into the airplane at HRJ he helped him properly adjust his lap belt and pushed it down around his waistline and tightened it.

Was the passenger injured?

No.

Explain what occurred with the runway lights?

He was informed by email from FAA inspector Corey Paczkowski of the Greensboro North Carolina FAA Flight Standards District Office that post accident, the number two radio which he had been using to communicate on the CTAF was still on the HRJ frequency of 122.7 MHz. And that was the reason why he was unable to turn on the runway lights. He indicated that he had been monitoring Fayetteville approach on 127.8. The FAA inspector has digital photographs of the frequency selected (Figure 1). Inspector Paczkowski work phone number is [REDACTED]

Had you been contacted by anybody from the military?

No. He did receive from FAA inspector Corey Paczkowski a copy of the sworn statements from the two flight crewmembers of the military helicopter. Those statements both reflect that neither of them heard him communicating on the CTAF frequency.

Do you recall switching the number two radio to the SOP CTAF?

No he did not.

⁶ He was advised at this time that he had spoken to me, as I was the NTSB Eastern region duty officer.

NTSB questions continued-

Explain why you did not switch the number two radio to the SOP CTAF?

I'm not sure of the reason. However, in retrospect, I note that most, if not all, of my recent flights are conducted under an IFR flight plan and to a much lesser degree with flight following. The aural prompts that occur with ATC contact were not part of the flight in question. Also, there may have been inordinate distraction associated with the attention I gave to the novice passenger on board. He could not recall ever getting back into his airplane at SOP following a flight and seeing the improper frequency on the number two radio. He did not have continuous site with helicopter, though he did scan the runway. He was not thinking about turbulence associated from the helicopter; rather, he was thinking about collision avoidance. He was not sure why he lost sight of the helicopter. The runway was clear, and he had a brand-new landing light which was on so they (military flight crewmembers) should have been able to see him. He also indicated that the airplane which was holding short of runway 23 visually saw his airplane during approach. The statements from the military flight crewmembers indicated the instructor turned to his right (east).

What was the time of the accident?

1748.

Were you video recording the flight?

No.

Does your airplane have any recorded flight parameters?

No, not that he is aware. His airplane was equipped with a Genesis-Aerosystems STEC 90 autopilot, and Avidyne primary flight display (PFD) and MFD.

Do you feel that the post accident radio frequency finding is correct?

Yes, he had no reason to believe that anybody changed the number two radio transmit frequency. It didn't occur to him that he was on the wrong frequency when he tried to turn on the runway lights using the CTAF frequency and they did not turn on.

What did you use number one radio for?

For air traffic control. He reserved the number two radio for CTAF, weather, tower, and ground communications. That was his personal preference.

Explain why he performed a straight-in approach versus entering the airport traffic pattern?

The wind was right down the runway between seven and 10 knots⁷. He said there was no reason to enter the airport traffic pattern. Additionally, he had all the airplane lights on and he should have been perfectly visible. He was making all the appropriate radio calls on the CTAF. Further, runway 23 was the runway in use for that day.

⁷ According to a METAR at SOP at 1756, or about 8 minutes after the accident, the wind was calm, the visibility was 10 statute miles, clear skies existed. The temperature and dew point were 10° and -01°, respectively, and the altimeter setting was 29.98 inches of Mercury.

NTSB questions continued-

Was he using a headset?

Yes. A Bose noise canceling headset. Both were wearing, and both were working okay.

Do you have any questions for NTSB?

No.

He was reminded that I would be sending him a NTSB Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident/Incident Report that was due to be completed within 10 days upon receipt.

The call end time was 1008 EST.



Figure 1: Photograph Taken by AMF Personnel⁸. View Depicting The Comm #2 Radio Active Frequency set to 122.700 MHz and the Transmitter Set to the #2 Comm Radio. The photograph was taken 2/10/2022 at 1146 local.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on March 9, 2022. He replied on March 14, 2022, at 1943 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on March 15, 2022. He replied on March 17, 2022, at 2344 EST with, “Received in good order Tim.” The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him on March 18, 2022.

⁸ The photograph was taken by AMF personnel using the cellular phone of Airport Manager Scott Malta.