

Interviewee: Amy Rae Belisle, wife of accident pilot

Date/Time: March 10, 2021, 1200 AKST¹

Location: via telephone

Present: Katherine Wilson, Eric Swenson – NTSB

Representative: Brewster Jamieson, Lane Powell PC

During the interview, Mrs. Belisle stated the following:

On March 2, 2021, she and her husband (the accident pilot) were getting back from their wedding in Las Vegas, Nevada. He wanted to discreetly get to Kodiak to see his daughter. He called the chief pilot and asked him to have his helicopter ready. She and her husband landed in Anchorage and went straight to the hangar at Merrill Field Airport. The helicopter was not there yet so they chatted at the airport, got gas in her car and made some phone calls. When the helicopter arrived, the chief pilot shut it down then talked with her husband for a few minutes. Her husband then walked around the helicopter, did a quick inspection then got in the helicopter and departed. She sat with the chief pilot and watched her husband took off.

The morning of the accident they departed from Las Vegas and changed planes in Seattle. They departed early from Las Vegas to Seattle and she thought they left Seattle around 1000-1030 PST and arrived in Anchorage after 1200 AKST. An employee of her husband's met them at the Anchorage airport and drove her husband to the hangar while she got her car from the airport parking; she then drove to the hangar.

Regarding her husband's demeanor on the day of the accident, she said her husband was stressed about things that were going on, but he was laughing. They had plans for later in the week and he seemed like himself.

While in Las Vegas, they discussed him flying to Kodiak. She was not sure if her husband had texted with the chief pilot on March 1, but she spoke with the chief pilot about the trip on March 2. The chief pilot had some conflicts with the helicopter, but she told him that family came first and her husband needed the helicopter. She told the chief pilot they would have the helicopter back for his flight on Friday, March 5.

Her husband did not tell his daughter that he was coming to Kodiak. He planned to just stay for the day, flying back the afternoon or evening of March 2 or the next morning. If he stayed, he would stay with his daughter. He did not have any luggage with him on the flight.

Her husband said he would fly his normal route to Kodiak. He would sometimes stop to get fuel in Homer but did not plan to do that on this trip. She and her husband both checked the weather along the route on their phones. They used the AeroWeather app and the weather seemed "fine". Her husband was familiar with flying to Kodiak and "could do it in his sleep." The AeroWeather app provided information on clouds, winds, "everything" such as IFR and

¹ All times are Alaska standard time unless otherwise noted.

VFR weather, the last time it was updated, airports and weather stations along the route. She never checked the webcams along the route of flight but was not sure if her husband did.

She learned about the accident from the chief pilot who was tracking the flight. He was calling around to see if the flight had landed and she called friends in Kodiak to see if the helicopter was at the airport. The chief pilot gave her the number for Kenai Tower who called Kodiak Tower to see if her husband had “checked in” because he normally landed at that airport; he had not landed. The chief pilot told her that the helicopter only had fuel until 5 PM so she informed Kenai Tower of that which then initiated the search and rescue.

She had known her husband for about 5 years. They had been planning to get married “for years” but then they decided to “get it over with.”

Her husband was methodical, hardworking, caring and loved his family more than anything. He always had a plan, was smart and was always willing to help anyone.

Her husband started Kodiak Helicopters “years ago” and the accident helicopter was the second helicopter he had owned. She thought he bought the accident helicopter in 2014. Kodiak Helicopters did charter flights, air tours, and spot work for rocket launches. The chief pilot and her husband were the only two that flew the helicopter. The chief pilot was the only pilot flying as a part of the Part 135 operation; her husband had not flown Part 135 for a while.

Her husband did not own any other aircraft. He had “a lot” of hours in the accident helicopter but she did not know how many; the helicopter was “his pride and joy”. Her husband flew fixed wing aircraft “years ago”. She thought his pilot logbook was at the hangar.

She was not a pilot herself, but she flew a lot with her husband.

She thought he got his training in the accident helicopter at Robinson school.

Her husband did not have any concerns about flying the accident helicopter. How often he flew varied; sometimes he would just fly around for fun, back and forth to Kodiak, or to go to a restaurant in the Valley. She did not know the last time he had flown. He was instrument rated. They had encountered IFR conditions when flying together, particularly around Kodiak. She had no concerns when flying in IFR conditions with him.

She did not recall the last time she flew with him. They had never experienced an abnormal or emergency situation when flying and he did not ever mention a situation like that to her. He never mentioned how the helicopter responded when flying in windy conditions.

Another pilot had flown for Kodiak Helicopters a number of years ago, but that pilot’s wife lived in California and his commuting to Anchorage was too hard, so he left the company.

She believed all of the company records were kept at the hangar; the chief pilot handled the records.

She was not a current employee of Kodiak Helicopters. She occasionally worked as a contract employee for her husband's businesses, not necessarily Kodiak Helicopters, the last time being a couple months ago.

On Saturday, February 27, 2021, her husband flew on an early morning flight from Anchorage to Seattle. She did not know when he went to bed that night. She met him on Sunday, February 28 in Seattle, and they went to bed about 2300-0000 PST. On Monday, March 1, they got out of bed about 0900 PST and flew to Las Vegas. They had dinner in their room. She thought they were in bed by 2100 and asleep by 2200-2300. She thought he slept well; he was snoring. On March 2, they had an early Delta Airlines flight (at 0500 PST), so they set an alarm 0400. They flew from Seattle to Anchorage on Alaska Airlines and were scheduled to land at 1252.

When not traveling, he would typically go to bed about 2200-2230 and would be up between 0400 and 0500. He would watch TV for a while once in bed.

He did not take any medications. He did not take naps and did not have daytime sleepiness; he was "always going".

In the 12 months preceding the accident, he had lost some weight; he was eating better and had stopped drinking beer; his health was not affected by COVID. He did not have any major changes in his personal life. His financial situation changed in recent days because he resigned from his position at Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. He was also the president and CEO of the Kodiak Native Association. He was also associated with a number of other businesses. He depended on his employees to help manage his workload. Beyond the recent allegations in the news, he did not have any other changes in his personal life.

Her husband was always healthy and never got sick. He looked good and felt good. He did "not really" exercise. He wore glasses for reading; he always had his glasses in his pocket. He had no issues with his color vision or hearing. He had not visited a doctor in the previous 30 days and did not take any medications. He took probiotics every day and a men's vitamin. He drank alcohol on occasion, the last time being Sunday, February 28; he had 2-3 drinks around 1900. He smoked on occasion but was not smoking when she was with him. During one of the flights to Anchorage on March 2, he had coffee on the plane; she did not remember him eating breakfast. She did not remember him eating lunch either; this was typical for him. He did not use any illicit drugs. He did not take any medications, prescription or non-prescription, in the 72 hours before the accident.

She was not aware of her husband's involvement in any previous accident or incidents. He did not have any speeding tickets or FAA violations. He did not take risks and always thought everything through.

He did not communicate with her during the accident flight.

It was typical for her husband to not let his family in Kodiak know that he was coming; "sometimes he would just show up."

The helicopter was equipped with a terrain awareness warning system; she had heard it say “terrain, terrain.”

He could switch over to stations and listen to the radio for weather updates. He sometimes would use his phone while flying to check the weather but there was not always service.

She did not know a typical altitude they flew at to get to Kodiak but they always flew low so they could look at things.

She described her husband as a “fantastic pilot” and had been flying since his 20s. She had never been in a helicopter before flying with him and she had “no fear whatsoever.” They flew the accident route together hundreds of times. She was just as confused about the accident as anyone else; he was one of the best pilots in Alaska.

The helicopter had 5- or 6-point harness seat belts in the front. They used the shoulder harnesses on every flight, and he would help buckle her in so it was nice and tight. He kept them on the entire flight. Safety was a huge priority to her husband and he would not want to do anything to jeopardize his pilot’s license or the helicopter.

She did not have anything else to add to the interview.

The interview ended at 1252.