

Factual Report – Attachment 19

Record of Conversations

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

ANC21FA069

A. Records of Conversation

1. Witness: [REDACTED], Island Wings

Participants: David Lawrence, NTSB; Tom Johnson, FAA

Date: August 8, 2021

Notes from conversation:

- She said Kos had an 8:00 Misty flight, she had an 8:00 Misty. She said her "Mistys are a little bit longer because we do a longer landing and whatnot so the tour is similar but we stay longer, and I usually depart, my habit is to depart at 8:15 instead of 8."
- She was coming back from the Mistys and passed Rolf. Rolf asked her "how's Rudyard?" and she told him the weather was beautiful.
- Rolf landed at Big Goat and then took off, which was his normal pattern.
- They spoke as they were passing between Nafco (ph) and the Carrol (ph), and Hawthorne. Rolf was outbound on his second flight when they spoke, about 10 minutes until 10am. She then told him it looked like the weather was changing fast there.
- She said the weather toward Ketchikan was getting "cruddy", and Rolf replied that his next trip was Hieghter (ph). That was all Rolf said, and was the end of the conversation.
- She did not know what Rolf saw on his way out since there was a bit of a delay.
- When she got back to Ketchikan, the weather was pretty low, so she landed and put their 1000 flight on a weather hold
- She said "Because I wasn't sure, is this a big cell that's just going to make this ugly for half an hour and then it's going to dissipate and move on? Or, is this a trend for the day? And I don't want to be stuck out in Rudyard if it's a trend for the day. So, we delayed our trip and I thought well I'll just see what Rolf says when he gets back, because you know I have a 12 o'clock Misty and a 2 o'clock Misty we have all day, and so I thought well I'll just ask him when he got back, and I kept watching the weather cameras."
- She saw the weather cameras, and said "they'd started deteriorating. So that weather wasn't just a cell that was in Ketchikan it was a trend of stuff that's moving in this way." The weather was moving south to north, coming over the gulf and Dixon entrance where it gets pushed up Dixon entrance.
- She said the weather was coming into the whole area, so she cancelled for the day.
- She said landing at Big Goat is a nice place to be as a start for going home because now you don't have to climb so much, starting at 2,000 feet already.
- She said if you landed at Rudyard somewhere, you're down low at sea level, and now have to climb out. In a Beaver, "It's climbing for nothing" and you spend your whole time climbing.
- She said that the day before this interview, she didn't do her normal route because that route specified by the LOA was "plugged up" and she was not going to fly that just because the LOA said so. It was not always possible to keep to the letter of the agreement because of the weather.
- She said where Rolf went would have been an awesome tour, aside from the last part.

- She said she started encountering weather right about at the Dogleg. She said "And by weather, I mean I had to start descending from, you know, I don't remember where I was honestly, a couple thousand feet or whatever because it was really nice over here. So, I had to descend under the layer right about the dogleg, and then it kept going down all the way to Ketchikan."
- When she had landed back in Ketchikan, the cameras showed that the weather had already moved north into the area. Looking at the Minks camera northeast, it looked like the cloud deck was right at the tree line.
- She said "I'm not sure why he didn't get on the backside of Muir because there's a lower pass through here that will get you back to Carroll, and then you're back on saltwater and you just descend it down. But sometimes you can get over this ridge before it plugs -- it's plugged in Ella down low at the tree line, but it's still visible up high here and that may be what he was going for."
- When asked if the weather south of Ella was notoriously bad, she said "It's just that weather moves in there, so, you know, you can get a good look. When you come out of Rudyard you can get a good look down here to the south. And kind of get a feel for what's going on over here."
- She said there was enough room to do a 180 turn out of Ella Lake if it gets "plugged."
- She knew about the valley the accident occurred in, and said "It's hard terrain, pretty tight. I don't know, I mean I wouldn't fly down in it on a nice day. It's not that kind of a valley."
- She said "I don't think I'd get to the outlet of Muir and continue going if I didn't have either Third Lake (ph.) visible, or Carroll visible, I would have turned around at the end of Muir."
- She said of Rolf "He's not a risk taker. I wouldn't say he's a risk taker, no. I think he's a good pilot. So he, he's certainly been out in his share of weather, but I don't see him as somebody's who overtly pushing the weather."
- She did not believe there was a pilot proficiency problem with the industry previously shut down.
- She said the weather cameras were "amazing things" thanks to the FAA.
- She said "In the old days, somebody would go out and scout and -- or you'd just go out with your people and then see what it was, and if you didn't like it, you turned around. And depending on who went out, you'd get weather either that you trust, or weather that you didn't trust, depending on who gave you the weather."
- When asked about risk mitigation strategies, she said "What's hazardous is decision making. The weather isn't hazardous. I mean, the weather can be hazardous if you're in it. The way you're minimizing your risk is to not be in it as much as possible. So, you know, get the best weather information you can, be willing to turn around. Be willing to be stuck. I've been stuck all over this country because I was unwilling to go further. It's not fun, it's not cost effective."
- She did not have TAWS, and for terrain avoidance, she said "Well you don't fly in terrain you can't see."
- She had a check ride from the FAA once, and when they simulated IIMC conditions he wanted her to do a standard rate turn to escape. However, you can't do a standard rate turn in some valleys without "hitting granite." She told the FAA person that she wouldn't have done a standard rate turn there, and instead would have flown straight ahead down Carrol where there is glassy water and would have landed.

- She said "I'm the biggest weather chicken on the waterfront, though. I've been flying since I was 16, so I've been flying 44 years, and I avoid the weather as much as possible. And in southeast Alaska, it's claimed many, many lives. This is not a problem area. The problem is people don't -- they're in a hurry, they think they can get through something, whatever, I don't know what's going on in their mind where they push it to where it's not. Doesn't make sense to me."
- She thought the LOA was "a joke."
- She liked the current POI since he knows the place and knows who's who and what's what. She did not have a problem with the PMI, who interacts with TJ mostly.
- She concluded by saying "Rolf and I were the only two out there to my knowledge between 8 and 10. I don't know who else went out after 10 o'clock because I was mostly just watching the cameras. But the weather just didn't get any better, so we ended up cancelling our whole day."

2. Witness: [REDACTED], Misty Fjords Air pilot

Participants: David Lawrence, NTSB; Tom Johnson, FAA

Date: August 9, 2021

Notes from conversation:

- He said he was a Beaver pilot for Misty Fjords Air.
- He spoke with Rolf on that second flight, and had "small talk."
- He had just landed at Baily Falls, and Rolf was flying from South Arm in the Mistys, probably at about 1,000 feet.
- Rolf said something like "how are you doing?"
- He said he usually would land on Big Goat, but he couldn't get in there because of the fog. He said Bailey Falls was nice, so that's why he landed there after flying through Sealevel.
- He said "Ella Lake was all dark and so was Alma." He decided to fly through Ella Creek at about 1,200 to 1,500 feet.
- He said "I made that straight through Ella Creek going towards -- crossing Ella there, and south Ella just looked like a wall of white. So I took a -- I looked to my right over by Mirror because, you know the story; if Ella's down, Mirror's great. But I didn't want to go there because it's tight in there; you have to turn around. So I just turned around at Ella, went back out, and back through Sealevel at about 2,000."
- He never saw Rolf on the radar after that.
- He said for a brief second he thought about going towards Mirror Lake, "but that's, you know, it's tight in there. It really is. You can't turn around in that area."
- He said "from south Ella west of all that and everywhere was pretty dark, so I just stayed west of all that area."
- He said the clouds were at the treetops and fog down towards the ground.

3. Witness: [REDACTED], Taquan Air pilot

Participants: David Lawrence, NTSB

Date: August 12, 2021

Notes from conversation:

- He had heard there was an accident involving Southeast Aviation, so he fueled up his airplane and went out to help with the search. This was about an hour or hour and a half after the accident.
- He flew around between Carroll Inlet and Thorne Arm, which was in a lowland areas. He wasn't able to get up very high due to the weather. He flew grids and patterns for the search before the Coast Guard showed up. Then he returned to Ketchikan.
- He said "the weather was – when I was out there, was probably 1500 variable. It was better in places and lower in places. Eight to 10 miles visibility. There was mountain obscuration and occasional moderate rain showers that brought, you know, visibility lower. And the mountains to the north of where we were searching were obscured. There was no way we could get up in there which I believe is where they found the airplane."
- He was not sure where they finally found the accident airplane.
- When asked about the ceilings in the valleys he flew in, he said "I would say the places we could get probably around 800 feet with maybe two to five miles visibility, lower in places. There were, like I said, there was rain showers moving around; there was rain fog in the area; mountains were obscured; there were certainly places where we couldn't search we just couldn't get up to." There were multiple airplanes involved in the search.

4. Witness: [REDACTED], Carlin Air

Participants: David Lawrence, NTSB

Date: August 13, 2021

Notes from conversation:

- He was certain Rolf had departed with fuel since "nobody goes out of here without gas."
- He said Carlin provided the fuel for Southeast Aviation flights.
- They fueled by looking at the pump meter and airplane gauges.
- They don't record each fueling for each flight, and they bill based on an on-going meter reading.
- He said the last reading on the pump used by Southeast after zeroing out the meter was 71 gallons, and no one had used that pump since the accident, which is likely what the accident flight had onboard.
- He bills based on Kos's running meter reading once a month.
- Typically the pilot would tell the fueller something like "I want a tank and 20" which means a full front tank and 20 gallons in the center tank.

- He said Jim Snapp was the fueler, and works for Carlin Air. Jim does fueling and ramp work for both Carlin and Southeast.
- He said the typical fuel load for the Mistys was a full front tank and 20 in the center. When the weather was worse, they'd take a little more.
- When asked about pilots flying along one side of the valleys so they would have more room to turn around, he said "that makes sense, especially if you're in lousy weather. And you also might do that for -- to be on the updraft side if there's any kind of wind on the downdraft side. So there's various reasons why you might want to do that."
- He said Kos is a great guy, and they were all family in the area.

5. Witness: [REDACTED], Carlin Air fueler

Participants: David Lawrence, NTSB

Date: August 14, 2021

Notes from conversation:

- He worked for Carlin Air, and fueled Southeast airplanes as well.
- On the day of the accident, he fueled both of Rolf's flights.
- He said it was a regular morning, and Rolf had asked for "a tank and 20" and told him "the weather didn't look too bad" on the first flight.
- On the second flight, he said Rolf requested the same fuel load, a tank and 20 gallons. "A tank" for the front tank in a Beaver was usually about 30-35 gallons. That was the standard fuel load for a Misty flight.
- He said he did not know if the fuel gauge on the pump had been reset to zero, so couldn't comment on if the 71 gallons was for the accident flight or not. It a running tally on the top of the meter itself.
- The gauge set to zero each day, and its logged before setting it to zero.
- When asked to speak about Rolf that day, he said it was just a normal day "up until it wasn't" when Rolf didn't return on the second flight.
- Kos monitored the flights on SpiderTracks and would let him know when Rolf was within 15-20 minutes out. For the accident flight, he was waiting on the docks, but Kos hadn't notified him.
- He said the turn time between flights was less than half an hour, and that was normal.
- He didn't know if Rolf had a third flight scheduled that day.
- Rolf did not mention anything of concern between the flights. He said Rolf had checked with another pilots and was told it was good to go. Rolf said "ok" and ordered the same fuel load as the first flight.
- He said he was certain he loaded the same fuel load on the second flight.
- He said for Southeast, they would use a van to pick up the passengers at the visitors center and bring them to their offices. The airplane was then warmed up, they hop in, then takeoff.