



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jason Aguilera
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: February 3, 2015
Person Contacted: Mr. Mark Darling, pilot of N8368U
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15LA122

Narrative:

About 1400 CST, on February 3, 2015, I conducted a telephone interview with Mr. Darling (hereafter referred to as "pilot") concerning the airplane crash which occurred in the Routt National Forest, Routt County, Colorado, on January 25, 2015. The telephone interview was conducted between me and the pilot only.

The pilot stated that he recalled flying over the Steamboat Springs area. He had lost his son a couple years ago and his son was born in raised in the Steamboat Springs area. After his son had died, they had scattered his ashes in Steamboat. The day of the accident the pilot had overflowed some of his old properties. His "emotions ran very high" and he "made a split second decision." He "made one to fly the airplane in to the side of the mountain." He aimed the airplane at a "pretty good size cliff and closed his eyes." He described his survival from the impact as "miraculous." He recalled opening his eyes to the brightest light and as if he was surrounded by a "electrical force field" he witnessed the airplane crashing into trees. He watched as the airplane was "ripped in to pieces", was flipped upside down, now facing 180° from his direction of travel. The pilot did not feel the impact.

When asked whether there were any malfunctions with the airplane or engine which contributed to the accident, the pilot responded that there were no problems.

When asked about the prevailing weather, the pilot recalled that the weather was good, although weather was building to the south. He reported that the mountains were not obscured.

When asked about the time between the accident and his rescue, the pilot stated that he was not dressed for cold temperatures. As cold and hyperthermia were setting in, the pilot started a fire utilizing fuel-soak airplane insulation and creating a spark by shorting the airplane battery with the oil dipstick.

The pilot reported having accumulated over 1,000 hours of flying. He reported taking his first flight around age 14. He has numerous years of flying in the mountains and specifically the Steamboat Springs area. He recalled flying numerous “underpowered” airplanes such as a Cessna 140. He had recently purchased the Cessna 172F and considered returning to get his license.

He reported that the flight did not begin with the intention of crashing the airplane, but that he was distraught over life events and the decision was made in flight.

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