



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Noreen Price
Aviation Accident Investigator
Alaska Regional Office

Date: January 18, 2017 @ 1430
Person Contacted: Matthew Vandeventer, pilot
NTSB Accident Number: ANC17TA015, N4261T, PA-32-260

Mr. Vandeventer was interviewed at Providence Hospital regarding the accident near Pilot Point, Alaska, that occurred on January 16. Inspector Scott Smith, Anchorage FSDO ASI, Chief Clint Johnson, NTSB, and Gayla Hosath were also present.

Mr. Vandeventer is the owner and operator of Van Air, located in Dillingham, AK. He has been operating since 2003. He owns two PA-32-260 airplanes and conducts Part 135 VFR charter operations. When asked about his employment history, he said that he after leaving the U.S. Marine Corps in 1984, he went to school for an airframes and power plant (A&P) certificate. He moved to Bethel, Alaska where he worked in aviation maintenance also and earned his private pilot license in 1994. He said that he flew in New Zealand as a commercial pilot, then returned to Alaska and went into a joint business venture as Inland Aviation in Bethel. After that business relationship terminated, he worked at Northern Air Cargo as a Flight Engineer until furloughed. He then worked at Peninsula Airways in Dillingham until 2003 when he purchased two airplanes and started operating Van Air. He stated that he performs most of the maintenance on his airplanes himself. He purchased N4261T in about 2008 or 2009.

Mr. Vandeventer said that he was feeling very healthy and had a good night sleep prior to the accident flight. He had no known mechanical gripes or issues with the airplane. He was scheduled to fly one passenger from Dillingham to Port Heiden at 1400. He said that he asked the Port Haiden passenger to be ready for an earlier departure so that he could accommodate other customers later that day. Mr. Vandeventer said that just prior to the flight to Port Heiden, he reviewed the FAA aviation weather cameras for Port Heiden and Pilot Point and also called Flight Service Station (FSS) in Kenai and received the Cold Bay and King Salmon terminal forecasts and the peninsula area forecast. He said that he knows how the peninsula area ices up quickly. He said that to the best of his recollection, the visibility at Port Heiden was forecast to be 8 miles visibility, clouds 1700 feet scattered, high pressure, and clear. He said that he usually

calls the Grant Aviation station agent in Port Heiden and also gets the Sand Point terminal forecast and looks at all the products to get a good picture for the weather.

Mr. Vandeventer said that he believes he took off at 1350 at an approximate gross weight of 2,800 pounds.

Mr. Vandeventer stated that while over Pilot Point enroute to Port Heiden, the airplane started to pick up trace icing around the windshield. He was flying at about 800 feet msl and 120 knots cruise. He decided to land at Pilot Point Airport to recheck the weather. According to Mr. Vandeventer, the Port Heiden AWOS could not be heard below 2,500 feet at Pilot Point. He said that he asked the passenger if she knew anyone at Pilot Point that she could stay with that night, or would she like to return to Dillingham. She said that she did not know anyone to stay with and would prefer to return to Dillingham. Mr. Vandeventer then called the Grant village agent and asked for Port Heiden observed weather. He indicated that the agent said that Port Heiden was 10 miles visibility and 2,000 feet scattered with no icing. Mr. Vandeventer said that he decided to take off toward Port Heiden to "take a look", and if it was bad, they would return to Dillingham. He took off at about 1505 and the weather "looked good" at that time.

According to Mr. Vandeventer, at about eight miles south of Point Pilot, at an altitude of 800 to 1,000 feet msl, he began picking up ice again. He turned north towards Dillingham and the icing conditions were much worse. He indicated that the engine was running rough and he turned on the carburetor heat, which helped for a little while, but then the engine performance decreased, so he turned the carb heat off. He continued turning the carb heat on and off to manage the engine performance. Meanwhile, the altitude had decreased to 500 feet and continued to 400 feet. The windshield had accumulated ice but was still clear enough to see ice on the leading edge of the wings. He said that the airplane felt very heavy and sluggish. He realized at 400 feet that he may not make the Pilot Point Airport and he set up for a forced landing on an ice covered area near the King Salmon River to the East. He did not want to land in the open water of the bay and was concerned for their safety. He could not recall if he selected flaps or if he flared at touch down. He did not recall the impact being very hard, but he did recall the right wing being slightly down, hitting a large chunk of ice, and the right main gear tearing off, followed by the nose gear. After motion stopped, he and the passenger egressed the airplane. Mr. Vandeventer sustained serious back and rib injuries and had difficulty walking. He said that his greatest concern was for the safety of his passenger, who he had known for a long time. He instructed her on how to turn the master switch and radio on, as well as confirm the Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) was on and how to operate the strobe light. He took out his marine VHF radio and they were able to reach someone at Pilot Point on channel 8. His phone was broken prior to the flight, but the passenger was able to make some phone calls and text messages to affect a rescue. They waited almost four hours for the Coast Guard to rescue them. He said that the basket spun around during the hoist, so the crew had to lower the basket back down and hoist again. The rescue medic turned the ELT off and told Mr. Vandeventer that the ELT beacon was heard on 121.5 Mhz. Mr. Vandeventer said that the weather cleared up as the evening progressed.

When asked how he received the frostbite injuries to his hands and fingers, Mr. Vandeventer said that he was wearing cotton work gloves after the accident. When he realized that his hands were cold, he tried to put on his warm gloves but they would not fit over the swelling, so he chose not to wear them. He said that his hands were not hurting him, so he was not very concerned.