

To:

Michael Garvin
FAA Airworthiness Inspector
[REDACTED]

San Antonio, TX 78216

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JAN 09 2012

BY: SAT FSDO/SW17

Michael:

The following report is my statement, per your request, regarding the December 30, 2011 crash that I was a passenger in:

Friday, December 30th Richard stopped by my T hangar at Zuehl Airport to invite me for a ride, as a passenger, in his Fleet biplane. Interested in riding in his aircraft, I went over to Richard's hangar to take him up on his offer. Upon arriving, Richard asked if I could help fuel the aircraft which involved climbing a ladder to fill the wing tank from two approximately six gallon fuel tanks which Richard provided. I proceeded to fill the wing tank with the fuel and tanks provided by Richard and added approximately 10 to 12 gallons of fuel. After fueling the tank, we boarded the aircraft, Richard in the pilot's cockpit and myself in the passenger cockpit, and taxied to the run up area. At approximately 1345, the aircraft took flight. The takeoff was uneventful and, from the front or passenger cockpit, everything appeared to be as it should. Shortly after takeoff, I noticed the fuel gauge, attached to the upper wing and visible to both cockpits, indicated between one quarter and one half tank of fuel (approximate). Richard piloted the aircraft East over Interstate 10 and, about five miles from Zuehl, the engine began to surge. Richard turned the aircraft back towards Zuehl while the engine continued to surge, coming to an idle and then returning to what sounded like normal operating RPM approximately three times. As we approached Zuehl from the East, the engine finally stopped completely, the propeller ceasing to rotate. As a passenger in Richard's aircraft, the aircraft Richard was piloting, I trusted him to properly fly the aircraft in the situation and never took control or thought it appropriate to take control of the aircraft. As the aircraft glided downward, it appeared that Richard was properly operating the aircraft given the situation. He flew it towards the nearest open field, the field of the crash site, but as

we approached the field for what seemed would be an uneventful power off and off field landing, the bottom of the aircraft struck a tree. The tree was never visible but the noise from the aircraft's impact with the tree made it obvious that the aircraft had in fact struck a tree. Then, at approximately 1400 and immediately after striking the tree, the aircraft impacted with the ground and flipped on its back coming to a rest inverted and pointing in the direction from which it landed. I immediately released my seat belt and shoulder harness and fell to the ground. I then assisted Richard, who had already released his own seat belt and shoulder harness, in deplaning. After assisting Richard deplaning the aircraft, I peered inside Richard's cockpit, the pilot's cockpit, and noticed the fuel valve still on. I turned the fuel valve to the off position and we then stood a safe distance from the plane until the fire department came.

Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] with any further questions.

Nicholas Ohman

[REDACTED]

1-5-12

[REDACTED]
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