

Mark Ward
ASI
AS-ANC

Date: 7/3/2023
Subject: ANC23FA045 pilot interview
Contact: Mark Scott – Pilot

Below is a summary conversation with Mark Scott at the hospital.

Mark put 2.5 hours worth of fuel in the airplane and calculated the airplane would be 50lbs under max gross weigh when he departed from Old Harbor.

He departed from Kodiak to move passengers and gear from Old Harbor back to Kodiak. This was the first trip of the day for him. The time to fly between Old Harbor and Kodiak was 30 minutes.

On departure from Old Harbor with four passengers, the airplane lifted off the runway where he thought it would. The airplane was able to climb out at 500 ft per min. The engine was maintaining "25 squared" (2500 engine RPM and 25 inches of Manifold pressure) While flying up the valley he determined they needed 200 more feet of altitude to cross over the pass that was at 950 ft. He did not think the airplane was going to be able climb high enough to clear the pass and planned to make a 180° turn to gain more altitude. He was flying on the left side of the valley and had been trained that left 180 turns were better. He set one notch of flaps. When the airplane got over to the right side of the valley the airplane stopped climbing. All engine indications were good and still at 25 squared. He believes maybe there were downdrafts on the right side of the valley and that he had good climb rates on the left. Before he could make the left 180° turn, he ran out of room and impacted terrain.

There were no flight control issues. The engine made no unusual sounds and maintained 25 squared.

He did not advanced throttle to full power he maintained the 2500 RPM.

He confirmed after his statement that, departure was normal, he had 500/ft climb rate, and had good performance on the left side of the valley. He decided to make a 180° turn but wanted to make the turn to the left. When the airplane moved over to the right side of the valley the airplane would not climb. He thought maybe the RPM/Manifold gage was faulty.

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Date: 7/3/2023

Subject: ANC23FA045 Other pilot interview

Contact: Wesley Dumm - Pilot of another Vertigo airplane

Below is a summary conversation with Wesley Dumm.

Wesley was in a second airplane, working with the accident airplane to move 14 people and gear from Old Harbor to Kodiak. The passengers were guests of the Kodiak Sportsman Lodge located in Old Harbor, AK.

He had talked to Mark (the accident airplane pilot) at Old Harbor and Mark did not mention any issue with his airplane. Wesley took off about two minutes ahead of Mark. He heard Mark make a radio call departing from Old Harbor and did not hear any other transmission from Mark.

The weather was great with high ceilings and unlimited visibility. He had no performance issues climbing and flying through the pass.

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Date: 7/6/2023

Subject: ANC23FA045 Lodge operator interview

Contact: Kelley Stonke - Kodiak Sportsman Lodge

Below is a summary of the telephone conversation with Kelly Stonke.

Rod arrived the day before the accident. He was there to repair their ovens at the Lodge. The weather prevented Rod from leaving that day. Bryon, Greg and Corey have been coming to the Lodge for 16 years. Scales are used to weigh the fish boxes. They are between 48 and 49 lbs. The Lodge does not weigh guests, they use the weight the guest puts on their traveler profile form. The Lodge uses Vertigo and Island Air to transport guests to and from the Lodge. Both operators weigh passengers on the way out to the lodge.

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Date: 7/6/2023
Subject: ANC23FA045 Passenger Interview
Contact: Corey Chitwood - Passenger

Below is a summary of a telephone conversatio with Corey Chitwood.

Corey was sitting in the second row behind the pilot. His brother (Greg) was sitting in the front right seat, Rod Murdauk was sitting next to Corey in the second row and his father Bryan Chitwood was seating in the third row on the left.

The cargo consisted of 3 - 50 lbs boxes of fish, a toolbox and tool bag belonging to Rod. Each person had a bag plus a carry-on bag. A C-Pap machine of Corey's.

Corey said he did not see a windsock and there was little wind. The airplane took an extended amount of time to takeoff. To him it seemed longer than normal.

He remembers looking out and seeing terrain and then an impact. The next thing he remembers is after the airplane stopped, was Rod calling out for someone to "help me" and then passing away. Mark (the pilot) was the first to exit the airplane. He heard Greg asking Mark "what the (expletive) just happen." Mark responded with, "we were overweight."

Corey did not hear any unusual noises, and no change in engine noise.

Last year Vertigo had weighed them, and their baggage before heading out to the lodge. This year neither the Lodge or Vertigo weighed them or the baggage.

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Date: 7/7/2023
Subject: ANC23FA045 passenger interview
Contact: Greg Chitwood - Passenger

Below is a summary of the telephone conversation with Greg Chitwood.

They arrived at the airport by a van. There were two airplanes when they arrived. They split up into 2 groups of four people, there was no assigned airplane. Greg had flown with Mark (Pilot) before. The airplane was already loaded with the 3 fish boxes before they arrived. Greg had a samsonite bag that was loaded into the airplane and a carry-on size bag that Mark loaded in the nose of the airplane. The passengers consisted of Greg, Corey (his brother), Byron (his dad) and Rod. Rod had arrived the day prior to fix a stove at the lodge. The weather prevented him from departing and this was the next flight available. Rod had a rolling toolbox. They talked about how much it weighed. They lifted it to try and figure out how much it weighed, Greg was familiar with what 50 lbs would be and it was less than 50 lbs. They loaded the toolbox into the back of the airplane. Mark strapped all the cargo with a netting like cargo restraint.

Byron was loaded first, he needed help getting in, he is in his 90s. He needed help with his legs. Rod was next followed by Corey. Mark got in and Greg sat in the copilot seat. He had wanted to ride up front as Corey rode up front on the way to the lodge. Greg fastened his shoulder belt. Everyone he believes had a headset on, not sure about Byron.

Mark started the airplane. They did not see the other airplane takeoff. On our takeoff there was no issues, no problems, lots of runway left. Right bank after takeoff to follow the coast, then left turn into the valley, he remembers the pilot calling it the

Highpass. They were flying a zig zag flight path, the pilot seemed to be following the bends of the creek below. The airplane was staying over the lowest terrain as they moved up the valley. Greg was focused looking out the right window and did not have a good feel on how high the airplane was. When Greg looked forward, they seemed low. Mark banked the airplane to the left like he wanted to turn around but then he straightened up the airplane. Mark adjusted the flap wheel, and it did not look good. Greg remembers tree limbs hitting him in the face and fuel getting into his eyes temporarily blinding him and then a sudden stop. The cabin filled with moaning noises and Greg's eyes cleared up. Mark got out of the airplane. He does not remember Mark climbing over him. Mark asked if Greg could get out and he said, "no, not a damn thing I could do." Mark helped him onto the right wing. He could not see the engine or cowl; it was all gone. Mark told Greg to stay put on the wing. Mark went to help others. The moaning stopped and Rod was calling for help. Mark was in command; he was calm and cool. He said help was on the way, they know we are down. Mark kept looking for a radio, but he could not find anything. They tried to get Rod out of the airplane but no luck. Corey said he seemed ok and was content with staying put. Greg asked about dad, Mark said he was gone. Greg was having a hard time breathing, thinks one of his lungs had collapsed. Mark was "bouncing around looking for radio, and first aid kit."

There were airplanes that flew by, (Caravan, float plane and another airplane) none of them seemed to notice them. Finally heard a helicopter, as if it was looking for them. When it saw them, it circled and landed below. The helicopter took off and returned 2 or 3 times with additional help. The first responders all looked like people he had seen at the lodge. They were all searching bags for first aid kits. They asked Greg if he had a first aid kit in his bag, he did not.

The Coast Guard crew was searching in the wrong area. Greg overheard the pilot of the black helicopter arguing with the coast guard over the location of the wreck. With the help of the black helicopter pilot the Coast Guard found the wreck. The rest of the recovery was discussed in detail.

Answers to follow up questions. Greg said they did not weigh him or his bags this year. In years past they had. The fish boxes were weighed at the lodge. The toolbox they talked about and estimated its weight. On takeoff it felt like a good climb, and flying along the coast they seemed high over the terrain. Mark was following the creek like a highway/road. After takeoff the pilot never adjusted power or changed the propeller pitch. The engine made no unusual sounds and noise level remained the same. There was no gradual change in engine or propeller noise. The pilot never added power. When Greg noticed things did not look good and they were going to impact terrain he was not too concerned because the pilot had not

increased the power. He said he would have been concerned and knew they were in trouble if the pilot had increased the power.

While sitting on the wing after the accident, Greg asked Mark, "What the hell happened." Mark replied with, "too much weight." Greg could tell Mark was distraught and felt a sense of responsibility, he was beating himself up.

Without Mark's actions at the accident site no one would have survived.