

Stacia Joyce
ASI
Aviation Safety

Date: September 23, 2024

Subject: ANC24FA085

Contact: Perry Raber, witness

Mr. Raber reported that the pilot, Mr. Foster had departed the main camp which was located about 3.5 miles to the south of the ridge where Mr. Raber was camped. He said Mr. Foster was going to drop off supplies for their hunting camp. After the supplies were dropped the airplane was going to continue to McGrath to fill up barrels of AV gas.

Mr. Raber noted that Mr. Foster was likely a little pressured that morning to get his day of flying under way. Mr. Foster was a single pilot operation and he had several hunting clients he needed to fly into camps that day and contend with challenging weather conditions.

Mr. Raber said Mr. Foster had landed on this ridge several times over the past few years however this was going to be his first landing on the ridge this year. Mr. Raber said that in the past Mr. Foster had leading edge slats installed on his cub but had removed them sometime in the spring of 2024 before spring hunting season. He remembers Mr. Foster saying he wished he still had them on in the spring because it made some of the landings on some of the lakes easier.

Mr. Raber recalls that the wind that morning was about 15-20 miles per hour out of the northeast but seemed unstable. He said Mr. Foster always adjusted his landings on the ridge dependent on the wind direction and speed. Sometimes Mr. Foster would land on the ridge itself, or he would land across the ridge or diagonally to the ridge.

Mr. Raber observed the airplane flying over his camp around 9:30 in the morning at about 200-300 feet above his camp. He could not discern the airspeed but he said the airplane seemed to be "just cruising along". According to Mr. Raber the airplane then made a right turn to the northeast along the north side of the ridge. Mr. Raber lost sight of the airplane, but he could still hear the engine. Mr. Raber thought the airplane had turned back to the southwest and was possibly making a right turn to continue to look at the ridge. Mr. Raber then heard the airplane call for full power very rapidly, he said it sounded like the throttle was wide open. Shortly thereafter, maybe 20 seconds or less he heard what he believed was the airplane impacting the ground.

Mr. Raber's camp was .6-mile straight line distance to the crash site but about one mile by foot. Mr. Raber's camp was situated just below the ridge on the northwest side near a small lake. After hearing what he thought was the airplane impacting the ground Mr. Raber ran up on the ridge and could see the airplane resting on it's nose with the tail in the air. Mr. Raber ran to the airplane and found Mr. Foster unconscious. He attempted to extricate him to provide life saving measures but was unable to due to the severity of the crash. Mr. Raber called for help by activating the SOS on his satellite tracking device.

Mr. Raber recalls seeing fuel pouring from both the left and right fuel lines. Mr. Raber found one section of the propeller about 200 yards to the west of the accident site. The other end of the propeller was buried beneath the propeller flange. Mr. Raber said that after the plane was recovered the impact mark it left was at least one foot deep in fairly hard ground.

Mr. Raber noted that where the airplane crashed was further northeast along the ridge than where Mr. Foster normally lands and that the ridge in that area was very rocky and uneven. He isn't sure if Mr. Foster was intending to land or was just surveying the area for possible landing sites.