



WITNESS STATEMENTS

Thomas J. Latson, Jr.
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

NTSB Accident Number: CEN12FA088 – N6485L, Piper PA-31 at New Orleans, LA

The investigator-in-charge spoke with several persons regarding the November 29, 2011, accident involving N6485L at Lakefront Airport (NEW), New Orleans, Louisiana.

Mr. Richard Graham said he is 79-years old and an FAA licensed airframe and power plant mechanic with inspection authority. He told me:

1. He has a business based at Callexico International Airport (CXL) Callexico, California.
2. He was the registered owner of Piper Navajo, N6485L.
3. The airplane had not been flown at all in the past 3 years.
4. His main business is to buy airplanes that need repair, then repair them and sell them.
5. He had sold N6485L through "Parker" in Ohio, when Mr. Jaime Lopez Valdez, a lawyer from Mexico, "just walked in here and bought the airplane".
6. Mr. Graham said he speaks Spanish and was easily able to converse with Mr. Lopez Valdez. They did not speak in English.
7. He understood that the airplane was going to be used someplace other than Florida.
8. Mr. Graham said he didn't keep copies of any paperwork from the sale of the airplane.
9. He sent all the paper work through "Federal Aviation Title Company" in Oklahoma City, and they were going to process the paperwork with the Federal Aviation Administration.
10. The pilot, Doug Johnston, had been his friend for over 40 years.

Mr. Robert “Bert” Benavidez said he was working at Deming Municipal Airport (DMN) Deming, New Mexico, on the afternoon of November 29, 2011. He told me.

11. Navajo N6485L came to Deming for refueling.
12. The airplane had only two persons in it, the pilot and the owner.
13. Mr. Benavidez spoke only in Spanish with the owner.
14. They did not speak English.
15. He did not speak much with the pilot.
16. He didn’t think the owner was a pilot but he did seem to have a decent knowledge of the airplane.
17. The airplane was a little rough in appearance, but was in reasonably good shape.
18. It looked like it had been sitting around somewhere and not being flown.
19. Mr. Benavidez did not observe any oil leaks on the ramp, but he had to add eight quarts of oil three quarts in the left and five quarts in the right.
20. He mentioned to the owner that was a lot of oil consumption for such a short time.
21. Mr. Banavidez pulled the right propeller through and felt low compression, and he mentioned that fact to the owner.
22. He also checked the hydraulic reservoir and found it did not need any.
23. The airplane took 92.7 gallons of Av gas.
24. During their conversations the owner told Mr. Benavidez that the airplane’s final destination was going to be the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Todd Downs said he is an employee of Stephenville Aviation, at Stephenville Municipal Airport (SEP) Stephenville, Texas. He told me:

25. Their "Fuelmaster" records show that N6485L did self-refueling at SEP at 1636 central standard time on the afternoon of November 29, 2011.
26. The total fuel delivered was 97.04 gallons.
27. Mr. Downs and Mr. Bill Smith were airport employees who were not present at the time and they did not observe or speak with the occupants of N6485L.
28. They could not find any other persons at the airport who saw or spoke with the occupants of N6485L.

(end)