

Record of Telephone Interviews

N4958J - PA-28R-180

Aircraft reported missing after departing Shelter Cove Airport on 10/24/2019 between 2045 and 2100PDT.

Pilot/Owner Justin R Winfrey (Private # [REDACTED])
Passenger Kayla Rodriguez

News reports based on interviews with family, friends, and other witnesses indicate Justin Winfrey departed Gness Field, Novato at approximately 1800PDT on 10/24/2019 enroute to Shelter Cove, CA with his friend Kyla Rodriguez. Their plan was to have dinner at Shelter Cove and return later the same evening to Novato.

There are no records of preflight weather briefings or any FAA Air Traffic Services. Oakland FSDO IIC has contacted ATO QC for any radar data. We do not have any certified weather data for Shelter Cove for the date/time of the occurrence.

At approximately 1900PDT, Cory Green of Shelter Cove reported observing an aircraft circling over the airport and made contact using a hand held radio. The pilot (Winfrey) requested assistance and Green along with his parents proceeded to the Shelter Cove runway and provided light using their headlights. N4958J reportedly landed (hard landing) and made contact with Green who stated that Winfrey seemed "kind of shaky", "uneasy". The passenger did not appear concerned. (Source News Story Kym Kemp, North Coast Journal)

Ms. Julie Peacock is manager of Gyppo Ale House located in Shelter Cove ([REDACTED]) and she reported by telephone that Winfrey and Rodriguez arrived at her location 1930PDT and stayed until 2045PDT. She verified the time using her restaurant CCTV video system and its time stamp. She stated that an employee reported that Winfrey consumed a non-alcoholic Ice Tea and Rodriguez ordered a wine, which she partially consumed. They did not order food.

Randy Walter, a resident of Shelter Cove reported that a female acquaintance (Maureen/no last name or phone provided) observed an aircraft getting ready to depart Shelter Cove at approximately 2100PDT and she noted it was completely dark with no horizon. He told Walter she was concerned about safety and considered proceeding to the pilot to advise not taking off. She hesitated because she thought he might be instrument rated and might be offended by her advice. She is reportedly a pilot and I am trying to contact her for a statement.

Tony Hann is the owner of Infinite Air Center located in Albany, OR ([REDACTED]). I interviewed Mr. Hann by telephone and he reported that Mr. Winfrey first contacted his

company in August 2018 inquiring about primary flight training. Hann offers an “accelerated Private Pilot course”, Part 61 and Winfrey started training in August 2018. He rented a studio provided by the school and stayed in Albany through March of 2019 when he passed his practical test. Mr. Hann reported becoming close friends with Mr. Winfrey and staying in touch with him after training. He advised that Mr. Winfrey was in the funeral business and became involved in flying with the potential of using aircraft in his business (possibly concerning the transport of deceased persons/ scattering ashes). In July of 2019, Mr. Winfrey approached Mr. Hann about purchasing an aircraft and learned the school’s Piper Arrow was for sale. Mr. Winfrey rented N4958J during July and flew it for 28.6 hours basing at Gness Field in Novato, CA. He completed purchase of the aircraft on 8/15/2019. He received training and a complex airplane endorsement after approximately 8-10 hours of training (Devin Burroughs and Craig Ulrich). There were no anomalies reported in his upgrade to the Arrow.

CFI Devin Burroughs provided Mr. Winfrey with his private pilot training. He reported that his student was conscientious and consistent throughout but struggled with technical tasks such as landings, route/destination orientation, and other technical issues. He did successfully complete his training and met ACS standards at completion. He had no difficulty with night flying or flight by reference to instruments during his training. CFI Burroughs had no concerns about risk management and considered Mr. Winfrey to be a cautious pilot. He mentioned that Mr. Winfrey had a personality trait of being eager to please others and possibly adverse to disappointing friends. CFI Burroughs speculates that this trait may have been a factor in Mr. Winfrey’s decisions on 10/24. He may have disregarded or been unaware of the dangers of flying into Shelter Cove due to eagerness to please his passenger. Mr. Winfrey mentioned Shelter Cove as a possible destination in his discussions with CFI Burroughs. This was in the context of flights he might take after achieving his pilot certificate.

N4958J was owned and operated by Infinite Air Center prior to the sale. It received Pitot/Static/Transponder Checks on 3/29/2019 and an annual inspection on 4/02/2019. It had low utilization in 2019 due to the FAA change in aircraft requirements for Commercial Pilot certification. Mr. Hann reported that the vacuum pump on N4958J failed after the aircraft was sold and moved to California. Mr. Winfrey reportedly flew with an inoperative vacuum system for a period of time prior to it being replaced by Scanlon Aviation in Novato, CA. Infinite Air Center has maintenance records available (applicable up to the date of sale). All other logbooks and maintenance records were transferred to Mr. Winfrey.

Lisa Dahl is the Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE) who administered his practical test for Private Pilot in Salem Oregon. The first test occurred in January 2019 and resulted in a Notice of Disapproval due to Airport Operations and Takeoffs/Landings. DPE Dahl reported he had unsatisfactory orientation during approach to the airport followed by landing(s) that did not meet standards. His performance indicated possible deficiencies on the risk associated with these areas of operation. He subsequently passed the Private

Pilot test on 3/20/2019. DPE Dahl reported that Winfrey fully met standards on his second test and she had no questions or issues with his risk management knowledge and skill at that time. DPE Dahl expressed confidence in CFI Burroughs and held him in high regard as a CFI.

Mr. Hann expected Mr. Winfrey to arrive in Albany, OR with his girlfriend on 10/25/2019, the day after his disappearance to spend the weekend for social events. He reported that the girlfriend was not the passenger on the flight into Shelter Cove. Mr. Hann later contacted Mr. Winfrey's family and learned of his disappearance. He mentioned that Mr. Winfrey's relationship with the passenger was not secretive, however he speculated that it may have been a reason he left Shelter Cove due to worry that spending the night may have resulted in misunderstandings or problems between him and his girlfriend.

As a courtesy, Mr. Hann is advising a Winfrey family member (Nicole) of the FAA/NTSB inquiry and asking if this person might be available for an interview, if needed. He will advise back by email.

Craig Ulrich is a CFI who completed the Complex Aircraft training/endorsement with Mr. Winfrey in July 2019. Kevin Nelson is a CFI who reportedly flew with Mr. Winfrey in California to assist him in gaining experience in the Arrow after he purchased it. Neither has any reported knowledge of the accident flight and neither reported any problems or issues with Mr. Winfrey or his flying. Both are available for interview through me if needed.

Harlow Voorhees
FAA Team Program Manager Operations
Oakland FSDO



I interviewed Maureen Hogan, a resident of Shelter Cove ([REDACTED]) on 11/20/2019 by telephone. Ms Hogan told me she lives next to Shelter Cove Airport and has a view of the parking ramp from the deck of her residence. On the evening of 10/24/2019, at approximately 2100PDT, Ms Hogan reported going out on her deck and observing several persons at an aircraft parked on the ramp, by her estimate several hundred feet from her location. She could not hear their conversation nor could she identify them. She became alarmed when she realized they intended to fly under conditions she described as "total darkness" and "no visible horizon". Ms Hogan is an inactive pilot with experience flying at Shelter Cove and believed a flight under these conditions would be dangerous. She considered proceeding to this aircraft to warn the pilot against taking off. She estimated it would take her several minutes to either walk or drive to the ramp (would have involved proceeding to a ramp access point). She hesitated after considering the pilot might be instrument rated and/or the flight might be an emergency operation. Soon after first observing the aircraft, she observed it taxi to Runway 30 and takeoff with a left turn after liftoff. She observed the landing light was illuminated but not the Nav/Position lights. She stated that the engine sound faded off and she returned to her house and learned of the missing PA-28 the next day. She stated she was unaware of its arrival earlier the evening of 10/24/2019 and her observations were limited to the departure which she estimated was approximately 2100PDT or shortly thereafter.

Note: Ms Hogan expressed regret that she did not proceed on her first instinct to warn the pilot. This has caused her difficulty sleeping and she advised her regret might last for the remainder of her life. I thanked her for her witness statement and assured her she was in no way responsible for the accident. The pilot made the decision and she should try and dispel any guilt or concern regarding her actions and decisions.

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