

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: ARCHELAUS "ERNIE" TURRENTINE, Pilot
Yute Commuter Service

Yute Commuter Service
Bethel, Alaska

Saturday,
February 8, 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 Service)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Archelaus "Ernie" Turrentine:		
By Ms. Price		5

I N T E R V I E W

MS. PRICE: Okay. We're here February 8th. This is a NTSB investigation ANC20FA017. We're at Yute Commuter Service in Bethel, Alaska. I'm Noreen Price, the Investigator in Charge, NTSB Accident Investigator.

Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves.

MR. ANGSTMAN: I'm Myron Angstman. I'm the attorney for Yute, and I have been asked to appear tonight as a representative for the witness Mr. Turrentine, but I have not established an attorney/client relationship with him. And, furthermore, he and I have not visited about this subject, or really perhaps any subject, other than the fact that I am acquainted with him from a long time ago.

MS. PRICE: Okay.

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

MR. RENFRO: Wade Renfro, General Manager.

MR. TURRENTINE: And Archelaus Ernest Turrentine. I go by Ernie.

MS. PRICE: All right. Thank you, Ernie. Appreciate it. So Ernie, you can have one person here to help you out today. Who would that person be?

MR. TURRENTINE: That would be Myron Angstman.

MS. PRICE: Okay. Great. Thank you. Myron, we talked about this already, but you cannot answer any questions, but we can stop the interview; you can confer with him.

1 So this is an NTSB accident investigation. We investigate
2 accidents so we can determine probable cause and make
3 recommendations so these tragedies don't happen in the future.

4 There will be a public record that will include transcription
5 of what we talk about here today. And if anyone has any more
6 questions or concerns before we get started?

7 MR. TURRENTINE: No.

8 MS. PRICE: Okay.

9 INTERVIEW OF ARCHELAUS E. TURRENTINE

10 BY MS. PRICE:

11 Q. So, Ernie, if you would say your full name again and spell it
12 out for the record. Thank you.

13 A. Oh.

14 Q. Sorry.

15 A. That's quite a mouthful. Anyway, Archelaus, my first name,
16 Ernest Turrentine. That's A-r-c-h-e-l-a-u-s, Ernest, E-r-n-e-s-t,
17 T-u-r-r-e-n-t-i-n-e, the III.

18 Q. That's a fabulous name. Okay. And what's your official
19 title here at the company?

20 A. Senior pilot.

21 Q. How many years have you worked here?

22 A. Jeez, how long has the company been in business now?

23 MR. RENFRO: Since -- we have been operating since May or
24 June -- yeah, June of 2017.

25 MR. TURRENTINE: So we are going on -- near 3 years, not

1 quite.

2 MS. PRICE: All right.

3 BY MS. PRICE:

4 Q. How about, how many pilot flight time hours do you have?

5 A. Oh, my.

6 Q. Roughly. It doesn't have to be exact.

7 A. Well I, for 10 years, have been saying I have over 30,000.

8 So it could be 40,000. A lot. There's a lot of years I flew

9 1,400 hours a year.

10 Q. That's a lot.

11 A. It is.

12 Q. That's the most I have heard yet. Amazing.

13 And if you could, give me a brief description of your
14 background. Sounds like you have done a lot and been a lot of
15 places, but an overview of maybe how many other companies you have
16 worked for and when you started flying. Just an overview though,
17 not details because that could take an hour from what I can tell.

18 A. Okay. Yeah. Real quick, I -- back in late '70s I went to
19 Mount Hood Community College to get an aviation degree, got my
20 licenses. Then I went to work for the Boeing Company as an
21 inspector. I got my power plant license, then I got my A license.

22 Then I got a job up here in '83 with Bush Air. I worked for
23 them for a very short time. Went to work for Herman's Air. Went
24 to work for Harold's Friendship Air. Then I worked for
25 (indiscernible) slash Village in Village Air Cargo for a lot of

1 years; worked for Yute Air. After they went out of business and
2 they got bought out, I went to work for Renfro's, and the owner of
3 the company decided to start an airline, Package Air d/b/a Yute
4 Commuter Service.

5 Q. Great. And have you had any other titles with the company
6 here other than senior pilot?

7 A. I have been chief pilot.

8 Q. And when was that period?

9 A. That was for -- well, when we started the company until just
10 a few months ago, late summer, September, somewhere around in
11 there.

12 Q. Okay. Did you hold a chief pilot or DO position in any other
13 companies before?

14 A. I have. I have been chief pilot a couple different
15 companies. I've been chief pilot at the former Yute Air. I was
16 chief pilot for a lot of years at (indiscernible) Air/Village
17 Aviation. I had an assistant DO before.

18 Q. So you have a lot of experience in 135 operations?

19 A. I do.

20 Q. Okay. Have you ever flown with the accident pilot?

21 A. Only on an evaluation ride.

22 Q. And can you describe what that means? What is an evaluation
23 flight?

24 A. Whether we should hire him or not. Is he capable of
25 learning, learning from us to fly?

1 Q. And how many evaluation flights have you done with new or
2 prospective hires before, about? I mean, are you the one that
3 does all the evals or is it some --

4 A. You're talking just this company or for life?

5 Q. Well, let's just keep it to this company.

6 A. Okay. A couple dozen at least, if not more.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. A couple dozen. Yeah, I fly a couple dozen maybe.

9 Q. And how did he perform on that evaluation flight?

10 A. He did very well.

11 Q. And typically what did you do on the evaluation flight? Any
12 instrument work at all?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. No, no. It's usually -- to me it should just be very simple.
16 We did a couple touch and goes over at the Poss (ph.) Gap, which
17 is, like, 6 miles away.

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 A. And he was a very, very good pilot. And of the other -- he
20 shined far above any of the other pilots that we -- I had an eval
21 ride with.

22 Q. What type of plane was it in?

23 A. It was a 172. It was just looking for basic skills.

24 Q. Right. Yeah.

25 A. Are you trainable?

1 Q. How about his personality? Can you describe what his
2 personality was like?

3 A. He had a nice, a very nice personality. He listened. He's a
4 person who wants to learn everything and couldn't probably have
5 been a better personality for wanting to hire somebody.

6 Q. Do you do any ground training classes?

7 A. I did a ground training class over the, the Piper Lance, or
8 the PA32R-300.

9 Q. Was he in that class?

10 A. Yes. He was in that class.

11 Q. Was there anything notable about his performance in class or
12 interest or anything of that sort?

13 A. No. He was attentive.

14 Q. Okay. From your perspective, if you would describe a typical
15 dispatch -- and I'm using the word dispatch; I understand it's not
16 truly a dispatch process, but -- how a flight is released from the
17 company from a pilot's perspective along with the risk assessment
18 process? From coming in, in the morning, what --

19 A. First thing in the morning they -- the flight following
20 personnel start gathering weather. They also gather what the
21 runways are like. They can get information from AWOS. They get
22 information -- they can look at cams. It's usually dark in the
23 morning this time of year so the cams don't do very much for you
24 first thing in the morning. And they get information from the
25 village agents for weather and runway reports.

1 And then we have people checking in. Mail is basically
2 checking in. They get the mail in the morning and everything
3 shows up on their computer screen. It's all entered in the
4 computer.

5 Q. Uh-huh.

6 A. And that way -- we have scheduled flights; they leave at a
7 certain time.

8 Q. Are all the flights scheduled or do you also have other
9 things going on?

10 A. We do have on-demand charter flights. Some days we have none
11 because we're -- our main business is scheduled.

12 Q. Is scheduled. Okay. That's good. Thanks.

13 A. Yeah. It's -- but we do charter flights.

14 Q. Okay. So the flights are on the computer system --

15 A. So anyway, all the information is on the computer, so they
16 start putting loads together, making manifests, assigning flights
17 to certain pilots, making the manifest. And they, you know, after
18 they get all this done, all this information from all over, can
19 they go to a village --

20 Q. Can I -- I'm sorry. Can I just interrupt you? I'm sorry to
21 interrupt you. But how -- you keep saying they. Who is they?

22 A. There's two. There's a dispatcher.

23 Q. Uh-huh.

24 A. Oh, I'm using the word dispatcher.

25 Q. It's okay. We understand they're not a true dispatcher, but

1 if that's what the company calls them, then let's call them that.

2 A. Right. Then there's basically an assistant.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And they will be helping getting the weather. They answer
5 the radio, because there's a lot of work there. It's a very hard
6 job. You know, it's a very demanding job. So they get all this
7 information together and, you know, determine what will be up. If
8 the weather is good enough, we can go there, and we had this load
9 to go there and pick up these people. We have people to pick up;
10 people to drop off. And so they make the manifest.

11 And then they let the pilot know, you're going to be going
12 here. And the pilot may ask them questions about the weather and
13 what the flight is going to do and such. Then the pilot will get
14 on the computer usually and check the cams and check the AWOS and
15 ask questions. And usually in a course -- this all takes time
16 because the airplane has to be loaded.

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. And the pilot is out there helping load the airplane. You
19 know, he has to figure out its weight and balance. And this all
20 takes a little bit of time; it's a lot of work. And so once the
21 airplane is all getting loaded and -- usually that's when the
22 pilot will get the manifest to make that last minute decision and
23 get the risk assessment done. Then we hand over the risk
24 assessment and somebody, one of the two people from the flight
25 following, initials the flight release.

1 Q. And it is the pilot that fills out that risk assessment form?

2 A. Yes. The pilot fills it out.

3 Q. Okay. And at the bottom I noticed on the form there's a
4 place for the dispatch person to sign --

5 A. And the pilot also to initial.

6 Q. They both sign, right?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. So does it take both of them to release the flight or is it
9 just the pilot's responsibility?

10 A. Yes. Yes. And if there's so many points, they may have to
11 get either the DO or the person that is in operational control to
12 initial it too.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. If there's too many points.

15 Q. And who is --

16 A. At least confer.

17 Q. Right. And who is responsible for doing that? Does the
18 pilot do that or does the dispatch person do that?

19 A. It's a joint thing. They should --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Both of them should be aware of that.

22 Q. And then --

23 A. And that's the whole idea of, get as many people involved in
24 it as possible, you know? Like, if one person says no, then the
25 flight doesn't happen, you know?

1 Q. Okay. So if the weather is, in a pilot's opinion, okay, but
2 in dispatch's opinion maybe not, it doesn't go?

3 A. Yeah. Once somebody says they don't like this, then the
4 flight is a no-go.

5 Q. Have you ever run into a situation where you may not want to
6 go or a pilot doesn't want to go because they feel like the
7 weather is just marginal, and dispatch thinks it's okay?

8 A. Oh, yeah, of course.

9 Q. And what happens in those circumstances?

10 A. They don't go.

11 Q. Just doesn't go. Okay.

12 A. And we have a company and culture that encourages that, you
13 know, yeah. You don't like it, you don't go.

14 Q. Okay. How do you --

15 A. We even have it -- go ahead.

16 Q. No, no, no.

17 A. You know --

18 Q. That's okay. You're the one that has a flight, not me.

19 A. You know, it's -- we have one gentleman who really doesn't
20 like to fly in the dark, and that's a huge thing. And he's a very
21 experienced pilot but, you know, I'll just say, that's okay; if
22 you don't like it, that's fine. And even though it puts -- it's
23 not good for the company, it's safety.

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. Because safety is everything, I mean, you know? That's the

1 way I look at it.

2 Q. In your opinion, do the pilots typically fill out the risk
3 assessment forms?

4 A. Oh, yes.

5 Q. And who would know if they didn't?

6 A. It's -- flight following should know. I mean, that's
7 basically it in a nutshell.

8 Q. Okay. So after you both sign it, where does that piece of
9 paper go?

10 A. It stays in the book. I showed you the flight and time and
11 duty sheet. We keep it in the book for the day, and we usually
12 turn them in at the end of the evening.

13 Q. Turn them in to whom?

14 A. To flight following.

15 Q. So they're already in a book in the dispatch office, right?

16 A. No. They're actually -- well, they are right there next to
17 dispatch office on a shelf. We have a window.

18 Q. In between the pilots and the dispatch?

19 A. Right.

20 Q. Okay. So it just sits there. You fill it out. You sign it.
21 They sign it. Sits in a book. You go fly for the day. At the
22 end of the day, pilots take those sheets from the day and hand
23 them to --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay.

1 MR. RENFRO: Then they put them -- can I?

2 MS. PRICE: Yes, certainly.

3 MR. RENFRO: Then they put them in the pilot's folder; each
4 pilot has a folder that they put those risk analysis forms in.
5 And they keep them in the dispatch office.

6 MS. PRICE: Okay.

7 MR. RENFRO: In fact, you saw one of the folders today.

8 MS. PRICE: Yeah. And that was Wade Renfro speaking for the
9 transcript.

10 MR. RENFRO: Sorry.

11 MS. PRICE: No, that's okay. If -- so if you feel like it,
12 just say, this is Wade.

13 BY MS. PRICE:

14 Q. Okay. And do you feel like the risk assessment process, as
15 it works now and the form, is a good tool for the company and
16 pilots to use?

17 A. Oh, very much so.

18 Q. Have you used it before in other companies?

19 A. I have.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And I mean, it can always get better. You know, everything
22 is a work in progress.

23 Q. Okay. Thank you.

24 A. You're welcome.

25 Q. So regarding weather, where do you get your -- what sources

1 and what information products do you look at for your weather in
2 preflight?

3 A. I get it from flight following, and I also -- right across
4 the window we have a computer there that we get on to that we
5 gather all the information we need. We gather the weather here.
6 We can get the TAF, get the forecast, all of the weather right off
7 the computer there.

8 Q. So do you pull it off of what site? There's so many.

9 A. Oh, numerous sites you can --

10 Q. Well, I'm just curious as to what you do. Our weather folks
11 and our specialists that work on the investigations and myself are
12 very curious as to --

13 A. There's, like, about a dozen sites on that computer.

14 Q. Uh-huh.

15 A. And all you -- you'll see all those different windows and all
16 the different -- you know, for example, some people will pull the
17 TAFs right off the -- and I didn't even know you could do that,
18 off the AFT cam. But I usually go to a separate page to get the
19 TAFs.

20 Q. Do you know, is it the National Weather Service, the Alaska?

21 A. The National Weather Service? You know, I'm --

22 Q. That's okay. That's all right.

23 A. You know, I'm not going to say that because I might be wrong.
24 I just use the sites.

25 Q. Okay. All right.

1 MR. RENFRO: Do you want me to elaborate on that at all?

2 MS. PRICE: Not at this time. Yeah, we'll talk about that at
3 your, your brief.

4 BY MS. PRICE:

5 Q. So when the dispatch folks talked to you, the flight
6 follower, okay -- which is the assistant, right? Is the flight
7 follower the assistant?

8 A. What's that?

9 Q. The flight follower is the assistant dispatch person or just
10 one of the two?

11 A. No, they are both flight following.

12 Q. Oh, they are both flight following. So one of them briefs
13 you on the weather. Are they typically briefing you on the
14 current conditions, the METARs or the village agent information
15 and runway conditions?

16 A. It's whatever they have there. And quite often I say, how
17 old is that? I want to get the newest weather.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And, in fact, we were having a discussion about that today,
20 and I know for sure that they definitely got some updated weather
21 because that was -- you know, what you saw on the sheet was way
22 too old. And so they instantly pull up weather, and it is not
23 documented anywhere because we were talking about that today.

24 Q. Uh-huh. Right. So we're referring to the weather board, the
25 document that we looked at today that is for the accident day --

1 A. Right.

2 Q. -- and the weather was only really documented that the flight
3 followers got early in the morning.

4 A. I believe that it was at 7:30.

5 Q. Yes. 7:30 for the accident flight.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. But if you have a later flight, you're saying they brief you,
8 but maybe they don't document it?

9 A. Yes. Oh, yes.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And the pilot, too, I'm sure he pulled up the weather and --
12 yeah, they're not going to be, you know, launching 3 hours later
13 without any updated weather.

14 Q. Okay. And then, do you find the forecast -- the TAFs area
15 forecasts, are they reliable? Are they -- it's an important
16 question. You have a lot of experience, so I --

17 A. Yeah. Sometimes you think they're just guessing and other
18 times he seems fairly accurate. Sometimes amazingly accurate.
19 Then other days, no. So it's very mixed.

20 Q. It's inconsistent.

21 A. Yes. That's what it is. It's not an exact science.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Forecasting it, I'm sure it's -- it's a lot better over the
24 years. I'll tell you that. It's a lot better than it used to be.

25 Q. That's good.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. So how about the weather patterns here in this area of Alaska
3 -- southwest Alaska? What type of weather is of particular
4 concern out here?

5 A. Well, all weather.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. That's a pretty general question. To me, you know, icing is
8 one of the scariest things.

9 Q. So pretend I am a pilot from, let's say, Kansas that has
10 never flown here in southwest Alaska. What specifics about Alaska
11 and this area of Alaska do you think would be most important to
12 highlight regarding weather?

13 A. Well, things get white out here in the winter. And one of
14 my, one of my biggest -- this is one of my biggest stories I like
15 to tell pilots, that back in the '80s I was giving this guy IOE.
16 Had a fresh ATP, very sharp pilot, can fly over Newtok. You know,
17 it's about 20 mile visibility, and pretty nice weather. Of
18 course, everything is fairly white out there. A lot of snow that
19 year.

20 And we get on downwind, and he goes within 200 feet of the
21 ground, and I said, are you going to look at the -- I let him go
22 down -- you going to look at the instruments or are you going to
23 hit the ground? So he climbed on back up. You turn final,
24 there's a village, there's a runway, there's stuff to look at.
25 This is just on downwind, mind you. And it shook him up so bad he

1 couldn't fly the next leg. He had me fly the next leg. He didn't
2 want to. It shook him up bad.

3 It -- as I say, it gave him some religion. You know, he --
4 that was a huge wakeup call. And of course, I had -- I'd been
5 doing this so long, I had a lot of stories to tell kind of in that
6 same scheme. That's one of my favorite ones. So it's --

7 Q. Was that like a --

8 A. And he was from California.

9 Q. Was that a whiteout, like, blowing or was it more flat light?

10 A. More flat light. Because it wasn't a whiteout --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. -- there's just nothing to look at.

13 Q. Uh-huh.

14 A. Put a bush or two out there, anything with color.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. And like I say, the minute you turn final, there's a whole
17 village. You got houses. You got a runway. There's color;
18 there's something to look at.

19 Q. Uh-huh.

20 A. And you can kind of see the mountains over a number of miles
21 away, some hills actually. This is out in Nelson Island and --
22 but you got to really kind of know how to make them out, because
23 they're white, the sky is white, everything is white.

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. And, you know, years where there's not as much snow more

1 bushes are showing too, or anything is showing. Maybe the ice is
2 showing. Just something needs to show other than snow to have
3 that contrast.

4 Q. Uh-huh. So in regard to that issue, is there -- are pilots
5 here trained on recognizing diminishing visibility and flat light?
6 Is that discussed in ground school, if you can recall? Or are
7 there any in-flight, simulator-type training scenarios that are
8 used to prepare pilots for that scenario?

9 A. May I confer with?

10 MS. PRICE: Certainly. We are going to take a quick break,
11 and we're stopping the recording.

12 (Off the record.)

13 (On the record.)

14 MS. PRICE: Okay. We're recording again.

15 BY MS. PRICE:

16 Q. All right. Back to our last question. We were talking about
17 diminishing visibility and flat light, and I asked you if there's
18 any training for new hires on how to recognize that and what to do
19 in the case of diminishing visibility for a VFR flight and
20 developing flat light situation.

21 A. There is. We talk about that extensively in ground school,
22 and I know I probably do more than most people. I -- since I have
23 a lot of experience up here, I know new people can come up here
24 and get in trouble. And I talk extensively about how you -- to
25 scan. You know, you're never VFR if things are white or it's

1 dark. You're in, you're out, you're always -- you never focus
2 your eyes any one place is the main thing, is you're totally doing
3 the complete scan all the time. That's basically it in a
4 nutshell.

5 Q. So how would a pilot be able to determine that the visibility
6 is diminishing? It goes from seven to five to three. What -- are
7 there any techniques in-flight that you would recommend that would
8 alert a pilot that there's a threat there specific, other than
9 moving your eyes around?

10 A. There is called the visual angle cut off. At a certain
11 angle, you know, you have 2 miles, and sometimes that can be hard
12 to determine. Like, if you're flying over a lake.

13 Q. Uh-huh.

14 A. You know, but you look at the first place you can see at a
15 certain angle that's 2 miles, and you can have an angle at 5 miles
16 or whatever. But that is a technique.

17 Q. How about VFR into IMC conditions? Does the company have
18 any, that you know of, published procedures on how a pilot is
19 supposed to respond to finding themselves in IMC?

20 A. You do a 180 back. You go on your instruments, and you do a
21 180 to get out of IMC conditions.

22 Q. And is that maneuver discussed in ground school or is it
23 practiced -- I don't know what type of, you know --

24 A. It's discussed --

25 Q. -- ATDs or simulators are available out here in Bethel.

1 A. We do not have -- there used to be one out here in Bethel
2 available, but there's not anymore. We mostly discuss that in
3 ground school.

4 Q. Okay. Is there any online training that the company uses
5 to -- videos of --

6 A. There is not. We've had a lot of discussion to get that.
7 And, of course, we have to -- once we find something that we want,
8 then we have to get into the training manual, get it approved.

9 Q. Right. Okay. So --

10 MR. RENFRO: Is it okay if I suggest to you a follow-up
11 question? Because you had asked him about whether they are
12 instructed, and I believe that he -- when we took the break then
13 he -- you did not go back to the question whether or not he
14 actually engaged in that with this pilot.

15 MS. PRICE: No, I didn't ask him about this pilot.

16 MR. RENFRO: Okay.

17 MS. PRICE: It's a general question.

18 BY MS. PRICE:

19 Q. Is there a training syllabus that I could look at that you
20 would have that information in it to cover; do you know?

21 A. We do have a training syllabus.

22 Q. Do you know if that is specifically listed in it? You may
23 not know. If you don't --

24 A. I do not know.

25 Q. Okay. That's fine.

1 A. We have a fairly newer syllabus, and I --

2 Q. Uh-huh.

3 A. So I'd have to refresh.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. We've had our training manual changed about -- a few times
6 here just within the last few months.

7 Q. Do you know why it was changed?

8 A. Yes. It was asked for us to change or get our training
9 manual cleaned up and updated, and then we had an inspection at --
10 what's the name of the inspection? That --

11 MR. RENFRO: CHAP (ph.).

12 MR. TURRENTINE: Yes, the CHAP inspection. And they
13 recommended us doing some changes in our training manual, and so
14 we did them.

15 BY MS. PRICE:

16 Q. Okay. So you used to be a check airman here, correct?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And at I imagine many other companies, correct?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. So how would you describe the difference between new hires 5
21 to 10 years ago -- I know you weren't here in this company, but
22 you have experience here in Alaska -- as compared to the new hires
23 now?

24 A. Pilots coming up here are not as good as they used to be.

25 Q. And what makes them not as good? Is it hours, where they are

1 flying, or do you think it's how they are being trained?

2 A. How they are being trained. One of the biggest gripes I have
3 is a lot of them do not know the basic fundamentals of how to land
4 in a crosswind. Nobody taught them. I have to teach them the
5 very basics. And there are two different -- getting on that
6 subject, there are two different ways to land in a crosswind,
7 which I definitely think the -- you know, and I won't get into
8 that. But they don't -- they weren't taught any, anything.

9 Q. So --

10 A. I mean, they really don't have a clue. It's --

11 Q. How about experience wise? Do you know -- so when you look
12 at pilots that you're hiring that -- you may not have been the
13 hiring manager, but you were a check airman, so you are
14 familiar -- 5 to 10 years ago, with pilots that you guys are
15 hiring now experience wise. The crosswind landings I understand,
16 but --

17 A. Well, we do have a lot of local pilots that have a lot of
18 experience. And so when we have -- try to find somebody new,
19 we've got about everybody locally we can. We usually are finding
20 people that are getting -- you know, they just barely meet the
21 minimum standards legally to fly, and they are from the lower 48.
22 And so yeah, it's -- the pilot -- hey, everybody knows the pilot
23 market is getting tighter. So --

24 Q. Right. So 10 years ago roughly, working for another company,
25 new hires, did they have limitations on where they could go, what

1 they could do and --

2 A. Oh, yes.

3 Q. And how about now? Does this company have limitations on --

4 A. Oh, yes.

5 Q. -- what a new pilot can do? What type of limitations are on?

6 A. Crosswinds, weather. Crosswinds are a big one.

7 Q. So where would they find those; do you know? Is that written
8 anywhere for the new pilots?

9 A. Usually it's verbal.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Then the dispatchers will make notes of that, and the pilot
12 is well aware of it.

13 Q. So is it the new pilots that set their own limitations --

14 A. Oh, no. No, they --

15 Q. -- or is it the chief pilot that says these pilots are
16 limited?

17 A. The chief pilot and the D0 does it quite a bit.

18 Q. Okay. So this pilot -- is it a standard number? Like, if
19 you are under 300 hours, 6 months, or is it just --

20 A. I don't know, because I think it's mostly the D0 is mostly
21 setting them now, and a lot of it is how the person is doing.
22 There are some people that, when they start, they can't fly in
23 much wind.

24 Q. Uh-huh. How about destinations? If a new pilot had never
25 been to an airport, are they permitted to go to an airport they

1 have never been to before?

2 A. Yeah, as long as the weather is good.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And they study up.

5 Q. So who has operational control here typically?

6 A. Typically it is Tony Spangler.

7 Q. Okay. And he is the DO, right?

8 A. He is the DO. And there are three other people that can take
9 operational control: Wade, myself, and Byron, the chief pilot.

10 Q. So you have delegated operational control authority? Do you
11 know?

12 A. What's that?

13 Q. Officially -- so the operational control, you are one of the
14 delegates that can --

15 A. Yes. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. Okay. And how, on a day-to-day basis, do pilots or dispatch,
17 how do they know who is the duty operational control person, who
18 actually is holding operational control?

19 A. It's written up on the board, and from the window there we
20 can see who is written up on the board there.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It's a whiteboard that --

23 Q. And is that person always here or --

24 A. They are not always here.

25 Q. Are they available by phone?

1 A. Oh, yes.

2 Q. Can they always be reached? Are you confident?

3 A. Oh, yes. One time it took me a whole minute to get back, and
4 I heard about that. It's a minute I got back to you when I was in
5 operational control. So I mean, yeah, it's like instantly. You
6 know it's -- you have to be available, and you have to be in the
7 know of exactly everything, what's going on.

8 Q. Uh-huh. So you were the -- when you were the chief pilot,
9 how often did the POI visit the base here? How often did you see
10 the POI?

11 A. Oh, jeez, that varies a lot. Sometimes he seemed to come by
12 all the time. Then all of a sudden sometimes, you know, he was
13 busy.

14 Q. Do you have a good relationship with him?

15 A. Yes, I do.

16 Q. Would you -- what would you say your priority was as a chief
17 pilot working with the POI on any improvements? Is there one
18 thing specifically that you were working on at that time? Or your
19 greatest concern as a chief pilot?

20 A. That's a good question. I'm trying to think.

21 Q. And if you can't remember, you know, just say so.

22 A. It's just a lot of things. I don't know what would be --

23 Q. Uh-huh. The priority?

24 A. -- you know, what would be the biggest priority, but just
25 that basically all of our paperwork is good, you know, and we want

1 all the paperwork to be together. So there was a lot of things.
2 Everything from pilot records to prior records --

3 Q. Uh-huh.

4 A. I just want to make sure everything is done right, where
5 they're happy.

6 Q. Okay. And did you fly 32 Charlie?

7 A. That's the one -- I never, I never flew that airplane.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Barely looked in it. Fairly new airplane.

10 Q. But you fly that -- I don't know how many of those planes are
11 on the certificate; I didn't look at the types. How many Cherokee
12 Lance --

13 A. I've flown all the other ones that we have.

14 Q. Did you know this one had ABS-B equipment on it, 32 Charlie?

15 A. I do not, I do not -- I don't know the airplane.

16 Q. Yeah, that's good. That's a good answer.

17 A. Yes. So I never really sat in it even or even hardly looked
18 inside of it. I should have, but I didn't.

19 Q. All right. So on the day of the accident you flew around the
20 accident time, right? If you can refresh my memory --

21 A. Oh, yes. Yes.

22 Q. What time did you --

23 A. Yes. Yes. I landed here in Bethel at 11:17. I remember
24 looking at that this morning with you.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. I can't remember exactly when I took off, but I remember
2 seeing that -- because I was trying to put the timeframe in my
3 mind where, by the time I walked in the door and I heard the
4 airplane is overdue, I was very alarmed.

5 Q. What were the weather conditions at that time when you landed
6 in the area; do you remember?

7 A. Here in Bethel?

8 Q. Yep.

9 A. It was 800, overcast. I believe they were calling it 10
10 miles, but I might be mistaken.

11 Q. That's okay. Yeah.

12 A. There was -- just south of the airport, right off the
13 approach end, it was a little fuzzy there, but other than that,
14 visibility was very good. You know, you had some -- there were
15 some areas where there were some lower ceilings. I was holding in
16 the southeast.

17 Q. And why were you holding?

18 A. Because it was, it was below -- being 800 feet, it was below
19 basic VFR.

20 Q. Uh-huh.

21 A. So that means you needed to have a special VFR to arrive into
22 Bethel, so I was holding out there waiting for my special VFR
23 clearance.

24 Q. Okay. When you departed though earlier it was VFR?

25 A. It was VFR.

1 Q. All right. And the -- what direction was your route of
2 flight for that?

3 A. Southeast.

4 Q. And were there any weather conditions to the southeast that
5 were of concern to you? Was the visibility good there?

6 A. Visibility is rolling good. There were some, there was some
7 different ceilings at different places. There was -- at Eek, for
8 example, everything was wide open; there was no ceiling.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Then there was some 1,000 foot ceilings. In fact, Quinhagak
11 was at 900 foot ceiling according -- but it seemed better than
12 that -- according to the AWOS machine.

13 Q. Does the company have a CFIT avoidance program that you're
14 aware of? Any -- I think we know the answer to that.

15 A. We do not have a CFIT.

16 Q. Okay. How about a safety program? Does the company have a
17 safety program or an SMS?

18 A. We have safety meetings constantly.

19 Q. Constantly. Who runs them?

20 A. Anybody can. I do sometimes.

21 Q. Okay. How about pilot meetings? Are there pilot meetings
22 just specifically for pilots?

23 A. Basically happens with the safety meetings. Sometimes we
24 just have meetings that aren't safety meetings. They're usually
25 done first thing in the morning.

1 Q. Okay. All right. Anything else you want to share? Any
2 ideas about what may have caused the accident or other information
3 that might be helpful to the investigation?

4 A. Well, this is a guess. He got his eyes fixated outside and
5 quit looking at the instruments for too long. And you can think
6 you're three dimensional, but you're not. And that is a guess,
7 but I think it's probably pretty good.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Only a guess.

10 MS. PRICE: Great. Thank you, Ernie. I appreciate your
11 time.

12 MR. TURRENTINE: You're welcome.

13 MS. PRICE: Have a good flight.

14 MR. TURRENTINE: Thank you.

15 MS. PRICE: That concludes the interview.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

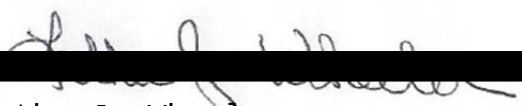
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL CRASH OF A YUTE COMMUTER
SERVICE PIPER PA-32R-300 AIRCRAFT
NEAR TUNTUTULIAK, ALASKA,
ON FEBRUARY 6, 2020
Interview of Archelaus "Ernie" Turrentine

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC20FA017

PLACE: Bethel, Alaska

DATE: February 8, 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