

NTSB Witness Statement
Torsten Renner: Events of April 11, 2020

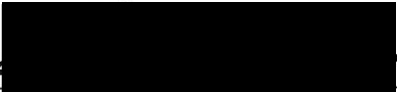
My family was returning from our cabin at Middle Lake near Beluga Lake in the evening of April 11, 2020. My dad was flying our Cessna 185 on wheel-skis, I was in the right seat and my brother and mother were in the rear passenger seats. We had no incidents leaving Middle Lake and the trip to the area approaching Lower Fire Lake was uneventful. We flew direct to Birchwood Airport to avoid the MOA and began our descent to Lower Fire Lake from the north after transitioning south of Birchwood. My dad's intentions were to land on skis on Lower Fire Lake, but first he wanted to fly over the landing area to ensure it was clear and available for landing. It is a multi-use lake and my dad was insistent on checking it out before landing. Winds and ease of landing dictated our landing to the north.

My dad made his typical call over Chugiak High School letting the area know we were going to overfly the busy lake for a visual inspection. My dad followed his general plan to inspect the field, bank right, and then make left traffic and land to the North. We split the west side of the island and the shoreline and flew perpendicular away from the lake. Somewhere along the way the engine suddenly lost power as if pulled to idle. The propeller continued to windmill, but the cockpit was not quiet. The engine sounded like it was still running, just not producing power. My dad said "Uh Oh" and immediately began to focus on flying the plane. As he pulled into a right bank over West Lake Ridge Drive, I began a brief cockpit check to try and determine the issue. (I am currently in my first year at the University of North Dakota to get my Bachelor's degree in Commercial Aviation and have a private pilot's license.) First, I looked to see if the mixture was in, it was. Second, I looked over at the key with the magnetos, they were both on. Third, I looked between the seats at the fuel selector, it was on both. As I looked up, from the

fuel selector, my father said, "I'm going to try and bring us around to the North." He was level and began a left turn. He then said, "We are going down." A split second later I heard the stall horn, then a falling sensation, followed rapidly by what I assume were trees hitting the left wing. We then violently pitched down facing the ground and impacted.

I woke up to gasoline in my eyes and gasoline on my down coat. Our neighbor, Hervé was yelling, "Aviation Master! Aviation Master! They're gonna burn!" He wedged me out of my seat and set me down on the ground. I later went to thank him, and he said he couldn't identify any switches when he looked in, so he flipped all the ones he could find, down.

- Dated April 27, 2020.


Torsten Renner