

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

CRASH OF AIRCRAFT N414MT (CALLSIGN \*  
ACE 5) NEAR FOUR CORNERS, CALIFORNIA \* Accident No.: WPR18FA013  
OCTOBER 21, 2017 \*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JARED HULSE

Sky Combat Ace Facilities  
Henderson, Nevada

Tuesday,  
December 5, 2017

## APPEARANCES:

ELIOTT SIMPSON, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jared Hulse:

By Mr. Simpson

4

I N T E R V I E W

(9:28 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. SIMPSON: All right. So we're recording the interviews  
4 for WPR18FA013 at the facilities of Sky Combat Ace in Henderson,  
5 Nevada. Today is December the 5th, 2017, and the time is 9:28  
6 local. I'm Elliott Simpson with the NTSB, and I'm joined with?

7 MR. HULSE: Jared Hulse.

8 MR. SIMPSON: Okay, from Sky Combat Ace; is that correct?

9 MR. HULSE: Yes.

10 MR. SIMPSON: Do you have any objection to recording the  
11 interview?

12 MR. HULSE: No.

13 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. All right. So during the interview I'm  
14 going to use the term SCA when referring to Sky Combat Ace --

15 MR. HULSE: Okay.

16 MR. SIMPSON: -- California Extreme Adventures, Vegas Extreme  
17 Adventures, or any other companies associated with the DBA of Sky  
18 Combat Ace.

19 MR. HULSE: Okay.

## INTERVIEW OF JARED HULSE

20  
21 BY MR. SIMPSON:

22 Q. So, Jared, how long have you worked for SCA?

23 A. I got out here in May. So the end of May.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. About 6 months.

1 Q. Okay. So you're a full-time employee?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. What did you do prior to joining SCA?

4 A. I was a flight instructor down in Colorado, and then I went  
5 to school at Metro State of Denver, went through their aviation  
6 program. They have an aerospace program there. And then after  
7 that I got my CFI and I started flight instructing down in  
8 Colorado.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And then did a lot of the tailwheel training and stuff like  
11 that.

12 Q. Before you came here?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay. So what training -- I'm sorry. What are the day-to-  
15 day duties of your position?

16 A. Day-to-day duties, we'd show up to work and, depending on how  
17 many customers we have, we'd get the airplanes pre-flighted and  
18 ready to go based on -- off of what our customer -- how many  
19 customers we're going to have that day. Get everything cleaned  
20 up, ready to go. Once the customers show up, we're checking them  
21 in, getting them to sign waivers and going through the payment  
22 process and telling them exactly what we're going to do, show them  
23 all the options that we have for Sky Combat Ace, and whether  
24 they're looking for air-to-air combat or aerobatics.

25 And then once we figure out exactly what they want to do,

1 what flight they want to incorporate themselves into, we'll show  
2 them around the hangar. We head upstairs. We go through a safety  
3 briefing, talk about what not to do with the airplane and how to  
4 use the parachutes, how to fly the airplane, how to fly through  
5 some of the maneuvers we're doing. We'll give them -- if they're  
6 doing combats, we'll talk about combat flights and some combat  
7 basic dogfighting 101.

8 And then once we're done briefing them, we'll take them  
9 downstairs. We get some flight suits on. We take pictures in  
10 front of the airplane. Then we get them all strapped in, familiar  
11 with the airplane, get in, and then we'll take them up and have  
12 some fun depending on what package they have and what they want to  
13 exactly -- what flight experience they want to do. And then we'll  
14 come back and debrief and reassess, and if they want to watch the  
15 video, we'll pull it up and go from there.

16 So it's about a -- each customer is about a 2-hour process  
17 between briefing them, getting them up there flying and  
18 everything. When we're not flying, we're usually around cleaning  
19 the hangar and stuff like that. Vegas gets a little dusty and it  
20 always messes up the hangar. Especially our hangar is kind of in  
21 this like chute, so all the wind blows all the dust in here and we  
22 get all these maintenance papers from other hangars.

23 Q. Collection spot.

24 A. Yeah, I mean, you know, we're not just the pilots, but we're  
25 really -- you know, we're more than that. We're the ramp workers.

1 We're taking care of the airplanes. We're getting them all  
2 strapped in. We're not just flying the airplane. We're kind of  
3 -- we have multi-roles and trying to fill as much as we can rather  
4 than just flying the airplane.

5 Q. So a customer will walk in the door and there's no front desk  
6 person, they just go straight to whatever pilots are on duty?

7 A. Usually the pilots are going to take care of everything  
8 between checking in. Now we do have some other people that will  
9 help out with that, but usually the pilots are the ones that they  
10 meet first. And we'll get them all set up and ready to go.

11 Q. And what's Tiffany's role in everything?

12 A. Tiffany, I'm not sure what her position is directly called.  
13 The other guys will have a better name for it. But she takes a  
14 lot -- care of a lot of the bookings. She's at San Diego. She  
15 does a lot of the checking in, in San Diego, helping out with the  
16 customers, really the -- we call them the fluffer. But she takes  
17 care of a lot of the bookings, especially when it comes to big  
18 group bookings. And she does a lot of the contact over the phone  
19 and email, getting groups interested in us and really marketing to  
20 San Diego.

21 Q. Is there an equivalent person here to Tiffany's position?

22 A. Tiffany's position is kind of unique. I can't really say  
23 exactly, you know, exactly what her position is.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. The other guys will probably be able to describe it a little

1 more. But --

2 Q. And who --

3 A. -- here in Vegas we kind of have -- I don't know how to  
4 explain it, but -- yeah, go ahead.

5 Q. Who sets up cameras?

6 A. So we have a video team here in Vegas. Tiffany will also  
7 help out with the cameras as well down in San Diego. So typically  
8 we'll have at least one camera guy here to set up all the cameras,  
9 take pictures, and they focus on the camera work. As pilots we  
10 know how to work the cameras and how to turn them on and how to  
11 get them set up, but usually we have someone there doing that for  
12 us. Tiffany will do that down in San Diego as well.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Do you work part time at any other  
14 organization?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. This is my full time.

18 Q. Can you describe the mission of SCA?

19 A. The mission is really to get the excitement and joy of  
20 aerobatics out there. You know, there's all these people, even  
21 pilots, that go to air shows and stuff like that. And, you know,  
22 as a kid I always went to airshows and I didn't think I could do  
23 something like that. But what's cool about SCA is we give the  
24 opportunity to everyone out there to get this flight experience  
25 that they could only dream of. And really just out there showing



1 a three-dimensional environment and out there to have a lot of fun  
2 and really get a beneficial experience.

3 I think it's -- I think aerobatics personally is real  
4 important for pilots that have their certificate and everything.  
5 That's kind of why I started going into the aerobatics side of  
6 aviation. I went to Metro State of Denver in Colorado. Metro  
7 State University of Denver is the official name. But I started an  
8 aerobatic team with the school. And we have a collegiate program  
9 in the international -- IAC, the International Aerobatic Club,  
10 which is kind of this international group of aerobatic guys that  
11 we set up local competitions around the country. But we also have  
12 a collegiate program. And there's not a whole lot of schools  
13 competing right now, but we got one started when I was back in the  
14 -- attending that school down there.

15 And we got this aerobatic team kind of formed up, and we're  
16 trying to get it bigger and bigger. We just got our first class  
17 approved, aerobatic class, for the program. It's three credit  
18 hours now. So that's pretty cool. That's coming up in fall. But  
19 I think aerobatics is kind of a unique portion of aviation because  
20 it shows hands-on skill and experience of the whole flight  
21 envelope of flying.

22 We always talk about stalls. We always talk about spins and  
23 everything like that in aerodynamics, but when you're out there  
24 doing aerobatics you get the real feel of all what's happening  
25 around the airplane. And the Extra -- and the Extra's kind of a

1 toy. It's a lot of fun. It's pretty simple to fly. So we can  
2 get anyone with any flight experience to come out here, and this  
3 thing handles like a video game and they get to feel exactly what,  
4 you know, everyone talks about on the movies, at flight school,  
5 all that kind of stuff.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So I think it's kind of a cool thing to incorporate,  
8 especially now you get into dogfighting, stuff like that. Now I'm  
9 a goal-oriented person. I don't like just to go out there and  
10 just, you know, screw around for a little bit. I like to go out  
11 there and have a little mission and get my mind wrapped around  
12 something and that helps me learn a little better. So the  
13 combat's kind of a unique situation that we do there, something  
14 you can't really find anywhere around the country. It's pretty  
15 rare. But did that answer your question at all?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. I don't know. I kind of went off topic a little bit.

18 Q. No, that's fine. No, that's fine. So you've been here since  
19 May. About how many passengers have you flown during that period?

20 A. So typically if I were to estimate -- I got here in May,  
21 probably finished training sometime in June. So what is that?  
22 It's December. So about 6 months?

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. Is that right? So about how many weeks is that? Like about  
25 25 weeks.

1 Q. Or about how many typically do you fly a week, I guess would  
2 be an easier way to break it down?

3 A. So 25 weeks -- I'm trying to do all the math in my head. So  
4 typically about usually three to four customers a day.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So times that by 5. I work 5 days a week. So around 15, 20  
7 a week.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Flights a week, I would say. And then multiply that by 25  
10 weeks, which is half a year.

11 Q. Okay. So basically four to five a day and 5 days a week.

12 A. Yeah, usually around three to four, it depends. Typically I  
13 think four is probably the sweet spot.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. It makes up for all the busy days and the slow days.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. But, yeah, around four.

18 Q. Is that specific to you or is that across the -- across all  
19 the pilots?

20 A. All the full-time pilots.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. All right.

24 A. Except for -- I'm not sure about San Diego. They probably  
25 average a little less per day. Probably like two or three every

1 5 days.

2 Q. Okay. While at SCA how many of your passengers already hold  
3 pilots licenses and are flying with you to gain additional  
4 experience or ratings since you've been here?

5 A. We get a lot of, we get a lot of student pilots.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I've had a lot of people that have had their student  
8 certificate, but they haven't flown in like 5 years or whatever.  
9 I would say about half of them have had some sort of flight  
10 experience, whether that's logging 5 hours or that's logging 1,000  
11 hours. Around half of them. I would say.

12 Q. Have you ever had to give anyone like formal training that  
13 required like a logbook endorsement?

14 A. Yes. So we do, do tailwheel and upset recovery training.  
15 Mostly we do tailwheel training. So we'll take the Super  
16 Decathlon up. I don't have my logbook on me, but I would roughly  
17 since I've been here I've signed about five or six tailwheel  
18 endorsements.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So we do have a little course for pilots specifically wanting  
21 to get into aerobatics or tailwheel training.

22 Q. And how about upset recovery training?

23 A. I haven't done any specific upset recovery training.  
24 Sometimes when they do tailwheel training we're flying the Super  
25 Decathlon, which is aerobatic as well. If they're doing well on

1 their tailwheel training and we still have a couple -- like an  
2 hour to spare, we'll go out there, we'll do some landings, and  
3 then if we have some time left we'll do some basic aerobatics.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Just to kind of get them familiar. Especially spins, I like  
6 to do spins, stuff like that.

7 Q. Okay. All right. Does SCA have a formal operations manual  
8 or similar?

9 A. We have a standards manual that I was given for training and  
10 everything.

11 Q. Okay. How would you describe the safety culture here at SCA?

12 A. I think it's kind of a unique situation. Aerobatics in  
13 general, you know, there's always going to be a little more risk  
14 than other types of flying. The amount of aerobatics that we fly  
15 per day is pretty extraordinary. We're doing this quite a bit,  
16 flying these airplanes a lot, and I always get into the airplane,  
17 and I've never been like an adrenaline junkie, anything like that.  
18 I never even thought I was going to be an aerobatic pilot. But I  
19 got into aerobatics and I just loved it. And I would never get  
20 into an airplane that I feel unsafe and feel like I would never  
21 come back at the end of the day. I just couldn't do that.

22 I feel like it's definitely a unique experience. I feel like  
23 safety is definitely a huge concern. I know after the first  
24 accident, Tex got hit pretty hard, not just business wise but  
25 personally. It just -- it hit him in the gut. And even since

1 then -- I haven't been around that long, but I know he's put in  
2 some implements in the standards that we have that he's pretty  
3 serious on. And he'll -- when we're up there flying together,  
4 he's not afraid to rat me out in front of a customer based off of  
5 safety.

6 So, you know, I've had my run-ins where we're flying up there  
7 and he's yelling at me over the radio with a customer telling me  
8 what not to do and stuff like that. Nothing dangerous, but, you  
9 know, he's out there to make sure I'm doing everything correctly,  
10 doing everything to standards, and I definitely feel like this is  
11 a safe organization. You know, we're flying the Extras, which is  
12 a beautiful airplane. And this thing is so well designed it's  
13 really built for world-class performances. And, you know, we are  
14 flying them a lot, but we're not beating them up all the time as  
15 much as a professional air show pilot would be doing.

16 And all these airplanes are fairly new when it comes to  
17 airplanes. So they work real well and we can trust them a lot, as  
18 opposed to getting an airplane with fabric wings that was built  
19 from the '70s. And then doing that with this kind of  
20 organization, I feel a little less uncomfortable about that, but  
21 -- yeah, I mean, does that --

22 Q. Okay. Yeah. No. And as far as a safety manager, is there  
23 anyone beyond Tex who would be considered like a safety officer  
24 here?

25 A. Tex is considered a safety officer. I don't know. Tex is

1 definitely the head of that. He's keeping us on track. Really  
2 all of us pilots, we're doing something kind of unique and we kind  
3 of have to create a bond with each other. Because we're up there,  
4 we're flying in formation, we're doing dogfights, we can't only  
5 trust ourselves, we have to trust the person we're flying next to.  
6 And when we're up there we're kind of self-checking each other all  
7 the time. But the answer is I'm not sure for that safety,  
8 additional safety officer.

9 Q. Okay. From your -- you kind of answered this already, but  
10 from your position and perspective what are some of the hazards  
11 that SCA faces?

12 A. So some of the hazards would be -- the aerobatics in general  
13 is, I think it's very safe, especially in this airplane when  
14 you're several thousand feet above the ground. When we do our  
15 low-level flying like we previously have done, we kind of cut that  
16 out of our program's -- all of our programs now after the accident  
17 because we're trying to mitigate risk and make things better and  
18 it's just an additional risk that we associate ourselves with.  
19 But some of the low-level flying, when you're close to rocks, you  
20 know, you don't have a whole lot of time to stop yourself from  
21 making a mistake.

22 So definitely the low-level flying would be one of the most  
23 dangerous pieces of what we do. The aerobatics, I think the  
24 aerobatics is 100 percent safe. The -- in Peter's instance, the  
25 high G turn is one of those other things where it's a little more

1 risky and not everyone wants to black out. That's not their goal.  
2 They're up there to have that aerobatic experience. So that is a  
3 risky part of what we do as well, kind of the high g turn that we  
4 used to do. We cut that out of our program just because it puts  
5 an excess stress on the airplane. You know, the airplane might be  
6 certified for plus or minus 10 G's, but if you always fly the  
7 airplane at plus or minus 10 G's, even if it's within the limits,  
8 it's eventually going to wear anything down just like anything  
9 else out there. If you're complying within the top of the limits  
10 with anything, whether that's a computer, that's your car, or an  
11 airplane, skateboard, I don't know, eventually it's going to wear  
12 and tear -- puts unnecessary wear and tear onto the airplane.

13 I mean, maybe not unnecessary, depending on, you know, what  
14 you can do about it, but --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. But, yeah, I mean, I think aerobatics in general, that's  
17 definitely very safe. When you put yourself close to the ground  
18 and close to rocks and you're pulling excess loads on the  
19 aircraft, putting more stress on the airplane, I'd say that's the  
20 most risky part of what we do.

21 Q. Okay. Is there a formal kind of internal accident or  
22 incident review process here?

23 A. Not that I know of. We did have a little meeting with the  
24 pilots. We had a meeting with the whole company and then the  
25 pilots split up and we personally talked about a few things. Kind



1 of --

2 Q. So after the last accident?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Yeah, okay.

5 A. After this one. So I don't know if there's any formal setup  
6 for a post-accident.

7 Q. So if you -- or if you had something you would consider a  
8 serious incident, there's no -- something happened on a flight you  
9 weren't particularly happy with, how would you address that?

10 A. Like safety, safety wise?

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. I would definitely notify one of the pilots, specifically  
13 Tex, Richard, because I know he's always the kind of guy that  
14 wants to know things right away. But whether it's a mechanical  
15 issue or if it's a pilot error issue, if it's something that the  
16 other pilot did that makes feel unsafe, I would talk to them about  
17 it. And if it was serious, I would definitely talk to Tex or  
18 someone about that. If it's a maintenance issue, you know, I'm  
19 not a maintenance guy, you know, I don't have an A&P or anything  
20 like that. So I'm a pilot, so I can't self-analyze the airplane.  
21 I have to talk to the maintenance guy and talk to him about it  
22 because he --

23 Q. Has anything happened to you that you considered to be  
24 serious that you've had to approach Tex on?

25 A. Nothing -- no, nothing serious.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. You know, biggest thing is every now and then one of the  
3 breather tubes on the fuel vents will come loose and you'll get  
4 this smell of fuel in the airplane, which I let the maintenance  
5 guy fix that, but I haven't had anything serious while I was  
6 flying here, no.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Nothing that's coming to my mind right now at least.

9 Q. Okay. How often, if at all, is SCA audited, you know, either  
10 internally or externally maybe by the FAA or any other entity that  
11 you're aware of?

12 A. I can't answer that.

13 Q. Is it you don't know?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yeah, I don't know.

17 Q. Are there any drug or alcohol testing procedures in place for  
18 employees at SCA?

19 A. There are not.

20 Q. Okay. So you've never been tested for drugs or alcohol while  
21 here?

22 A. Nope.

23 Q. Okay. And along those lines, are there any -- let's say a  
24 passenger comes in that appears to be under the influence. Are  
25 there are procedures for dealing with that and has it ever

1 happened to you before?

2 A. There are no procedures with dealing with that. It's never  
3 happened to me. I used to be a bartender back in college so I can  
4 kind of tell if someone's going to be intoxicated, stuff like  
5 that. It's never happened to me, but we do not have a procedure  
6 on it.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Most people are starving themselves because they don't want  
9 to puke anything up.

10 Q. Are there any duty day or duty hour restrictions as a pilot  
11 while at SCA?

12 A. Typically we're here 8 to 5, 5 days a week, hanging out. Our  
13 flights, we don't have any limit on them. Typically they're only  
14 like 30-minute flights. You know, it's pretty action packed so it  
15 will take a toll if you do like 10 of them in, you know, several  
16 hours. But we don't have any limits or restrictions or anything  
17 like that.

18 Q. Have you attended any sort of formal aviation training since  
19 starting at SCA, either internal or external?

20 A. No.

21 Q. How about when you started? Was there formal training  
22 regarding the missions?

23 A. Yes. Yeah, we have a training syllabus that we follow. And  
24 it's step by step. It takes you through getting checked out in  
25 the airplane, and then you work your way to what's called -- we

1 have two different types of packages that we have. We have  
2 aerobatics and we have combats. So our aerobatic packages, the  
3 top one is called the Top Gun. So we kind of reference it that.  
4 We have certain Top Gun levels of training.

5 So you'll start by getting checked out in the airplane, and  
6 then you'll go through the Top Gun training, and eventually you  
7 get a check out for the Top Guns but not the combats. So you'll  
8 eventually be checked out in the aerobatics and then as you work  
9 your way through the program, you'll be flying the aerobatics but  
10 then you also get checked out in the combat separately. And you  
11 get checked out as a wingman first. So you'll be checked out as  
12 combat wingman, which means you can formation fly and you can do  
13 combats but you can't lead the flight.

14 And then eventually you get combat lead, where you can lead a  
15 combat, and then we have red flag, which is a whole different  
16 combat situation where we have blue air fighters, red air  
17 fighters, all this kind of stuff and there's a whole separate  
18 checkout for that.

19 So that's kind of the steps. We start off aerobatic -- or  
20 getting checked out in the airplane, the aerobatics, and then once  
21 you get checked out in that, go through a check ride, you go  
22 through the combat wingman, you get checked out in that. Then you  
23 go through the combat lead, and then you get checked out in the  
24 red flag and then eventually red flag lead, but it takes a little  
25 time to --

1 Q. And who does --

2 A. What's that?

3 Q. Who performs the checkouts?

4 A. Tex.

5 Q. Tex. Exclusively Tex?

6 A. Yeah, Tex does the checkouts and Scott, which is the guy  
7 you're going to talk to next, he's in charge of most of the  
8 training. He's director of operations. So he does a lot of the  
9 training. When I was here we had a little more full-time pilots.  
10 We kind of lost one additional to Peter because he just had a kid  
11 and it kind of hit him in the gut and he wanted to go corporate.  
12 So he left when that incident happened.

13 Q. And who was that who left?

14 A. His name is Zach Morrison.

15 Q. Wasn't he the mechanic?

16 A. He was a mechanic and a pilot. So he was doing both.

17 Q. So Zach has since left?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Since the last accident?

20 A. Yes. But when I was training I would do most of my training  
21 with Scott and then a couple times I would fly with Zach. I flew  
22 with Zach like maybe once or twice. And then we also had a -- we  
23 have a part-time pilot here right now. He's kind of working his  
24 way out. But his name's Collin. I used to -- did a couple  
25 flights with him. And then I did one flight Djavad, which he's --

1 I'm not sure if he's still vice president of the company, but --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But he's part time right now, too.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And then Tex would do the checkout, the check ride.

6 Q. Since you've been at SCA, have you ever felt any pressure  
7 from management to have your aircraft operating in an unsafe  
8 condition or in unsafe conditions?

9 A. No. I would say no. These airplanes are, I mean, pretty  
10 well maintained by our maintenance guys.

11 Q. Not just the condition of the airplane. You know, weather  
12 conditions, for instance.

13 A. Oh, yeah, I feel very comfortable with this airplane. Every  
14 now and then there's going to be storms around the area. And  
15 Vegas they're kind of isolated. If it's right over the airport or  
16 it might be over the airport during landing, then that might be an  
17 issue. But I've never really had a weather situation where I felt  
18 uncomfortable with this airplane.

19 Q. And do you think that management is receptive to you turning  
20 down a flight based on any concern?

21 A. Yeah. The other day it was, it was like -- it was a pretty  
22 windy day, like, 35 and gusting. That's knots. And we had a  
23 couple flights that day, and I know Tex came up to me -- and I've  
24 flown in pretty strong winds in this airplane but I'm kind of the  
25 newer pilot that we have. So he talked to me, said, hey, I know

1 you're confident in flying in this weather and this wind  
2 condition, but if you have any concerns, just let me know. And he  
3 offered to go up -- before the customer showed up, he offered to  
4 go up with me for a little quick flight just if I needed to, to  
5 make myself feel comfortable. But I told him I was comfortable  
6 and I was comfortable handling this airplane. He just wanted to  
7 make sure. And he just straight up told me if you don't feel  
8 comfortable just let me know; I'd rather sacrifice a couple  
9 customers -- or not sacrifice that way, but I'd rather sacrifice a  
10 couple of payments off of customers than, you know, crash an  
11 airplane. But he told me that straight up right before we flew  
12 and just because I was kind of a -- I'm the baby of the pilots  
13 right now. But, yeah, that was really the only situation -- this  
14 is kind of the windy season.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. So we've been getting some good winds lately. But I'm  
17 definitely comfortable with the airplane and Tex definitely  
18 reassured me. He just told me straight up if you don't want to  
19 fly just let me know. Obviously, you know, I need you to fly,  
20 but --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- don't make that a huge pressure on you.

23 Q. Okay. Since the accident in October of this year, you said  
24 that basically low-level missions have been scrubbed. Are there  
25 any other --

1 A. Low level missions and high G turns. So we --

2 Q. Okay. Is there anything else beyond those?

3 A. As of right now, no.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. We -- even the high G turns, we're limiting the airplane to  
6 6 G's now. So Tex does not want us going above 6 G's.

7 Q. What was it before?

8 A. It was 8.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But, you know, he didn't -- we were limited to 8, but he  
11 didn't really like us going to 8 unless we had like a wild  
12 customer or something like that. You can get plenty out of 6 G's,  
13 and 6 G's is still a lot of g-forces. But he was particularly  
14 cautious about speed. In the standards, our flying training  
15 standards, we're limited to 180 knots. Airplane's certified to  
16 220, but Tex does not feel like we should need to go above 180.  
17 And we can get 8 G's on any of our airplanes at 180 knots with a  
18 good pull. And he's always worried about us accidentally  
19 overstressing the airplane or overstressing us pilots themselves,  
20 so he is very particular about not going above 180.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And in any training situation -- I kind of know this  
23 firsthand because I was the last pilot in training here, and  
24 anytime I would go like even 5 knots above 180, he would get on my  
25 ass, so --



1 Q. And how would he know you got 5 knots above 180, okay, when  
2 he was in the airplane?

3 A. If he was in the front seat, or we have a Garmin VIRB on the  
4 right shoulder over here. You can actually see the airspeed  
5 indicator through that Garmin VIRB on the front seat.

6 Q. And would -- are those videos typically reviewed by anyone?  
7 By Tex or anybody else on the training flights?

8 A. The training videos?

9 Q. No, the video -- so if you fly, you've got a customer video.  
10 Is that video -- is there any oversight? Does anyone reviewed  
11 that video?

12 A. He does. Like sometimes, even before Peter's incident he  
13 would kind of have all the pilots and he would say, hey, I've been  
14 watching some videos lately and I've been seeing you guys have  
15 been going over 180, or you've been going over 8 G's, or something  
16 like that. He would kind of mention it. So I know he does every  
17 now and then watch the videos. I'm not sure what sparks it,  
18 whether he just does it randomly or if something might be  
19 concerning him, but I know every now and then he will pull up a  
20 couple videos and kind of self-analyze them.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Or sometimes if he thinks we're going too rough on customers  
23 lately, like, as in tearing it up and we're making them too sick  
24 or something like that, he's mentioned that a couple times before;  
25 hey, you guys need to go a little easier. Not specifically to any

1 pilots but just in general, stuff like that. You know, I know he  
2 does occasionally watch the videos. I'm not sure why or how often  
3 he does it.

4 Q. Okay. On those lines, are there any pilots who would -- you  
5 would consider have kind of a cowboy mentality here? Maybe tend  
6 to overstretch the limits somewhat?

7 A. No. I would say no. You know, all these pilots were kind of  
8 -- because like I explained before, we do what we do; we do  
9 formation flying. A big thing with formation flying is you're  
10 trusting your wingman. Doing all these combats we have to have  
11 this bond with each other and, you know, we can't just be out  
12 there doing our own crazy stuff and the other pilots aren't. So  
13 I'd say no on that. Cowboy mentality, I mean, that's funny.

14 Q. Beyond the two fatal accidents, back in the '16 and the one  
15 in October, are you aware of any other accidents or serious  
16 incidents at SCA?

17 A. No. I know we were talking about the accident a couple of  
18 days after it happened. And this might just be words coming out  
19 of my mouth, but this is kind of what I heard. There was no --  
20 since the first fatal accident, 18 months we went without any  
21 serious incidences or anything like that. So apparently -- I've  
22 only been here 6 months, but apparently we've had a pretty good  
23 record after that first accident, and then obviously this  
24 happened. So that was definitely unfortunate, but not that I know  
25 of.

1 Q. Are you aware of accidents before the first fatal accident in  
2 2016?

3 A. I'm not too familiar with any accidents before that. I kind  
4 of just knew about the company last fall.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Actually, I take that back. I do know of a couple. I'm not  
7 sure when they happened in terms of the first accident, but I know  
8 someone landed short of the airfield one time, which both pilot  
9 and customer were okay, but damaged the airplane. And then  
10 there's another one -- it wasn't really -- I don't think it was an  
11 accident, but just the rudder cable came loose and they had to  
12 land on the cairn.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And -- but, yeah, that one where he landed short of the  
15 runway, ran out of fuel or something. It was on the improper  
16 tank, something like that, and he had landed short and totaled the  
17 airplane.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But I'm not sure when that happened, whether it was --

20 Q. Okay. No, that's fine.

21 A. Whether it was pre-crash or post-accident of the first one.

22 Q. Okay. Do you feel SCA is adequately funded to operate?

23 A. Yeah. I mean, you know, I'm not making the most money in the  
24 world, but it's something I want to do, always wanted to do, and I  
25 love sharing the passion with everyone. So that's kind of why I

1 do it. But, yeah, I feel like it's well funded.

2 Q. And do you feel there are adequate personnel and equipment to  
3 operate here?

4 A. Right now because our director of maintenance has left and we  
5 just got a new one, we're trying to find more maintenance crew.  
6 Our maintenance guy in Phoenix, though, he's really on top of it.  
7 He's been working on Extras for a long time. I feel like he's the  
8 expert at maintaining Extras. So he's shown us a couple things  
9 that have helped us out a lot. And we're trying to get more  
10 maintenance crew here. But since the accident we lost a couple  
11 pilots. Right now, we're kind of short staffed right now. But --

12 Q. Which pilots have left since the accident?

13 A. Just Zach. He's the only one, but --

14 Q. Oh, nobody else?

15 A. We have Djavad and Collin, they went part time before this  
16 happened. And ever since they went part time, they've been flying  
17 kind of less and less, and I think they're working their ways out.  
18 So, I mean, they are part-time pilots but they don't really fly  
19 with us anymore. So really right now it's just the three of us --  
20 Me, Tex, and Scott -- and we're starting to hire a couple more  
21 pilots here to fill in the spots.

22 Q. Is there anyone who's filling in down in San Diego?

23 A. Not currently. So if we have any San Diego flights, one of  
24 us will fly down there.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So we kind of rotate. Once every 3 weeks we switch off who's  
2 got the San Diego shifts down there.

3 Q. And how do you get down there? You take the --

4 A. We take the Arrow or -- depending on whether or not we have  
5 an Extra down there because sometimes we'll have to take the Extra  
6 down here for maintenance. Usually we take the Arrow or something  
7 like that out there, but if we don't have an Extra down there  
8 we'll obviously fly an extra down there.

9 Q. And you stay overnight?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So the --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- company provides accommodations?

14 A. Yeah, if we have -- depending on how busy we are here and how  
15 many flights we have down there, ideally we'd go down there for  
16 the weekend and stay the night there.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But we have a little crash pad in the hangar.

19 Q. Oh, in the hangar?

20 A. Yeah. Yeah, it's nice.

21 Q. Okay. So finishing up, what safety improvements would you  
22 like to see implemented at SCA?

23 A. Right off the bat, we got rid of the low-level flying and the  
24 high G turn. That was partly to do with our insurance. We  
25 weren't sure if the insurance company was going to keep having us,

1 and they're actually -- our insurance company, apparently they're  
2 on our side. And Tex called them up, and Tex didn't really even  
3 need to get rid of the low-level flying or high G turn at all and  
4 they would have helped us keep going forward. But we still wanted  
5 to mitigate risk and everything like that and so we still took  
6 those out.

7 But as far as safety, honestly, I feel like the training  
8 curriculum could be -- could have a couple more flights onto it,  
9 especially the combats. That's kind of a unique situation that  
10 I've never done before. Because the combat situation, I kind of  
11 did a couple flights and then all of a sudden it was my check ride  
12 and I didn't pass it, but -- it took me a couple more flights.  
13 But I felt like I wasn't ready for my check ride. I feel like I  
14 could have had a couple more.

15 Q. But you didn't pass the check ride?

16 A. Yeah, I mean, it's not like an official check ride, but --

17 Q. I know.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. But you didn't feel you were prepared enough?

20 A. I didn't feel confident. Obviously Tex knew I didn't pass  
21 the check ride, and I got my -- I got a good nice scream at, so --  
22 which definitely helped me out. When someone's yelling at you at  
23 something you did wrong, it helps stick a little better.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. But I don't know, I feel like we do some pretty wild, extreme

1 stuff out there. I feel like there shouldn't be any limit on --  
2 or, you know, I feel like we should take as much time as needed to  
3 feel comfortable flying the airplane before we take it up with a  
4 customer.

5 Q. And did you feel comfortable taking them up with -- taking it  
6 up with a customer?

7 A. I did. I just was a little rushed. But I felt comfortable.

8 Q. Okay. You talked about Tex screaming at you.

9 A. Well, not screaming. He was --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. He was doing a -- you know, how do you put it? Well, you  
12 know, I kind of did something wrong and it was pretty serious, so  
13 he was yelling at me.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And he wasn't -- he's not the guy that just yells at you  
16 because he's angry and he wants to yell. He yells at you because  
17 it gets it in your head, kind of engraves it in your head.

18 Q. Okay. But you don't -- do you feel that he has a temperament  
19 that allows you to be open and discuss safety issues?

20 A. Oh, no, I can talk to him about anything.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It's just if he's serious about something, he's serious and  
23 he'll get that stuck in your head pretty quickly.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. But he's very persuasive.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah, I'm not trying to rat him out or anything like that,  
3 but he does know how to get something stuck in your head. Which  
4 is good. Which is for the better, I feel like.

5 MR. SIMPSON: Right. Okay. So those -- that's everything,  
6 all the questions I have. Do you have any questions for me?

7 MR. HULSE: I do not.

8 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. So -- no?

9 MR. HULSE: No.

10 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. So I'll end the recording.

11 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF:           CRASH OF AIRCRAFT N414MT (CALLSIGN  
                                  ACE 5) NEAR FOUR CORNERS, CALIFORNIA  
                                  OCTOBER 21, 2017  
                                  Interview of Jared Hulse

Accident No.:                WPR18FA013

PLACE:                        Henderson, Nevada

DATE:                         December 5, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rebecca Thompson  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

CRASH OF AIRCRAFT N414MT (CALLSIGN \*  
ACE 5) NEAR FOUR CORNERS, CALIFORNIA \* Accident No.: WPR18FA013  
OCTOBER 21, 2017 \*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: SCOTT McDONALD

Sky Combat Ace Facilities  
Henderson, Nevada

Tuesday,  
December 5, 2017

## APPEARANCES:

ELIOTT SIMPSON, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Scott McDonald:

By Mr. Simpson

4

I N T E R V I E W

(10:30 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. We're recording. So we're recording the  
4 interviews for WPR18FA013 at the facilities of Sky Combat Ace in  
5 Henderson, Nevada. Today is December the 5th, 2017, and the time  
6 is 10:30 local. I'm Elliott Simpson with the NTSB. And I'm  
7 speaking with?

8 MR. McDONALD: Scott McDonald, Sky Combat Ace.

9 MR. SIMPSON: Scott, do you have any objections to recording  
10 this interview?

11 MR. McDONALD: No.

12 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. Great. Now, Scott, during the interview  
13 I'm going to be using the term SCA. When I say SCA I'm referring  
14 to Sky Combat Ace, California Extreme Adventures, Vegas Extreme  
15 Adventures, or any other companies associated with the DBA of Sky  
16 Combat Ace. I'm just going to say SCA.

17 MR. McDONALD: Yep.

18 MR. SIMPSON: So we're on the same page.

## INTERVIEW OF SCOTT McDONALD

19  
20 BY MR. SIMPSON:

21 Q. So, Scott, how long have you worked for SCA?

22 A. I've been here since August of last year. So that'd be about  
23 a year and a half. I went through training July of 2016, so --

24 Q. Okay. Are you a full-time employee here?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And what did you do prior to joining SCA?

2 A. I was a full-time flight instructor, the chief flight  
3 instructor for a flight school in Michigan and owned a couple side  
4 companies as an airport manager and FBO operator.

5 Q. Okay. What is your title, and what are the day-to-day duties  
6 of your position here?

7 A. So my title's changed kind of a little bit as I've kind of  
8 moved up in the ranks. Originally I was a full-time pilot  
9 instructor. I went into -- become director of training, which I  
10 worked with Peter quite a bit during his training. And then going  
11 forward, director of flight operations.

12 So essentially it entails, you know, getting the hangar open,  
13 making sure our preflights are done correctly, documentation is in  
14 line, making sure that maintenance is in line for the day-to-day  
15 operations, and then carrying on with -- you know, check-in  
16 customers, briefing them, flying them, that kind of thing.

17 Q. Okay. Can you explain Tiffany's position within the company?

18 A. Tiffany is kind of an everything person. She primarily  
19 focuses on marketing, and also works day-to-day operations in our  
20 San Diego location.

21 Q. Okay. So she covers marketing for the entire company?

22 A. She's -- yes, she's a big part of our marketing department as  
23 well as day-to-day operations and kind of sales, group sales,  
24 stuff like that.

25 Q. Okay. And is there anyone else within the kind of marketing

1 division?

2 A. We do have people, not per se on staff, but we work with a  
3 few companies that do our marketing and social media stuff. So we  
4 have a lot of different teams that assist her in the overall  
5 marketing region.

6 Q. I see. Okay. Do you have any additional duties beyond the  
7 ones you've described?

8 A. Besides, you know, keeping everything in line here, you know,  
9 I help out with the janitorial stuff, clean the hangar, make sure  
10 everything's in line.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Besides -- not really. Just making sure everything's running  
13 smoothly.

14 Q. Okay. Do you have any other part-time positions outside of  
15 the organization?

16 A. I do light flight instruction on the side.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. A few hours a month.

19 Q. Can you describe the mission of SCA?

20 A. The mission of SCA is to, you know, allow people to learn  
21 about airplanes, go do amazing flight experiences with an  
22 instructor, and, you know, safely give people an experience in an  
23 aircraft.

24 Q. Okay. Since you started, how many passengers have you flown  
25 here? Or if you don't know the number off your head, how many

1 typically do you fly in a week? A day, and then a week.

2 A. Good question, yeah. It really varies based on seasonal  
3 loads. Generally I'll fly anywhere from two to six customers per  
4 day. Groups I fly more; you know, light days I fly less. If I  
5 had to put it to a number, I think I'm somewhere around probably  
6 2,000 customers or so.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I guess.

9 Q. And how many days a week typically?

10 A. Five days a week.

11 Q. So two to five a day, 5 days a week, season dependent.

12 A. Yeah, 5 days -- five a day-ish. I guess I never really put  
13 that to a number. But if I'd look at my logbook I'd say probably  
14 I got about 1100 hours in the Extra. So that would work out to  
15 about, you know, 2,000 some customers.

16 Q. So 1100 hours since you started here. That's where you got  
17 your Extra experience?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay. So while at SCA how many of your passengers already  
20 hold a pilot's license and have flown with you to gain additional  
21 experience or ratings?

22 A. I do a lot of the training side as well. So we have my Super  
23 Decathlon that we do tailwheel upset recovery and training. I  
24 would say a small percentage of people are rated pilots. A lot of  
25 people are interested in aviation and talk about getting their



1 licenses, but rated pilots would be probably less than 5 percent.

2 Q. So less than -- when you say rated, you're saying rated  
3 pilots on the experiences or rated pilots who are coming for like  
4 a tailwheel endorsement or the upset --

5 A. So all the tailwheel training in terms of adding  
6 endorsements, adding, you know, spin endorsements, that kind of  
7 stuff, those are all, almost all rated pilots. Okay? But in  
8 terms of my overall flying with SCA, I'd say probably less than 5  
9 percent are rated pilots.

10 Q. So you're saying --

11 A. They come for our experiences in the Extras.

12 Q. Right. So the -- okay. So 5 percent of the people who come  
13 for experiences just happen to be rated pilots?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Got it. Okay. And how many actual endorsements would you  
16 say you've given for tailwheel or upset recovery? I mean, how  
17 many actual endorsement flights have you flown with rated pilots  
18 who are coming here for, specifically for training?

19 A. I would say probably done 12, 15 endorsements, maybe -- let's  
20 see here. Maybe 100, 150 hours of training given in those type of  
21 training situations.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Ish, very -- yeah, I'm not sure.

24 Q. Okay. Does SCA have a formal operations manual or any other  
25 similar document?

1 A. Yeah, we do.

2 Q. Okay. How would you describe the safety culture at SCA?

3 A. I would say that we're very safety oriented. And that's  
4 been, you know, very important to me as I've been here. Because  
5 there was a crash previous to me coming on board and I was aware  
6 of that, I tried to learn as much as I possibly could about that  
7 crash which the -- hasn't been released yet, the final findings.  
8 And, you know, having that kind of in the background has, you  
9 know, in my opinion, put everybody in a safety-oriented light.  
10 Or, you know, everybody's been trying to focus on safety.

11 I would say the overall culture is that we want to do these  
12 flights as absolutely safely as possible. And, you know, fun, or  
13 learning for the customer comes kind of secondary to your safety.

14 Q. Is there a formal safety manager that you can report to?

15 A. We do kind of a self-reporting, and we also -- anytime we'll  
16 get down from a flight where there's multiple people on a flight  
17 we'll debrief after that flight and at the end of the days. We  
18 also do routine reviews of video. And our general manager is, you  
19 know, going through our videos on occasion, making sure that he  
20 doesn't see anything unsafe. And if we do see anything like that,  
21 we'll pull the pilot aside and address those issues as they come  
22 up.

23 Q. And as general manager, who do you mean when you say general  
24 manager?

25 A. That would be Nate.

1 Q. Okay, Nate. Okay.

2 A. But in -- my understanding, both of our video team has been  
3 tasked with keeping an eye out for unsafe conditions.

4 Q. And who would the video team consist of?

5 A. Well, anyone who's doing the videos. Primarily Nate, Gary.  
6 Tiffany does some video now, but that's more recent.

7 Q. And when you say video, you're talking reviews the video  
8 afterwards and -- what do you mean does the video?

9 A. It's a video for the customers. So it's a creation of --  
10 they take the flight, all the videos, you know, compress it,  
11 review it, and scrub it down into a final product.

12 Q. And is that sent to the customers a few days later or is it  
13 while they're still here?

14 A. It depends. Usually it's the day of, but it can take up to,  
15 you know, a day or two.

16 Q. So most customers will -- won't wait for the video; they'll  
17 be sent the video?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. Okay. So from your position or perspective what are some of  
20 the hazards that SCA faces?

21 A. Well, aerobatic flight, it can be, you know, an unforgiving  
22 situation if it's not done correctly. I mean, we maintain our  
23 airplanes to the highest level, but airplanes break. Accidents  
24 happen. I mean, knowing, you know, kind of what we think we know  
25 for this, I would say canopies can be an issue on the Extras, and

1 that would be one of our biggest issues for safety just from  
2 tidbits we've heard from this investigation.

3 Q. When you say -- can you be more specific about canopy issues?  
4 Is it just related to this investigation or do you have -- have  
5 you experienced any canopy issues prior?

6 A. Well, I know that we have had a canopy break in flight prior  
7 to this, Peter's crash. Again, I've heard that, you know, part of  
8 Peter's canopy wasn't intact with the aircraft. So that -- you  
9 know, that'll come out with the investigation.

10 And I was at a competition with a brand new LX. And the guy  
11 took off, canopy was latched, everything was intact, and his  
12 canopy shattered at like 100 knots, and, you know, 200 feet on  
13 climbout. So, you know, looking at it, it looked like a screw had  
14 come out of his spinner, went through the slipstream and possibly  
15 shattered the canopy.

16 So just -- you know, and the people I know that fly Extras  
17 and the three or four canopies I know of that have had issues,  
18 that's why I say that.

19 Q. Have you had any issues yourself?

20 A. I have not.

21 Q. No. Okay. Is there a formal kind of internal accident or  
22 incident review process at SCA?

23 A. I'm sorry. Could you ask that again?

24 Q. Yes. Is there like a formal accident or incident review  
25 process here? So after -- if something happens on a flight that

1 you're not happy with, is there a process for addressing that?

2 A. Again, we have a process of debriefing any flight that we see  
3 deemed unsafe, unsatisfactory outside of our normal procedures.

4 So, yes, we do debrief flights in that way. But in terms of any  
5 -- I mean, when you put it accidents/incidents, you know, I mean,  
6 like with Peter it's so sudden. We do what we can to know what we  
7 can, but it's so -- we're so in the dark with what actually  
8 happened. And that's, of course, why the investigation is  
9 happening, to shed some light on that.

10 You know, we've talked quite a bit about what the potential  
11 possibilities that could have happened with this crash and we've,  
12 you know, talked about all the scenarios, but of course that's  
13 just kind of -- I wouldn't say pointless because, you know, you  
14 don't know what happened and what elements played a factor in the  
15 accident, but --

16 Q. More on a day-to-day basis, not necessarily an accident  
17 happening, but if something happens on one of your missions,  
18 you're not thrilled with what happened, I mean, you --

19 A. I mean --

20 Q. -- have your debrief, but then does it go beyond the debrief?  
21 Is anyone else in the organization notified?

22 A. Well, I'm just saying because like a normal flight, for  
23 example, will go out, will fly, you know, our hard deck's at, you  
24 know, 2,000 feet above the ground, but we're doing aerobatics  
25 3,000 feet above the ground. So, you know, if you're not hitting

1 -- if the customer doesn't do a loop, you know, plus or minus 100  
2 it's not a big deal because you're not going below your actual set  
3 limit. So if somebody screws up a maneuver, it's not really that  
4 big of a deal because you don't need to take over; it was never an  
5 unsafe situation. So that wouldn't be something that I would ever  
6 really debrief because it wasn't unsafe, it wasn't abnormal.  
7 People are very, you know, low experience, they're going to screw  
8 up, you know?

9 Q. Right.

10 A. In terms of, you know, accidents/incidents, you know, we  
11 don't really run into things that happen often. You know, it's  
12 extremely rare that we have any incidents or abnormal situations.

13 Q. Or let's say a combat mission where you think another pilot  
14 did something that wasn't particular safe or, I mean, have you had  
15 any of these incidents where you think maybe you got too close or  
16 there was something that happened during a combat mission where  
17 you're concerned?

18 A. Yeah, so we'll sit down, pilots debrief. We'll go through  
19 the video. We'll review the scenario, why it happened, what was  
20 supposed to happen, and what could have -- you know, the scenarios  
21 that would have built into that.

22 Q. And that's happened before? You've had a flight where you've  
23 felt the need to?

24 A. It was a training mission with Jared. And, yeah, we  
25 debriefed everything because it was, you know, it was a close

1 call. It was towards or within our 300-foot bubble that we use  
2 for combats.

3 Q. How approachable is Tex for any issues or concerns you have?

4 A. If it's safety oriented, if it has to do with the company,  
5 he's very approachable. You know, he wants to hear what we have  
6 to say. So I'd say he's fairly approachable.

7 Q. Okay. Since you've worked at SCA have you ever felt any  
8 pressure from management to have your aircraft operating in an  
9 unsafe condition or in unsafe conditions, be that weather or  
10 maintenance or anything really that you considered unsafe?

11 A. No. I mean, we'll fly in higher winds, but I've been trained  
12 in higher winds so I was never in a situation where I felt  
13 uncomfortable or anything was outside my abilities that would  
14 cause an unsafe situation. And aircraft are maintained to the  
15 level that, you know, they're required to. So, no, I've never had  
16 to fly a flight that I thought was unsafe or outside my abilities.

17 Q. Okay. Have -- are you aware of SCA having ever been audited  
18 by the FAA or any other entity?

19 A. I'm not sure of the term audited, but --

20 Q. Yeah. Ramp checked or have you really had much communication  
21 with the FAA?

22 A. Yes. I mean, we communicate with the FAA quite often. I  
23 know that they've come in, I guess done an audit of all of our  
24 records, went through all of our maintenance records for the  
25 aircraft, looked over all the aircraft, ramp checked them. We've

1 done that at multiple locations through multiple FAA inspectors or  
2 employees. So, yes, we've dealt with the FAA regularly.

3 Q. Do you have an FAA inspector that's assigned to the operation  
4 here?

5 A. I don't deal with them directly, but I know we do have a few  
6 FAA inspectors that we've worked with over the years pretty  
7 regularly.

8 Q. Are there any drug or alcohol testing procedures in places  
9 for employees of SCA?

10 A. Not at this time.

11 Q. Okay. Have you ever been introduced to a passenger who you  
12 think was under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and if so, how  
13 did you manage the situation?

14 A. You know, being in Vegas sometimes, you know, you'll have  
15 passengers come in and you can't really tell because there's a lot  
16 of weird people that come to Vegas in general, you know, and this  
17 type of activity kind of draws people that are adrenaline seekers,  
18 kind of off people, in general. So, yeah, occasionally you'll get  
19 passengers in and you're trying to manage whether they're, you  
20 know, possibly intoxicated or if they're just kind of quirky and  
21 weird and excited or scared in that kind of way.

22 You know, in general, you know, sometimes people might be  
23 hung over. You know, we emphasize that everybody should be sober  
24 and, you know, we get everybody waters and refreshments, make sure  
25 that they're hydrated and ready for the flight. I've never



1 encountered a passenger that I thought was unsafe or unfit to fly.  
2 But if I did, I wouldn't let them. That wouldn't be an issue for  
3 me.

4 Q. Okay. Are there any duty day or -- duty day or duty hour  
5 restrictions with regard to being a pilot at SCA?

6 A. I mean, duty day -- I mean, we can't fly over our 8 hours of  
7 instruction as a CFI, which is never an issue because that would  
8 be an extreme amount of flying because of the short duration of  
9 our flights. To make it to an 8-hour of flying would be almost  
10 impossible with just the amount of daylight and the time it takes  
11 to check a passenger in. So we always are adhering to our 8 hours  
12 of flying.

13 In terms of a duty day, again, it's the same thing. I mean,  
14 we'll do -- you know, we're scheduled to be here 8 hours per day.  
15 Sometimes if we have people that'll book morning flights and  
16 evening flights we'll be here for, you know, 10 hours, but it's  
17 not regular. It's not overdone. Because just the amount you're  
18 actually flying, you've got plenty of time to relax in between  
19 flights and it's never been a situation where I've felt exhausted  
20 to a point where I didn't want to fly or anything like that.

21 Q. Okay. And you say evening flights, but do you do night  
22 flights?

23 A. No, not night flights. Like in the summer we have a 5 p.m.  
24 slot. So evening, you know, dinnertime, but it's still plenty of  
25 light out. Before sunset.

1 Q. So since the accident in October 2017, what operational --  
2 what changes have occurred at SCA?

3 A. So prior to the crash we had max restriction G's on -- 6 G's  
4 on any flights. We're -- restricted that down to 5 G's since  
5 then. So we don't do any high G turns with our passengers. We've  
6 also taken out any of our low-level flying. And we had previously  
7 had restrictions of nothing above 180 knots, and those are still  
8 in place.

9 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any other accidents or serious  
10 incidents involving SCA beyond the two fatal accidents? So we had  
11 the two fatal accidents, the canopy incident, and is there any  
12 other accidents or incidents you're familiar with or aware of?

13 A. I know that one of the pilots in the past ran out of fuel.  
14 He was on the wrong tank coming in to land and he ended up landing  
15 short of the runway and taking out the fence or something. I  
16 don't have specific knowledge of that incident but I know that,  
17 that did happen.

18 Q. Are you aware of any other?

19 A. No, not that I'm -- well, actually, we do have -- as we go  
20 through training we talk about, you know, emergency procedures and  
21 scenarios, things that could occur, what would you do. You have  
22 to break down the scenario and give a solution. So I know that we  
23 also -- this was probably 3 years or more ago, we had a rudder  
24 cable break in flight and the pilot elected to land at McCarran to  
25 avoid a crosswind. And I think that in turn ended up with a

1 ground loop damage to the aircraft. So that's an incident that we  
2 talk about and review.

3 Q. So beyond the company procedure changes since the accident in  
4 2017, are there any changes, personal changes you've made to the  
5 way you fly?

6 A. I'm more, much more cautious and aware. Not that I wasn't  
7 before, but especially the first, you know, 20 flights after the  
8 crash it was -- you know, it's very humbling to know that somebody  
9 doing the same thing passed away.

10 Q. All right. Can you recall to me the Extra 300 book values of  
11 VNE and G loading? Actually, do you want to take a minute?

12 A. I'm okay. So the max speed is 230 knots. And max G loading  
13 depends on the weight category that you're in. The aircraft's  
14 ultimately certified to plus or minus 10 G's, but that'd be low  
15 fuel and single person.

16 Q. Okay. How would you relate the overall employee morale here  
17 at SCA?

18 A. Morale, as in just -- can you ask that in a different way? I  
19 mean --

20 Q. Obviously after the accident people are unhappy, but just in  
21 general, even before the accident, were employees -- were people  
22 happy to work here? Were there any --

23 A. Yeah. I mean, you know, it's a great place to work. We get  
24 to do, you know, really amazing things and show people a very  
25 unique part of flying. So it's -- you know, I love working here.

1 It's great to be able to take somebody that's never been able to  
2 do something like that and just show them.

3 Q. We can take --

4 A. Sorry.

5 Q. Let's go ahead and take a --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Why don't we take a break? Do you want to go and take 5  
8 minutes off?

9 A. Just give me a minute. I'll be all right.

10 Q. Okay.

11 MR. SIMPSON: No, really. Let's stop the recording for one  
12 minute.

13 MR. McDONALD: Okay.

14 (Off the record.)

15 (On the record.)

16 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. It's 11:04. We're going to resume  
17 recording with Scott.

18 MR. McDONALD: So, yeah, I think you talked about morale?

19 BY MR. SIMPSON:

20 Q. Yeah, morale.

21 A. Prior to the accident morale was good. You know, I mean,  
22 it's a fun job being able to share the experiences with the  
23 customers, especially for people that haven't experienced  
24 something like this. So it's a fun day-to-day job just because  
25 the joy that you can share with customers.

1           After the crash, obviously, there was a lot of shock and awe.  
2 We had, you know, a lot of deep discussions about if we wanted to  
3 continue doing this, if it was worth it. And it came down to the  
4 fact that, you know, people still want to do this even though it's  
5 dangerous. Just like anything, skydiving or bungee jumping, I  
6 mean, driving on the highway, there's danger involved and it's a  
7 risk people are willing to take, so --

8 Q.    Okay. Do you feel that anyone has ever had kind of a cowboy  
9 mentality here? And do you know what I mean by cowboy?

10 A.    Yeah, macho.

11 Q.    Yeah.

12 A.    Arrogance.

13 Q.    Yeah.

14 A.    Actually the pilot that passed away previous to Peter, Ben --  
15 I had flown here as a passenger. I was already a pilot but just  
16 wanted to come have some fun on an Extra. And just his mannerisms  
17 on the ground, the way he -- yeah, he just very macho, like "Look  
18 at me" style. He was very cocky, in my opinion, even just to like  
19 people that don't -- like I wasn't an Extra pilot. I didn't know  
20 or really care about his background or who he was, but he had that  
21 bravado, I feel, style.

22 Q.    Interesting. Anyone here similar personality wise?

23 A.    No. No. I mean, you know, when I came on there were only,  
24 you know, two pilots. There was Collin and Tex, or Rich, and they  
25 were doing all the day-to-day stuff. And then I got hired on.

1 And we also had Zach who was -- you know, everybody was down to  
2 earth, doesn't have an ego about it.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. And then, you know, I hired Jared. Then I hired Peter. And  
5 they're from the competition side of aerobatics which is a whole  
6 different style. You know, it's a different culture altogether.  
7 And coming from the IAC side, or International Aerobatic Club, and  
8 the competitions, it's just a whole different approach to it all.  
9 You know, because everything is so perfect and exacting and you're  
10 trying to do everything inside this tiny box, and, you know,  
11 there's no student pilot involved, so it's, you know -- so when  
12 you start putting student pilots in an Extra and doing aerobatics,  
13 the requirements change. You know, you're not looking for a  
14 perfect loop, you're looking for them to take it all the way  
15 around and stuff like that.

16 So no, I mean -- and I mean Peter was, in my opinion, one of  
17 the -- I wouldn't say cautious, but I guess it's a decent word for  
18 it. He was the most, you know, just mission focused, I guess.  
19 You know, he was a cautious, great proficient pilot. And it's  
20 just crazy.

21 Q. Have you had -- you know, on those lines, have you ever been  
22 up with a passenger who's kind of scared you a little? I know as  
23 a flight instructor that happens a lot, but --

24 A. Yeah. So has a passenger scared me at all?

25 Q. Interfered with flight controls or done anything on the

1 flight that's had you a little concerned?

2 A. Honestly, no. Just because, well, besides being a flight  
3 instructor for 5 or 6 years, I'm kind of a -- I don't know what  
4 the word is -- empathetic person. I'm trying to ease their fears  
5 as much as possible so that they can enjoy it as much as possible.  
6 So, you know, I mean, people are fearful, you know, excited,  
7 fearful, that kind of style just because of what it is. I mean,  
8 if they're not a little bit scared they're kind of crazy because  
9 it's the fear of the unknown, you know?

10 And, you know, so I'm always taking care -- because you can  
11 tell when people are nervous and when they're not. So I always  
12 try and relate to my customer and -- you know, oh, how long are  
13 you in Vegas? Or, you know, you can -- there's ways to calm  
14 people before you even get off the ground, you know? The briefing  
15 is a big one. You're kind of judging what kind of character these  
16 people are. And, I mean, our flights are catered to the  
17 passenger, so, you know, if you want to go mild we can do that.  
18 If you want to just go fly upright in an Extra, it pains me to do,  
19 but we can do that, you know?

20 Q. Right.

21 A. I've never had anybody lock up on the controls or anything.  
22 You know, the combats would be the area that somebody might be  
23 likely to keep stalling and keep stalling, keep stalling just  
24 because the dynamics sort of trying to turn behind your opponent  
25 and that aggressive attitude. But we set our hard deck, you know,

1 so far above the actual ground that, you know, you're -- even if  
2 you flew straight at the ground, you're minutes away from it. So  
3 you can get them off the controls really easily. And nobody wants  
4 to screw up. You know, if you yell "My controls, my controls,"  
5 they're going to release them and you just fly right out. You're  
6 still well above your hard deck, so --

7 I personally haven't had any because I put extra time into  
8 every passenger to make sure they're calm and they understand it  
9 all. You know, if they have any questions, let's get them  
10 answered so that they're calm and, you know, just having fun.

11 Q. We're almost finished. What safety improvements would you  
12 like to see implemented at SCA?

13 A. I would say more training in the extreme unusual attitudes.  
14 And I just say that -- well, we don't really know what happened  
15 with Peter. Give me a minute.

16 Q. Yeah, yeah. We can switch -- we can ask -- we can follow  
17 that one up later.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. I've got one other question.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Who sets up the cameras on the airplane?

22 A. Either the person taking pictures or the video department or  
23 sometimes the pilots. They're single on; turn them on, leave them  
24 on.

25 Q. Okay.



1 A. So you can set them before you even put the passenger and  
2 then they're set forever.

3 Q. And then when you say video department, is there one person  
4 whose job it is -- is there a person whose only job it is to be in  
5 the part of the video department?

6 A. Gary and Nate are both our primary video --

7 Q. Gary is a pilot -- or no, Nate is already a pilot, right?

8 A. Neither Nate or Gary are pilots.

9 Q. Oh, okay.

10 A. They do the computer side of our company. So video  
11 processing, video editing.

12 Q. Got it.

13 A. Marketing brochures, website, computer stuff.

14 Q. And are they full time?

15 A. Yes, both of them.

16 Q. Okay. That's pretty much all I have beyond the safety  
17 improvements.

18 A. Yeah. So going back to the safety thing.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. You know, it's so hard to train for every scenario just  
21 because things go wrong quickly, and it's pretty unforgiving. I  
22 would say we could do better in more extreme, you know, tumble  
23 recoveries or -- I mean, not even tumble recoveries, just more  
24 training in the snap rolls and that element of the flying.  
25 Because it's not like -- you're not going to get confused in a

1 loop or a barrel roll or something like that. It's going to be  
2 some type of a weird recovery out of, you know, something --

3 Q. But you've had these experiences where you've found  
4 recovery --

5 A. Well, not -- again, we're performing all these maneuvers at  
6 an altitude where you should have plenty of altitude to get out of  
7 absolutely everything. And the Extra has such, you know, big  
8 controls that you can recover it to a straight level in like a  
9 half a second. But, I mean, obviously something happened with --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- this situation where he wasn't able to recover. I don't  
12 necessarily think it had anything to do with his training.

13 Q. Yeah. No, I'm not asking you to try and work out what  
14 happened.

15 A. Yeah, I realize that. It's just --

16 Q. It's more if there's anything specific --

17 A. No wheels are turning, no.

18 Q. No, I --

19 A. The original question was would I like to see anything added  
20 safety wise or training wise?

21 Q. Yeah. Any other -- and if there isn't anything, that's fine.

22 A. Yeah, I mean, just unusual attitudes in general.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I mean, not really unusual attitudes, but --

25 Q. Are there any questions you have for me or is there anything

1 you think you'd like to -- still like to talk about?

2 A. Just give me a minute.

3 MR. SIMPSON: No, you know, I think we're okay to -- we can  
4 end it at this point.

5 MR. McDONALD: Well, I'd like to include something, but it's  
6 tough.

7 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. Yeah.

8 MR. McDONALD: Can we -- I -- can we just end it?

9 MR. SIMPSON: We'll stop. It's 11:17. We'll stop the  
10 recording.

11 (Off the record at 11:17 a.m.)

12 (On the record at 11:23 a.m.)

13 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. It's 11:23. We're going to continue the  
14 recording.

15 BY MR. SIMPSON:

16 Q. And, Scott, if you could really recount the conversation you  
17 had with Peter 3 weeks prior to the accident?

18 A. Yeah. So we were just kind of hanging around the hangar and  
19 kind of not really debriefing, just had a couple questions for me,  
20 and essentially he was talking about bailing out, bailing out  
21 procedures and, you know, emergency scenarios. And we were  
22 talking back and forth about it.

23 And, you know, it started off, well, you know, what happened  
24 -- if you lost an engine, would you land? Would you jump out?  
25 You know, what would you do? And essentially I came to the

1 conclusion -- and we had talked about this in training before,  
2 but, again, every scenario is so different and there's so many  
3 elements in terms of altitude, terrain you're over, the failure  
4 that you've had. What would you do in terms of either bailing out  
5 or landing off airport?

6 And I told him that if I'm not over a runway or a prepared  
7 surface like a paved road, that I would most likely bail out. Now  
8 if that's assuming you're over non-populated terrain, because  
9 you're not going to bail and just let that fall on bystanders. So  
10 the consensus was that you've got to jump out because you're not  
11 going to land off airport; you touch down at 80 knots and flip  
12 over and be trapped anyway. So in that regard, my consensus was  
13 you've got to bail. There's no reason to land an airplane that's  
14 already broke. That's what insurance is for. You know, passenger  
15 safety is key.

16 So that was kind of the end of the first half of the  
17 conversation, and then, you know, it got into, well, just general  
18 bailing. You know, he's like, well, I mean, you can't bail out  
19 because you've got a passenger there and, you know. I said, well,  
20 every time we brief a customer on bailing procedures you need to  
21 say it in a serious enough way that they understand that they are  
22 in control of their own life, you know? It's a dangerous  
23 environment or can be, and it can go very bad very quickly so the  
24 passenger has to be ready for that scenario. And he was -- you  
25 know, I remember him saying, he's like, you can't just leave the

1 passenger.

2 Q. Right. Okay.

3 A. And, yeah, I mean, I agreed with him in the fact that, yeah,  
4 you can't leave the passenger, but in the scenario that you're in  
5 an airplane that's out of control, you have to get out of it.  
6 They're either coming or they're not. You have to be able to  
7 instill in them that it's time to leave. And that's the scenario  
8 that you have to think of and plan on in advance. And of course  
9 that scenario might have played out.

10 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. All right. Scott, I think we'll  
11 conclude the recording at this point, conclude the interview.  
12 Thanks.

13 MR. McDONALD: Okay. Thank you.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
15  
16  
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25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF:           CRASH OF AIRCRAFT N414MT (CALLSIGN  
                                  ACE 5) NEAR FOUR CORNERS, CALIFORNIA  
                                  OCTOBER 21, 2017  
                                  Interview of Scott McDonald

Accident No.:                WPR18FA013

PLACE:                        Henderson, Nevada

DATE:                         December 5, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
Rebecca Thompson  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

CRASH OF AIRCRAFT N414MT (CALLSIGN \*  
ACE 5) NEAR FOUR CORNERS, CALIFORNIA \* Accident No.: WPR18FA013  
OCTOBER 21, 2017 \*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: TIFFANY WOLFE

Sky Combat Ace Facilities  
Henderson, Nevada

Tuesday,  
December 5, 2017

## APPEARANCES:

ELIOTT SIMPSON, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board



I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Tiffany Wolfe:

By Mr. Simpson

4

I N T E R V I E W

(11:43 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. We're recording. We're recording the  
4 interviews for WPR18FA013 at the facility of the Sky Combat Ace in  
5 Henderson, Nevada. Today is December 5th, 2017, and the time is  
6 11:43 local. I'm Elliott Simpson with the NTSB and I'll be  
7 interviewing?

8 MS. WOLFE: Tiffany Wolfe.

9 MR. SIMPSON: With?

10 MS. WOLFE: Sky Combat Ace.

11 MR. SIMPSON: Sky Combat Ace. Tiffany do you have any  
12 objections to any -- recording this interview?

13 MS. WOLFE: Nope.

14 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. So during the interview, I'm going to  
15 use the term SCA when referring to Sky Combat Ace, California  
16 Extreme Adventures, Vegas Extreme Adventures, or any other  
17 companies associated with the DBA of Sky Combat Ace.

18 MS. WOLFE: Okay.

19 MR. SIMPSON: Okay? All right.

## INTERVIEW OF TIFFANY WOLFE

20  
21 BY MR. SIMPSON:

22 Q. So how long have you worked for SCA?

23 A. I got hired middle May, I believe, of this year. So about 6  
24 months.

25 Q. Okay. And are you a full-time employee?

1 A. Yup.

2 Q. Okay. And what did you do prior to SCA?

3 A. Well, for the 4 years prior, I did nothing. I was living in  
4 Toronto. My husband was a pilot up there, so I couldn't work.  
5 And then prior to that, I worked for Scheyden Precision Eyewear as  
6 their marketing director and --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Do you want me to keep going?

9 Q. Sure.

10 A. One time I owned my own business called T. Wolfe's Wash and  
11 Wax. Prior to that -- prior to aviation, I was a preschool  
12 teacher and a daycare provider.

13 Q. Okay. Do you have a pilot's license at all?

14 A. Um-hum. I have a degree in aviation technology.

15 Q. Oh, okay. Where from?

16 A. San Diego Christian College.

17 Q. Okay. And you have a pilot's license?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And instrument rated.

21 Q. Instrumented rated. Okay. And your husband is a pilot?

22 A. Yeah, he's a pilot as well and currently working for SkyWest.  
23 Was chief pilot of Pilatus Centre Canada when we lived up there.

24 Q. Okay. So I know that he was with us the day after the  
25 accident. Is he employed by SCA?

1 A. Nope.

2 Q. No. Okay. So what is your title and what are your day-to-  
3 day duties comprised of?

4 A. Title is director of marketing. As I've started with the  
5 company, things have evolved, different roles. So mainly I do  
6 sales. I do all the group inquiries, so I take care of group  
7 events, things like that. As of next month, I'll be doing the PR  
8 role as well, so social media and magazines, et cetera. And  
9 customer service, obviously. So out of San Diego, if we weren't  
10 dealing with -- well, when we had customers I was 100 percent on  
11 customer service and taking care of the facility, and then when we  
12 didn't have customers it would just be focusing on sales and  
13 marketing.

14 Q. And when you say sales and marketing, what do you mean?

15 A. Exactly. No, just kidding. Just as we're going along, it's  
16 like we've realized that group events are -- well, since I've been  
17 here. I'm sure they've realized this a long time ago, but group  
18 events are probably a really great opportunity for like -- you  
19 know, just have one big group in a month --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- and that's much easier than -- so my main focus was  
22 starting to gear towards groups and then creating packages and  
23 going and meeting with the DMCs and event coordinators. A DMC is  
24 a destination management company. So just mainly showing them  
25 what we're capable of. Created a packet -- like I created some

1 different packets that I can offer them online so that they have  
2 all the information they need.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Photographing the facilities, making sure that all of our  
5 marketing materials are up to snuff for each location.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. That good stuff.

8 Q. And is there advertising involved with that?

9 A. I don't do any of that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. We have, I think, another company does that.

12 Q. Okay. Okay. And who coordinates with the other company as  
13 far as advertising is concerned?

14 A. That would be Rick.

15 Q. It would be?

16 A. Richard. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. All right.

18 A. So my original employment was solely for San Diego, but it  
19 just -- it's easier to focus on all three locations as much as  
20 possible. So just as time has gone on, it kind of self-evolved my  
21 role in taking different duties and whatnot.

22 Q. Right. Right. Okay. Can you describe the -- okay, are  
23 there any additional duties beyond those we've discussed that you  
24 have, that we missed?

25 A. No. The joke is cleaning, but I think that goes along with

1 the fact that we're doing group events with high-end people so we  
2 need to keep it up to snuff. But Jared likes to throw that one in  
3 there.

4 Q. We'll get to the group events later. I have more questions  
5 about that. Can you describe the mission of SCA?

6 A. The mission of SCA.

7 Q. Yeah, I guess what SCA does?

8 A. You know, I always think about that one and how to say it. I  
9 guess in a nutshell -- I actually do suck at this one -- but in a  
10 nutshell, we offer customers an opportunity to go up in aerobatic  
11 planes and perform a combat mission or their own air show.

12 Q. Okay. How would you describe the safety culture here?

13 A. Safety culture. Okay. That's actually a good one. When I  
14 first started -- I do have a pretty good background in aerobatics  
15 in like not performing aerobatics but working with different  
16 aerobatic groups and whatnot. And so when I first started with  
17 the company, I was really cautious walking in because my  
18 reputation is on the line as well. I don't want to go work for a  
19 company if -- pardon my -- lack of a better use, a bunch of D-  
20 bags.

21 And so when I got in and interviewed with everybody, I  
22 realized that, well, maybe on the outside it looks like -- I've  
23 heard this a lot lately -- like Wild West out here, but just when  
24 you get into the company -- one thing I saw on Peter's desk one  
25 day was like this big stack of the training material and I know

1 that Tex is really adamant that you -- training is important.  
2 That's the first priority, and he puts the guys through the ringer  
3 and whatnot. So all of the information that I learned from Peter,  
4 who I highly respected in aviation, was that safety was important  
5 and, like I said, it's not a bunch of cowboys out here, if you  
6 will. I don't know --

7 Q. Right.

8 A. I've heard that in the last 3 days, that term. ICAS is in  
9 town so all the air show guys are around.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But anyway, so nonetheless, safety's really important but  
12 then you can -- that's kind of a blanket statement. But just from  
13 the culture of the company, if somebody is not feeling comfortable  
14 with something, it's -- they don't have to shy away from that.  
15 They can talk to Richard about that and he's not going to berate  
16 them. He's going to try to figure out, okay, well is what you're  
17 saying a safety issue or is that your level, you're not -- you  
18 don't feel your level is there?

19 And I've seen that happen quite a few different times where  
20 somebody would say, I don't know, and then they decide is there a  
21 risk factor here or is it your level. And I've seen when it's the  
22 level, it's okay, well, here's -- we're going to change the plan  
23 up. You don't have to feel bad about anything, but -- like one  
24 day it was really windy and someone said, I'm not really feeling  
25 comfortable. And they looked at everything and said, okay, well

1 that's -- it's not the risk factor. We're totally legal and safe  
2 to go. Everyone feels comfortable. You don't, that's fine. So  
3 they readjusted the schedule. And I liked that. Because the  
4 pilot didn't feel like he was less than anyone else, but he just  
5 honestly said, I don't feel comfortable. Okay. Cool. You're not  
6 left out, but we see that the weather's going to change later in  
7 the day so we'll adjust and then we'll come back to you. And the  
8 pilot -- later in the day, the winds died and he said, yeah, let's  
9 roll.

10 Q. Okay. Okay. Is there like a formal safety manager  
11 internally?

12 A. Hmm. I don't know. In the structure of the company it goes  
13 -- I just saw this recently. It's Richard, myself, and then  
14 Angie, our -- I'd say CFO, but she's our accountant and HR. And  
15 then underneath that it's kind of like Richard and Nate and all of  
16 the pilots. So in regard to the flying portion, I'm not quite  
17 sure about that.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I'm not sure about how that structure roles. And it was like  
20 I said, I stumbled upon Peter's safety training manual and went,  
21 holy cow, I'd really like to look through that; that's amazing.  
22 I'm not surprised, but --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. I'm not fully up to speed on what they're doing.

25 Q. Okay. Are there any drug or alcohol testing procedures in



1 place for employees of SCA?

2 A. Not that I know of because it's not -- I don't know. I know  
3 the airlines, they do.

4 Q. Right. And so not for employees, but do passengers ever show  
5 up possibly under the influence and is there a process for dealing  
6 with that?

7 A. I -- well, very first and foremost, we would not want to take  
8 a customer up under alcohol --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- because we don't want them to lose their -- toss their  
11 cookies. So far, I haven't been trained on that, per se, but I  
12 think my common sense, if I saw a passenger drunk I wouldn't allow  
13 him to go up. Just again, mainly because I don't want you to get  
14 sick in the airplane and why would you show up to such an  
15 expensive event just wasted?

16 Q. Right. I mean, have you ever seen people hungover or maybe  
17 slightly borderline?

18 A. I'm sure -- like I haven't noticeably seen anyone --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. -- along those lines. There's -- but again, I'm mainly in  
21 San Diego or have been in the 6 months.

22 Q. Yeah. That's right.

23 A. So it's kind of a different -- we get a lot of people from  
24 Orange County coming in and it's more business.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. So -- I mean, Vegas, I wouldn't be surprised if people came  
2 in hungover.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. But it's not widely -- I haven't heard any stories about it  
5 or anything like that.

6 Q. Okay. All right. Great.

7 A. Actually we do have a video where we talk about -- for group  
8 events and whatnot. It's just -- in particular. Even with  
9 individuals, I always say, while there is beer on hand, I -- you  
10 know, please drink water first and then we explain why. And most  
11 -- well, not most people. Everybody is like, okay, that's fine.

12 Q. So, yeah, can you walk me through the process of taking a  
13 passenger on a flight from the second -- I guess from the second  
14 they make the booking and how would they typically make the  
15 booking?

16 A. Okay. So there's lots of different outlets. They can do --  
17 if they're going to go through a third party, by either -- let's  
18 see. At one point we had a Groupon deal. What's the other one?  
19 So they can go online and book direct. They can go through one of  
20 those third-party groups and book. And then what will happen is,  
21 I think we'll confirm that we have the booking and then the day or  
22 so before they're scheduled to come in, we'll give them a call and  
23 just confirm. And then if it's Vegas, they have the option to be  
24 picked up. If it's San Diego, it's self-drive.

25 So for San Diego, specifically, since that's my main base,

1 what would happen is they would meet us at the Gillespie Field  
2 Café and then they'll call headquarters, and then I'll get a text  
3 message and then I'll walk down and pick up the customer, bring  
4 them into the ramp. Remind them we're in an active airport,  
5 please watch your head, all the wings and the pylons.

6 And then bring them over to the hangar. There's a wow  
7 moment. Check it out. I show them around. Get them a water. We  
8 go upstairs. They'll waiver and then we'll do a -- I'll look at  
9 their account. If they owe a balance or whatnot, we'll pay it up  
10 there. They have the option to upgrade to a different package.  
11 They have the option to buy the videos. And then we will empty  
12 their pockets, give them a flight suit, take them into the lounge.  
13 And then we'll go through the safety briefing in the lounge. And  
14 then after the safety briefing, they will pick their call sign, go  
15 downstairs. We take pictures and in front of the airplane and  
16 then the first passenger will take their flight suit off if it's a  
17 hot day or leave it on.

18 We take them over, we get them parachuted. Then we do like a  
19 an additional plane-side briefing and then -- so we just kind of  
20 reiterate everything that we talked about upstairs so, you know,  
21 they get their round two. Put them into the airplane. They get  
22 strapped in. We'll strap the customer in, of course. And then as  
23 we're doing that, we're talking about, don't put your feet on the  
24 rudder pedals during taxi, takeoff, landing. We go over all the  
25 safety procedures there. Usually the pilot does that. While

1 they're doing that, I'll walk around and put the cameras on the  
2 plane and snap some extra pictures and then we push the plane out  
3 and they launch.

4 Q. Okay. So in San Diego, it's basically done with you and the  
5 pilot, in concert?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. But up here, is that the case? When you're not around, it's  
8 just the pilot that takes care of --

9 A. No. Up here, it's like all cushy. There's 25,000 people  
10 here to help.

11 Q. Right. So when someone comes in the door up here --

12 A. So up here what happens is we'll pick you up or self-drive.

13 Q. And up here, I mean in --

14 A. In Las Vegas.

15 Q. -- Las Vegas. Right.

16 A. Yeah. And then the customer will walk into that front foyer  
17 room and we'll greet them. Kind of the same concept. So we'll go  
18 through, welcome; we show them the video screens so you can have  
19 the option to buy the video, upgrade, and then we'll balance out  
20 the account. And they'll waiver, empty the pockets. They get the  
21 flight suit, pick the call sign. Let them into the hangar for a  
22 minute; a lot of people like to look around. And then we'll bring  
23 them upstairs to the room just behind us for the briefing.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. And so same concept. Usually one of the pilots is doing the

1 briefing and, generally speaking, what happens is the pilot who's  
2 going to fly will be the one downstairs welcoming them in and then  
3 they'll do the briefing up here. And then afterwards, we'll take  
4 them downstairs. The pilot will take them downstairs or whoever  
5 is doing the briefing and then one of -- either myself or Nate or  
6 Gary or somebody downstairs will come out and do the pictures.  
7 Put the cameras on while the pilot's getting them in put in.

8 We also have a driver, Les or Buddy, and/or, and they'll also  
9 help out with that stuff. If the canopy needs to be wiped down or  
10 just kind of like that. It's always important that we do that  
11 last visual inspection of the airplane before they go up. I have  
12 been told, so I don't know if this would be considered training,  
13 but you're just visually trying to inspect the airplane, making  
14 sure that fuel caps are on, just little things like that.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And yeah, so then we'll take the pictures. We're also  
17 watching, as the airplane starts up, to make sure that there's no  
18 problems, that any other customers in the hangar aren't actually  
19 in the hangar when the plane starts up, and so --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. San Diego, it's ridiculous.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. You're like, please don't stand in front of the airplane.  
24 They cannot see you. So anyway, so in Vegas, that happens. And  
25 then once they're ready to launch, we'll come -- the customer

1 service agent, whoever's helping, puts all the videos in the  
2 production group downstairs. And then if the customer came in  
3 from the strip and Buddy or Les our drivers are here, they're  
4 waiting to hear the airplanes come back in and then they'll help  
5 the customer out. Water, Ginger Ale, grab the -- you know, for  
6 the customer, grab the cameras, come back in. Make sure the  
7 customer's, you know, under control if they're feeling a little  
8 bit sick or anything like that.

9 Q. Right. Okay. Just skipping back. You talk about third  
10 parties, the Groupon ones. But when you said -- now this isn't my  
11 area of expertise. When you say a third party, who would that be?

12 A. Okay. Here's an example. We work with Viator. I don't -- I  
13 haven't personally had any experience setting up the Viator  
14 accounts, but there's --

15 Q. How do you spell that?

16 A. V-I-A-T-O-R.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So then there's -- like Cloud Nine is another one where, you  
19 know, you're just thinking like what's the coolest things I can do  
20 while I'm in San Diego or Las Vegas, and they'll showcase  
21 different activities.

22 Q. I see. Okay. So you have contacts with them -- you  
23 basically say that you have these services available and  
24 they'll --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Do you have a, like a ballpark of how many flights a  
2 day are flown out of both locations?

3 A. I would say that San Diego, a really busy day that wasn't  
4 involving groups out of San Diego, we would probably, I would say  
5 that we would have about three flights. It would be -- I wouldn't  
6 say that's a busy day but that would be like, all right.

7 Q. And how many days a week?

8 A. That would probably be about -- we have one or two flights a  
9 day. So we were open 5 days a week. We have one or two flights a  
10 day and then maybe on a Saturday or a Sunday we would have three  
11 or four flights.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. And then out of Vegas, Vegas is usually -- I think you're  
14 usually looking at four to six flights potentially a day and  
15 they're open 5 days a week. But again, in both locations, if  
16 somebody really wanted to fly on Tuesday, Wednesday, which is our  
17 days off, then depending on, you know, what they wanted to do, we  
18 can usually have someone come in.

19 Q. Right. And how many aircraft are available between both  
20 locations?

21 A. Currently, San Diego has the Extra. We have an Extra down  
22 there right now. And we have a Citabria but the Citabria doesn't  
23 -- that doesn't really get used for the flights. I think some  
24 people are interested in looking at doing upset recovery with it,  
25 but we haven't actually nailed that down.

1           And then up there, you've got -- let's see. We've got three  
2 Extras up here and a Super Decathlon. So that's what's being  
3 flown.

4 Q.    Okay. So, and out of those flights, again, a ballpark of how  
5 many flights are for experiences versus already certified pilots  
6 who are looking for like tailwheel endorsements or upset recovery  
7 training?

8 A.    Up here, I'm not sure.

9 Q.    Right.

10 A.    Up here you do have a lot more people doing the upset  
11 recovery and the tailwheel endorsement or something like that.  
12 San Diego, I think we only had one, one person -- one or two  
13 people that were doing it or interested in doing it.

14 Q.    In the -- since you've been there?

15 A.    Yeah.

16 Q.    Okay.

17 A.    So I don't know if that guy actually followed through.

18 Q.    Right.

19 A.    I'm not quite sure up here what they do.

20 Q.    Okay.

21 A.    Generally speaking, my time in Las Vegas prior to last week,  
22 was coming up for group events.

23 Q.    Prior to last week. What's changed?

24 A.    Well, San Diego is just -- we haven't shut down San Diego.

25 Q.    Okay.



1 A. But we're open Saturday, Sunday.

2 Q. I see.

3 A. And unless a group calls in or something like that, so it was  
4 either don't have a job or I can come up here and be more useful.  
5 So this makes a lot more sense. And then as I had mentioned  
6 earlier, I kind of saw what I would be able to do within the  
7 company and kind of self-expanded my role.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So while I'm up here, there's -- you know, that just keeps  
10 going.

11 Q. So was San Diego reduced, the open hours, due to lack of  
12 customers or was it a decision, an internal decision?

13 A. I think after the accident, it was an internal decision to --  
14 this is my perception on what has happened. It was let's just  
15 bring things in and -- I don't want to use the word slow down, by  
16 any means, but it was more along the lines of we've had an  
17 accident; this is a big shock to everybody.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. It's horrible. So we've just kind of brought it in to be a  
20 little bit smaller is, again, my perception on what's happened.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So, you know, you're down an airplane and a pilot. You don't  
23 want to be pumping San Diego -- you know, throw your Christmas  
24 party here.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. We wouldn't have the resources plus it's just -- I think it's  
2 just bring it in small for a bit.

3 Q. No, I see. Okay.

4 A. No, wait. Our PR girl did come in. Our PR company came in  
5 yesterday and she has been with Richard for quite a while and said  
6 that this is a slower time of year with all of her customers as  
7 well.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. So I think -- again, this is my first year in San Diego or  
10 with the company, so I haven't seen all the seasons, but it --  
11 from the summertime, we've seen it slow down quite a bit as well  
12 in San Diego because the majority of the customers would be coming  
13 from Orange County or convention center.

14 Q. Okay. I'm confused. How -- so there's a PR person that  
15 doesn't report directly to you?

16 A. She -- they're a different company.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. And Richard had known this gal from the company she worked  
19 for.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. And then she split off and started her own. So he's been  
22 working with her and supporting her in that company as well just  
23 by giving her business, of course.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And so yeah, I don't know how long she's been with -- how

1 long Richard's been a client or hers, but --

2 Q. Okay. All right. I'm sorry, I think -- most of the  
3 questions I have I think you've already covered. If you'd give me  
4 a minute to sort through.

5 A. Oh, no problem.

6 Q. Since the accident have you changed anything personally  
7 within how you perform your duties at SCA?

8 A. Yeah, I guess I would say there was always something in the  
9 back of my mind prior to even coming here just because I've been  
10 -- I've seen a lot of very unfortunate events working in  
11 aerobatics for so long.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. And so one thing I knew I needed to get done was just having  
14 a little emergency response procedure for San Diego. I like  
15 process and procedure a lot. So after the accident, I felt like I  
16 knew how to put that together really quick.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. And I've -- I don't know. That's pretty much it. I voiced  
19 to the company the importance of having that there and let  
20 everyone know where it is and all the information is by the desk  
21 in San Diego.

22 Q. Okay. Okay. I think that's all the questions I have. Are  
23 there any questions you have or anything you think I may have  
24 missed?

25 A. No. Any -- I don't know. I don't know what you can tell me,

1 if there's anything new going on or --

2 Q. Well, we'll end the recording at this point and I'll -- it's  
3 12:08.

4 (Off the record at 12:08 p.m.)

5 (On the record at 12:15 p.m.)

6 MR. SIMPSON: Okay. So we're beginning the recording again  
7 at 12:15.

8 BY MR. SIMPSON:

9 Q. If you could really --

10 A. I can take you through the whole day.

11 Q. Take me through the whole day. Yeah, that would be great.

12 A. Well, there I was -- actually, would you want to go from  
13 Vegas to San Diego?

14 Q. No, no, I'm sorry. So just from when the passenger arrived.

15 A. Okay. So the customer was Garrett and Kiersten. They were  
16 dating. So they arrived, they came in and they looked at the  
17 airplanes. And then when they got upstairs -- I believe he came  
18 upstairs first to waiver and to get everything going, which would  
19 be like payment and stuff like that.

20 So they -- I had asked them what the relationship was and he  
21 was saying it was a long-distance relationship. He lived in  
22 Texas. She lived in San Diego. It was his second time flying  
23 with the company and he wanted to take her out and this was the  
24 date. And so he had mentioned he didn't -- when I was showing him  
25 the videos, like you can buy these videos, he was watching some of

1 them, going, I don't want to that. You know, I'm just here to,  
2 basically just to impress her. I think he did a combat in Las  
3 Vegas so he was going to do the Top Gun aerobatic experience this  
4 time.

5 And I don't know if this matters, but he did really want to  
6 do the -- we have an extended route, where we'll start off going  
7 straight and level over the beaches of San Diego because you can't  
8 beat that, but he didn't have enough money in his account at the  
9 time. So he was standing there talking to me about the  
10 relationship. She wasn't around at the time. He was super giddy  
11 about her, really interested. We talked about, would you move to  
12 San Diego or would she move to Texas. He was smiling. I don't  
13 think it had gotten to that point yet. I didn't know it at the  
14 time, but he had two boys in Texas and then she had a son here so  
15 obviously that dynamic would make it difficult.

16 Yeah. So he had said she's the thrill seeker and he just  
17 wanted to kind of have a mellow day. So when we went in, we did  
18 the briefing, talked to him about all the safety stuff and, oddly  
19 enough -- this part sucks. She -- they picked each other's call  
20 signs and she got Maverick and she picked Goose for him, and then  
21 the joke always comes up whenever someone picks Goose because in  
22 Top Gun, and so Goose is no longer available.

23 Yeah. So anyway, so we have this really big, goofy guy with  
24 big red cheeks and he's all smiles because he is fully smitten  
25 over her. They go downstairs. He and Peter, during the picture

1 portion -- to back pedal a little bit, we had a girl from American  
2 Ninja Warrior come in and fly with us, named Natalie, and she  
3 couldn't stop moving and hanging off of things. And so when we  
4 were taking their picture, she threw her leg up in the air and  
5 grabbed it with her hand for the picture and Peter did the same  
6 thing. So of course I'm going, what the heck; these are keepers.

7 So there was this odd joke. Every time Peter -- every so  
8 often when Peter was with a customer, he'd do the normal picture  
9 routine and then he'd grab his leg and throw it up in the air.  
10 Well, this guy, Garrett, is a -- he is a big guy. So Peter, the  
11 last picture, grabs his leg and throws it up in the air and  
12 Garrett doesn't miss a beat and does the exact same thing. So I  
13 don't know if I sent that picture to you guys, but I kept that  
14 one.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. I wasn't going to send it over to Garrett or anything, but I  
17 kept that one because it was really funny. So the scene with  
18 everybody was excited, fun. The girlfriend, she was a little bit  
19 more reserved. She's a sweet girl, but getting to know her a  
20 little bit after the accident, she's just more reserved. Most  
21 girlfriends are taking all these pictures and she was just sitting  
22 there quietly on the couch watching. Probably slightly nervous as  
23 well. But Garrett was big red, rosy cheeks, smiles, ready to go.  
24 He had American Flag sunglasses on. Having a good time with it.  
25 He had stopped to pick up some cash on the way in and so, I mean,

1 he was happy and excited and was really excited for her to go up.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. So I think some people have asked what were the -- maybe it  
4 was a customer had a death wish. Not a chance.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Not a chance. Getting to know this guy the way he talked,  
7 there was a future between the two of them.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. And actually just in that day, they had more plans and stuff  
10 like that.

11 Q. Okay. I know that the flight went on a little bit longer  
12 than normal. That's what I've been led to believe. Did that get  
13 discussed at all, maybe extending the route?

14 A. Yeah. He wanted to extend the route --

15 Q. Right.

16 A. -- but we didn't. He had actually called here and talked to  
17 Nate, our general manager, and he said, I can't -- I don't have  
18 enough money on my credit card and I don't have any cash on me  
19 right now unless I left and went and got it, so can I pay you  
20 later? And Nate said, no, he can't really do that. So again, he  
21 wanted that girlfriend to get this cool experience and stuff.

22 So when I realized that they were slightly overdue, I thought  
23 Peter had maybe gone ahead and done the extended route, which is  
24 why --

25 Q. So was Peter aware that he was trying -- the passenger --

1 Peter was aware that the passenger was trying to get --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- fly a little longer?

4 A. But the fact that we had -- Nate had already said no -- we  
5 videotaped this. It's like, what are you going to do? Take him  
6 on an extended route? We didn't have enough time in the day left  
7 and are you going to delete that? That just wasn't going to  
8 happen.

9 Q. Right. Right.

10 A. So what do you mean that the flight was a little bit longer?

11 Q. I was under the impression from someone I had talked to  
12 earlier that the flight -- heard through Richard, sorry, that the  
13 flight generally takes 20 minutes and, if I recall, they'd gone --  
14 they were at the 20-minute mark about the time the accident  
15 happened. So his sense was that the flight had already gone a  
16 little bit longer than normal. But that's fine.

17 And going back, do you have to do any weight and balance? Do  
18 you weigh the passengers at all before they get on?

19 A. Visually.

20 Q. Yeah. Okay.

21 A. And we'll -- if -- I mean, if the guy is, you know,  
22 humongous, then he's not going to fit in the airplane.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. And sometimes -- if we have the availability to recommend  
25 like the Corvalis for just a nice, straight and level flight,



1 we'll do that.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. But this guy was big, but he fit in the parachute. He didn't  
4 have any weight issues and he'd already flown before. And he  
5 wasn't -- he seemed tall and big, but not unable to get into the  
6 airplane.

7 Q. Right. Okay.

8 A. I don't know if that helps. That probably doesn't help with  
9 the balance portion, but --

10 Q. No, it does. No, that's great. Okay. That's it.

11 A. All right.

12 Q. I'll end the recording.

13 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:            CRASH OF AIRCRAFT N414MT (CALLSIGN  
   ACE 5) NEAR FOUR CORNERS, CALIFORNIA  
   OCTOBER 21, 2017  
   Interview of Tiffany Wolfe

Accident No.:                    WPR18FA013

PLACE:                            Henderson, Nevada

DATE:                              December 5, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
Michelle Hermann  
Transcriber