



## INTERVIEW SUMMARY

**Elliott Simpson**  
**Aviation Accident Investigator**  
**Western Pacific Region**

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**Interview Date: April 23, 2019**  
**Person Contacted: Angela Ellis – [REDACTED]**  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA115**

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### Narrative:

- Mrs. Ellis is the wife of the pilot, Robert Ellis.
- The family had moved to Utah in December 2018, with plans to settle there.
- He commuted in the accident airplane when weather allowed, about 5 to 6 times during the intermediary period, generally leaving Monday, and returning Thursday night. He preferred to arrive at night when the weather was better, and this allowed him to also put in a full day of work.
- The accident day was one of the few times she was not worried about him flying, because the weather was good. When the weather was bad, he typically flew home via a commercial airline flight.
- Mr. Ellis had a large dental practice in California, along with arrangements to provide orthodontic services to five other locations. She described his practice as a “monster” that he was deciding what to do with as they made the move to Utah.
- In addition, he owned multiple rental properties, and he was very involved in their upkeep, as he was mechanically inclined, and liked to perform work himself such as plumbing etc.
- He often did not trust relying on the work of others, specifically when it came to mechanical work, and had just the week prior told her that he had found a cleaning rag somewhere in the airplane where it should not have been. Beyond that, he had not brought any mechanical issues to her attention.
- Mrs. Ellis stated that she believed he was leasing the accident airplane from somebody else, although she stated that he was not the most organized, and she was trying to establish ownership.
- Mr. Ellis was well, and had not complained of any medical issues. He did not appear to be under any undue stress leading up to the accident, and there was no pressing need for him to get home that night. He reported recently having a medical physical examination performed.

- Regarding a 72hour history, she and his mother (he was living with his mother during the week) discussed his days leading up to the flight, and they were all normal. He went to bed about 1030, and would wake up at 0700. He did not report any sleeping difficulties.



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**Interview Date: April 22, 2019**  
**Person Contacted: KENT EWING** [REDACTED]  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA115**

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### **Narrative:**

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Ewing stated the following:

- He met the pilot, Mr. Ellis about 1 year ago. He flew with the him in Georgia, and provided initial flight training in the Duke.
- Mr. Ewing provides training at a company called Bonanza and Baron Pilot Training – BPT.
- Mr. Ellis had made the decision to purchase a Duke, and had selected two possible airplanes for purchase. Mr. Ewing and Mr. Ellis flew both airplanes, and eventually Mr. Ellis decided to purchase N65MY, and the flight training continued.
- During that period Mr. Ewing exclaimed to Mr. Ellis that operating out of Fullerton was “crazy” due to its short runway.
- Nonetheless, Mr. Ellis insisted on flying out of Fullerton, and as such the training continued with emphasis on short field operations.
- With regard to Mr. Ellis’s flying skills, he flew fairly well, and there were no deficiencies in his skills that stood out.
- Mr. Ewing stated that at BPT, they teach pilots to fly the Duke in ground-effect until Vyse (blue line) is reached, to allow the pilot more margin should an engine be lost, however this is not easily attained or appropriate at Fullerton. He stated that the Duke can lift off at 85 knots, but this leaves the pilot in a treacherous state should an engine be lost.
- Mr. Ewing taught Mr. Ellis about the, “20 second bucket”, which is the time during takeoff between Vmc (red line) and blue line which in the Duke is 85 KIAS and 115 KIAS. He stated that depending upon gross weight, field elevation, and temperature it can be as long as 20 seconds.
- Mr. Ewing does not recall seeing a gust lock in the airplane, or observing the pilot ever using one on any flights.

- In his experience, pilots will often instinctively react to a complete or partial loss of engine power with opposite aileron, which simply exacerbates the problem due to adverse roll. For a power loss below VMC, the safest option is for the pilot to pull power on both engines and try to land ahead.



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**Person Contacted: Henry Pont**  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA115**

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### **Narrative:**

During a telephone conversation on April 19, and in-person meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Pont stated the following:

- Mr. Pont used the hangar across from the accident pilot, Mr. Ellis.
- It was his understanding that Mr. Ellis had moved his family to Utah, but still maintained a dental practice in Southern California. Mr. Ellis typically flew from Heber City, Utah on Monday mornings. He would then work during the week, and return to Fullerton Airport Thursday about 1700, and depart in the airplane at 1900.
- Mr. Ellis had been following this routine for the 2-3 months leading up to the accident.
- Mr. Ellis had told Mr. Pont that N65MY was expensive to maintain and operate, and that he was considering purchasing another airplane, possibly single engine, for the commute, and possibly selling his other airplane, which was a Beech Baron.
- Mr. Pont was not aware of N65MY having any mechanical problems, except that an engine was replaced earlier in 2018 after a turbocharger failed.
- Mr. Pont and a friend had approached Mr. Ellis, concerned that he did not have enough experience to fly a N65MY safely. Mr. Ellis had already had an accident in a Baron a few years prior, with his family on board. It was his understanding that the cabin door opened in flight, and Mr. Ellis was not able to land safely.
- Mr. Ellis would typically fly to Utah under an IFR flight plan.
- The night before the accident, Mr. Ellis had approached Mr. Pont, explaining that the left landing light on N65MY had failed. Mr. Pont provided some tools and assistance, and they worked together in Mr. Ellis's hangar to replace the light bulb. During that interaction, Mr. Ellis stated that a circuit breaker kept tripping in the airplane; Mr. Pont could not recall specifically which breaker was tripping.

- Mr. Pont owns a motorized airplane tug that works by lifting the nose wheel off the ground. It was a different style to the tug that Mr. Ellis owned, which kept the airplanes nosewheel on the ground. They discussed the possibility of Mr. Ellis purchasing it, and he decided to try it that evening on N65MY.
- They pulled the airplane out of the hangar with Mr. Pont's tug, and then taxied the airplane to the fuel island. Mr. Pont went along because he had never flown in the airplane, and was interested in looking inside. Mr. Pont has a physical disability that prevented him from easily accessing the front seats, so he sat in a back seat throughout.
- Mr. Ellis added about 200 gallons of fuel, and then taxied to the run-up area so he could check the circuit breaker. He performed an engine runup, but it did not trip. Mr. Pont did not have a clear view of the instrument panel, and could not see what Mr. Ellis was doing to troubleshoot the circuit breaker issue.
- They then taxied back to the hangar.
- Upon arrival, Mr. Ellis again used Mr. Pont's tug, backing the airplane slowly into the hangar. Just as he came to the end, he informed Mr. Pont that the elevator of N65MY would not clear the left propeller of the other airplane in the hangar (a Baron) (See Photo 1) unless he moved the elevator to the "UP" position.
- Mr. Pont exclaimed skepticism, but Mr. Ellis stated that he had done this before, and it was a regular routine. As he continued to move N65MY back, Mr. Pont could see that Mr. Ellis was correct, and the elevator was going to strike the propeller of the Baron.
- Mr. Pont could not specifically recall how Mr. Ellis moved the elevator. When asked to give a more detailed description, he conceded that he assumed simply that Mr. Ellis went to the back of the airplane and moved it up by hand, but he did not recall the exact details. He could only recall that that Mr. Pont had done something to move the elevator up, and once he had done it, he could clearly see that it stayed in the up position, and cleared the propeller.
- Mr. Pont stated that he does not think Mr. Ellis went into the airplane to move the elevator controls, but he could not be certain.
- Mr. Pont then went home for the day, and both agreed that they would see each other the following evening.
- The following evening (accident day) Mr. Pont was working with his friend on a motorbike in his hangar. Mr. Ellis arrived, about 1900.
- Mr. Ellis proceeded to tug N65MY out of the hanger, using Mr. Pont's motorized tug.
- Once N65MY was on the ramp, Mr. Ellis began to talk about the motorbike. He exclaimed that he was running late, and had filed an IFR flight plan to depart by 1900 but that because the weather was so good he was considering flying VFR with flight following.
- The evening progressed, and eventually Mr. Ellis departed in N65MY. Mr. Pont left a short time later to a party that was happening in a hangar on the main ramp. When he arrived at the party (about 15-30 minutes after the N65MY had left), he noticed the N65MY was still in the runup area. He was surprised that it had not already departed.
- A short time later, someone at the party alerted the group that a twin-engine airplane had just crashed.

- Mr. Pont does not have any recollection of seeing a gust lock in the airplane. He was not aware of any recent maintenance issues, although Mr. Ellis stated that he was planning to take the airplane to Riverside to have the brakes serviced.
- Beyond the landing light, he has never seen Mr. Ellis perform maintenance on the airplane.



Photo 1 – Baron, with Finger indicating Contact Area with M65MY Elevator



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**Interview Date: April 20, 2019**  
**Person Contacted: William L Hale,** [REDACTED]  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA115**

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### **Narrative:**

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Hale stated the following:

- Mr. Hale performed a biannual flight review (BFR) with the pilot, Robert Ellis, in N65MY on March 30, 2019.
- Mr. Hale works for a company that provides insurance mandated flight training for Duke airplanes (Bonanza and Baron Pilot Training – BPT). The initial training course requires 10 hours of ground school, and he had provided the ground portion of the training for Mr. Ellis in 2018. Mr. Kent Ewing then provided the flight portion of the training.
- The airplane had undergone an engine overhaul that had taken the airplane out of commission for a large portion of 2018, so Mr. Ellis approached Mr. Hale for a “tune up” and a BFR. This was to be the only time Mr. Hale had flown with the Mr. Ellis.
- Mr. Hale stated that Mr. Ellis had above average flying skills compared to most pilots that sign up for the training, and that he wanted to become proficient in the use of the Avidyne 540 system.
- Mr. Hale’s primary concern during training was regarding the pilots first takeoff from Fresno, when he performed the takeoff at a slow pace, and had a tendency to pitch for climb rather than airspeed, and as such attaining blue line airspeed took excessively long.
- Mr. Ellis stated that he could not get the airplane to blue line within the airport environment at Fullerton, and Mr. Hale stated that they were at Fresno, so should fly accordingly.
- Mr. Hale exclaimed horror when he found out that Mr. Ellis planned to keep the airplane at Fullerton. He was concerned that the length of the runway left no room for error, and as such was unforgiving, and Mr Ellis needed to fly “on the spot”.



- Mr. Hale further stated that the Duke requires “massive” amounts of rudder to compensate for a loss of engine power, and the accelerate-go distances are not favorable for an airport like Fullerton.
- Mr. Ewing does not recall seeing a gust lock in the airplane, or observing the pilot ever using one on the flight.
- During the BFR Mr. Hale did not observe any mechanical issues or anomalies with N65MY, and noted that the engine controls for the two engines were better synchronized than most Duke’s he had flown.



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**Interview Date: April 20, 2019**  
**Person Contacted: James Webb, [REDACTED]**  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA115**

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### **Narrative:**

In an email on April 20, 2019, addressed to FAA Inspector Mr. Tom Walters, Mr. Webb stated the following :

"Mr. Walters,

I am a professional pilot and I hold an ATP certificate with Rotorcraft and Multiengine Land, with type ratings in several turbojets.

On the evening of April 18th, 2019, I was preparing to depart the City Pad located off of taxiway Echo at Fullerton airport. The helicopter was facing 060° degrees. I had called the tower for departure and been advised to hold. I recall hearing a Beechcraft Duke cleared for takeoff and thought I might be able to depart after him. I was at flight RPM with all pre-takeoff checks complete but with my collective still locked. I recall looking up and to my left and seeing a Beechcraft Duke airborne off of runway 24. When I first saw the airplane it was in a nose high attitude, I estimate it was 10 degrees nose up and increasing, about 50'-70' above the runway. It began a left turn and my first thought was, "that's strange, he shouldn't be making an early left turn here" but the bank angle was increasing rapidly, rolling through 45-60 degrees as he passed just to the left of my helicopter. As the airplane passed me I heard loud engine noise. I could not differentiate if there were one or two engines operating. The airplane impacted behind me and my cockpit was brightly illuminated by the fireball. I was concerned that the fireball may reach my helicopter so I quickly pulled the helicopter airborne and moved forward and right a few hundred feet. I then applied left pedal to look back and saw fire and smoke. I realized there was nothing I could do to help and thus I hover taxied over to General Aviation and landed in front of one of their hangars. As I was shutting down, I saw an operations vehicle speeding towards the wreckage from East to West. I don't recall hearing any communications from the tower or the accident airplane during the accident sequence. There was no damage to my helicopter.

Initially I believed that I was watching a single-engine below Vmc induced stall/spin event, but upon reflection and thought I'm not sure if I'd be able to tell the difference between that and merely an excessive pitch attitude at low airspeed on departure resulting in a stall spin."



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**Interview Date: April 20, 2019**  
**Person Contacted: Richard Brown** [REDACTED]  
**NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA115**

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### **Narrative:**

In an email submission dated April 22, 2019, Mr. Brown stated the following:

"I don't know if I can add much to the discussion, but I was there when he took off. I have a Mooney in a hangar on the SE side of the airport and had just finished a flight that evening. I put the plane away and was getting ready to leave for home. My hangar is where the red "X" is on the attachment. I heard a plane getting ready to depart as I was driving towards the exit and stopped about where the red circle is on the attachment to watch it. I rolled down my window, he was lined up and on the brakes as he ran his engines up, normal for a twin there. I watched as he released the brakes and started down the runway. Everything looked and sounded normal. As he lifted off, I think at around 1000-1100' down the runway he looked a little squirrely but I have seen enough private pilots take off not to think anything of it. Once he had left the ground I rolled my window up and started to drive off when out of the corner of my eye I saw the fireball.

There were two other planes in the runup area for 24 that may have also seen everything. There was a twin that was facing the runway and a single that was facing west, both would have had an unrestricted view if they were not busy looking at their instruments while doing their run-ups. In the other attached picture you can see both of those planes, the pilots might be worth talking to if they can be located. I don't think I can offer any more information, but if you have any questions for me please let me know."

"He was all the way back at the start of the displaced threshold [yellow X]. He ran the engines all the way up while [ ] on the brakes before releasing. I couldn't say exactly how long he was at full power before releasing, but it was long enough that I had heard him start to run them up as I was driving and had enough time to stop the car (not going fast as it's only a 10 mph speed limit), roll the window down and still wait before he released and started the roll."

