



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Noreen Price
Aviation Accident Investigator
Alaska Regional Office

Date: July 23, 2018

Persons Contacted: Mr. Kurt Heller and Ms. Margot Dunne

NTSB Accident Number: ANC18FA055 N9878R Regal Air

Narrative: Mr. Heller and Ms. Dunne witnessed the airplane maneuvering on Willow Lake before the accident on July 18, 2018. They were interviewed together, in person, at their business on the lake. This is a summary of their statements.

Mr. Heller own sand lives at the Flying Machine at Willow Lake with Ms. Dunne. Mr. Heller has an airframe and powerplant FAA certificate and is very familiar with Pratt and Whitney R-985 engines. The Flying Machine is next to the loading ramp and fuel docks (that are currently not open,) on Willow Lake. Two days before the accident, they each noticed that a Regal Air Beaver came in and dropped off the passenger and then took off abeam from the ramp, vice using the whole lake as Beavers usually do.

On the day of the accident, they noticed that the pilot was having a hard time getting the airplane off of the gravel ramp, so they went out to help. They did not see the pilot load the airplane. The pilot said to them, "I have a full load of stuff." They pushed but could not get it off, so the pilot started the engine and tried to drive it off. The right float came off, but the left float was stuck good. The pilot shut down the engine. They were able to loosen the left float and Mr. Heller said "man, you're heavy." The pilot responded "Well, if I have to, I'll come back and offload some cement bricks if I can't take off!" They each thought maybe he was kidding, because they did not know there was cement on board. The pilot seemed happy and was very polite. He then taxied straight out from the ramp and did not use the full lake for the first takeoff run, like most Beavers do.

The rear floats were about under water and the airplane appeared aft heavy. They watched the takeoff attempt, and then the pilot plow taxied, and step turn taxied around the lake north of the island. Mr. Heller stated that the engine sounded like it was at full throttle the whole time. The engine may have been hot by the time the airplane took off. He thought the tail of the airplane was going under water while the pilot plowed taxied.

The airplane eventually conducted a step taxi takeoff and departed to the south. Figure 1 indicates their position on the lake.



Figure 1. Witness locations at Willow Lake.