

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL CRASH OF A YUTE COMMUTER

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SERVICE PIPER PA-32R-300 AIRCRAFT

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NEAR TUNTUTULIAK, ALASKA,

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ON FEBRUARY 6, 2020

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Interview of: HUNTER GILBERT, Line Pilot
Yute Commuter Service

Yute Commuter Service
Bethel, Alaska

Friday,
February 21, 2020

APPEARANCES:

NOREEN PRICE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

HUGH YOUNGERS, Investigator in Charge
Federal Aviation Administration

WADE RENFRO, General Manager
Yute Commuter Service

MYRON ANGSTMAN, Attorney
(On behalf of Yute Commuter Services)

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. PRICE: Okay. We are here in Bethel, Alaska. It's February 21st, 2020. I'm Noreen Price, Aviation Accident Investigator with the NTSB and Investigator in Charge of accident ANC20FA017.

We'll go around the room and introduce ourselves.

MR. ANGSTMAN: I'm Myron Angstman. I'm the attorney for Wade Renfro, and I'm sitting with the witness, although I'm not his personal attorney.

MS. PRICE: Go ahead.

MR. GILBERT: Hunter Gilbert, line pilot for Yute Commuter Service.

MR. RENFRO: Wade Renfro, General Manager, Yute Commuter Service.

MS. PRICE: And on the phone?

MR. YOUNGERS: Hugh Youngers, the IIC for the FAA.

MS. PRICE: Great. Thank you for being here today, everybody, and particularly Hunter.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency that's charged with investigating accidents and determining probable cause and making recommendations so these don't happen in the future, and these interviews are a critical part of that investigation.

You're allowed to have one person represent you here today. That person can't answer any questions, but if you're not sure about an answer and you want to talk to him, we'll just take a

1 break and you can do that. Who is that person today?

2 MR. GILBERT: Myron.

3 MS. PRICE: Thank you. The interview today is going to be
4 recorded, and I'll be sending the recording to a professional
5 transcription service. It'll become part of a written document
6 that'll be published with the final investigative report in about
7 a year. Your name will be in that. It won't be in the report
8 itself, but it will be on public information that's available
9 today.

10 Before we get started, do you have any questions?

11 MR. GILBERT: No, ma'am.

12 MS. PRICE: Okay.

13 INTERVIEW OF HUNTER GILBERT

14 BY MS. PRICE:

15 Q. Can you spell your name for the -- your full name for the
16 record?

17 A. H-u-n-t-e-r, G-i-l-b-e-r-t.

18 Q. Thank you. So what is your assignment here at Yute Commuter
19 Service?

20 A. I fly the 172 -- Cessna 172.

21 Q. Okay. And is that on scheduled flights or are they --

22 A. Scheduled.

23 Q. Scheduled flights. And how long have you worked here?

24 A. Since November 3rd, 2019.

25 Q. About how many total hours do you have?

1 A. 625.

2 Q. And can you give me just an idea of, prior to working for
3 Yute, what you did before that?

4 A. I was a ferry pilot in Louisville, Kentucky. I flew Cherokee
5 6s.

6 Q. Okay. So about how many hours do you fly here per month?

7 A. Ranges between 70 and 85. But I've only been out here
8 since -- I've only been on the line since the end of December.

9 Q. Okay. Well, that's a good amount. And tell me about the
10 training program when you came. Do you feel like the training
11 program, ground and flight, prepared you for your line flights?

12 A. Yes, it did.

13 Q. Who gave you your check ride?

14 A. It was James Howery with the FAA.

15 Q. How do you feel about the pay here? Are you paid by the
16 hour, by --

17 A. I'm paid daily.

18 Q. A daily rate?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And do you feel like it's a fair payment?

21 A. I think it's fair.

22 Q. So prior to working here, did you have any Alaska flight
23 time?

24 A. No, ma'am.

25 Q. How do you feel about flying here?

1 A. I don't have any issues with flying here. I enjoy it.

2 Q. Yeah? Tell me about the weather here this time of year.

3 A. It can be dangerous, but you just have to prepare yourself
4 and know what you're going to be flying to -- flying into.

5 Q. Have you ever flown the route out to Kipnuk and Chefornak?

6 A. I've been to Kipnuk; I've not been to Chefornak.

7 Q. Have you ever run into coastal fog out there on any of your
8 flights?

9 A. No, ma'am. No.

10 Q. So when you come in, in the morning for a flight, could you
11 just tell me how you prepare for your flight in regards to
12 weather?

13 A. Well, I first wake up, and I look at my phone and look at
14 ForeFlight.

15 Q. ForeFlight?

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And I look at the area weather. And then I come here and
19 talk to some of the senior pilots and go on FAA for cameras and
20 check everything out there. And then I talk to dispatch, and I
21 like to find out the destination airport's weather and the -- run
22 the reports. That's how I prepare myself for every flight.

23 Q. So do you ever find, once you look at all those things and
24 then you depart, that the weather changes?

25 A. I will make the choice if it changes then I come back to

1 Bethel.

2 Q. Have you ever returned not completing a flight because of
3 weather?

4 A. I have not come into that situation. No.

5 Q. Have you ever had to cancel for weather?

6 A. Yes, I have.

7 Q. Have you ever departed under special VFR departure out of
8 Bethel?

9 A. I have not. I have come into Bethel under special because of
10 forecast weather.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And I had prior training, or special training -- special VFR
13 training.

14 Q. Okay. Have you ever inadvertently flown into IMC conditions
15 while flying here?

16 A. No, ma'am.

17 Q. Have you ever had any training here for what to do if you fly
18 inadvertently into IMC conditions?

19 A. Yes, ma'am.

20 Q. And what did the training tell you?

21 A. They tell me to -- they say the general things to do if you
22 fly into something like that, which would either be climb, turn
23 around, and just mainly focus on your instruments.

24 Q. Okay. So did you do any training with Tony Matthews at all
25 or fly with him in any way?

- 1 A. No, ma'am.
- 2 Q. Did you know him at all?
- 3 A. We went to the same flight school in Louisville, Kentucky.
- 4 Q. Oh, you did?
- 5 A. Yes. We did.
- 6 Q. And did you know him when you went to that flight school?
- 7 A. I met him in the flight school, and I've known him since
- 8 then, and we've kept close contact.
- 9 Q. And what is he like?
- 10 A. He's a great person.
- 11 Q. I'm sorry about the accident. I know that's tough.
- 12 A. That's okay.
- 13 Q. Did he ever talk to you about the company, whether he was
- 14 excited to be working here, happy to be working here, disappointed
- 15 in any way?
- 16 A. No. He -- this was our plan, to come up here, when we were
- 17 in flight school, and it was great to be up here.
- 18 Q. Why did he want to come up here?
- 19 A. Just to get the new experience of flying in Alaska.
- 20 Q. Uh-huh. So he didn't talk about any concerns he had about
- 21 flying in these types of conditions?
- 22 A. No, ma'am.
- 23 Q. Have you ever experienced any white out or flat light here?
- 24 A. No, ma'am.
- 25 Q. Did Tony ever talk about any life personal issues that might

1 have been bothering him?

2 A. No.

3 Q. How about any medical, sick, flu, or anything that he --

4 A. No, ma'am.

5 Q. Have you ever had the flight folks -- the flight follower
6 call you and turn you around on a flight for any reason, for
7 developing weather or otherwise?

8 A. No.

9 Q. What were you doing on the day of the accident? Were you
10 flying that day?

11 A. I was home in Florida.

12 Q. Okay. Have you ever been to a safety meeting with the
13 company since you've been here?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Can you describe what type of safety meeting? Was it an all
16 pilot, all company, ground; what was it?

17 A. It was all the pilots going over safety briefing, or going
18 over weather for the day.

19 Q. And how often do those occur?

20 A. Currently every day now.

21 Q. Before the time of the accident, I know it's hard to think,
22 when was it going on then?

23 A. I don't know. I can't -- I don't know.

24 Q. You can't recall any, like, safety meetings between November
25 and February 6th?

1 A. We did have safety meetings, but I can't -- it wasn't every
2 day.

3 Q. And who would conduct them?

4 A. Either Byron or Tony.

5 Q. Okay. What was discussed at those meetings?

6 A. I can't recall.

7 MS. PRICE: Okay. Thank you.

8 Hugh, do you have any questions for Hunter?

9 MR. YOUNGERS: I don't actually.

10 MS. PRICE: Was that a no?

11 MR. YOUNGERS: Yes.

12 MS. PRICE: Okay. Go ahead.

13 MR. YOUNGERS: No, I don't have any.

14 (Laughter.)

15 MS. PRICE: I'm sorry. Okay, got you.

16 Wade, do you have anything?

17 MR. RENFRO: I don't.

18 MS. PRICE: All right. Thank you.

19 Hunter, is there anything else you think would be helpful to
20 the investigation?

21 MR. GILBERT: No, ma'am.

22 MS. PRICE: Okay. Thank you. That concludes the interview.

23 (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: FATAL CRASH OF A YUTE COMMUTER
SERVICE PIPER PA-32R-300 AIRCRAFT
NEAR TUNTUTULIAK, ALASKA,
ON FEBRUARY 6, 2020
Interview of Hunter Gilbert

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC20FA017

PLACE: Bethel, Alaska

DATE: February 21, 2020

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.


Letha J. Wheeler
Transcriber