

To whom it may concern,

This is a written statement of an aircraft accident which took place on August 22nd 2015 in Grimes County Texas at approximately 5:30pm, as given by John Dumont, commercial helicopter pilot and flight instructor.

To give a bit of background information, I own and operate a successful helicopter company located in Bryan Texas named HeliBacon, which has been operational for nearly the last 3 years. We specialize in helicopter hog hunting and perform various other Part 91 work. HeliBacon also flies the same type of helicopter involved in the accident, which is a Robinson R44 Raven II (300WZ), and have no accident or incidents.

HeliBacon had been approached by a small TV crew, which produces a hunting reality show called "Hunt Wicked Close". We had arranged for this TV crew to join us for a helicopter hog hunt that would be used for an episode on the show. We had also arranged for a second helicopter to be present to capture additional aerial video footage of us shooting out of our helicopter (300WZ) for the TV show. The helicopter (445HS) had been contracted to perform aerial videography for the day.

The events leading up to the accident were fairly straightforward. It started with a pilot briefing, which consisted of what kind of shots we were trying to achieve and how each aircraft was to maintain a high degree of safety given the nature of having two helicopters in close proximity to each other. Each pilot was aware of the risks and has been trained to use proper manipulation of the controls to always keep the aircraft in a position to perform a safe emergency landing.

The first flight the camera ship (445HS) was used it took off with 3 occupants; the pilot was complaining he did not have sufficient power to maintain a constant altitude; I made the recommendation he drop off one of his passengers (HeliBacons employee Lisa Gaston). After he dropped her off the flight continued without issue. Both helicopters then landed and shut down, then returned to Coulter Air Field for lunch.

During lunch it was discovered that the pilot of 445HS only had roughly 400 hours of flight experience, and that this flight was his first commercial job ever. It was also discovered that he was discouraged to use more than 22-23 inches of manifold pressure in 445HS. He had many questions as to how to fly the aircraft for the job at hand, my business partner and I had many pointers and tips for him to complete the flight safely and efficiently. The main point being safety, which the recommendation was to keep the nose of the helicopter pointed into the wind and for the pilot to maintain ETL. This conversation raised many red flags to my business partner and I, we had considered not using the second helicopter for any additional time but decided against it because of the value of the footage.

The second flight of the day began normally however 445HS departed roughly 10-15 minutes after me in 300WZ, but we rendezvoused approximately 1 mile south of the crash site.

445HS took off with roughly 25 gallons of fuel and both persons involved in the accident, Jacob Olive and Wayne Bomstad. I had taken off with exactly 23 gallons of fuel (138lbs), 2 passengers with a combined weight of around 420lbs, 40lbs of gear, my flight weight of 170lbs for a calculated take off weight of 2301lbs. What I am getting at, is that 445HS had a lighter take off weight by at least 150lbs, and should have had plenty of power to conduct the flight.

It seemed as if the pilot of 445HS was doing much better at maintaining a good standoff distance and altitude, roughly 200 yards left and 200 feet higher than 300WZ to the 9-10 o'clock position of the nose of 300WZ. This continued for about 45 minutes until the accident happened.

The weather during the time of the accident was VFR with more than 10 miles visibility and unlimited ceilings. Wind was gusty between 12-15 knots but not variable in direction and coming from approximately south. There was however a good deal of convective turbulence, but nothing, which would have caused a hazardous situation. During the entire accident sequence I felt no strange gusts or turbulence in my helicopter (300WZ)

Shortly before 5:30pm is when the accident took place and we (300WZ) had just found a small group of pigs in some tall trees. I was hovering out of ground effect at approximately 100ft AGL moving the pigs to an open area where we could shoot them. I slid the helicopter to the right to get back on target and after I did that, I looked up towards 445HS and saw the events unfold.

The aircraft was stationary at approximately 300-350ft AGL in a slight decent with a nose high pitch attitude and pointed straight into the wind, it made a sharp left yaw, a sharp right yaw, another quick left yaw, and then continued to yaw to the right uncontrollably. As the aircraft continued this right yaw the rate of decent began to accelerate and the wind pushed the aircraft toward the north, or with the wind. The first 3-5 seconds I watched this happen I was trying to figure out what was going on and it seemed to click, it appeared as if he was settling with power.

I immediately got on the radio to Jacob, the pilot of 445HS and yelled the corrective emergency procedure, "Lower the collective, forward cyclic! Jacob, lower the collective, forward cyclic! Lower the collective, forward cyclic!" This was repeated for approximately 15 seconds intermittently.

My attempt to help him failed and I watched the helicopter continue to accelerate its descent and yaw to the right until it impacted the trees.

As mentioned, before the accident had started the aircraft was stationary at 300-350ft AGL, and it took approximately 30 seconds for the helicopter to bleed off its altitude and drift about 150-200 yards to the north of its original location.

Once the helicopter impacted the trees, I attempted to call Jacob on the radio to which I heard no answer. At this same time I was already on approach to a clear area to assist them. This took 15-20 seconds for me to reach the ground. Once on the ground, I grabbed my fire extinguisher and medical kit, gave them to my passengers who then ran into the woods to locate the downed helicopter. One of my passengers returned to my helicopter as I performed the cool down procedure approximately a minute later and told me to relocate the helicopter to a closer area to the downed helicopter. I finished shutting down my helicopter and reached the downed aircraft about 3-4 minutes after the accident.

When I reached 445HS it was laying on its right side, I asked both occupants if they were ok and both were able to respond. It was obvious that the pilot had a major fracture to his right tibia and fibula. I then turned off the fuel shut off valve and made sure the master battery was also off. There was a trickle of fuel leaking out of the top of the rotor mast and into the dirt. There did not seem to be any danger of a post crash fire, no smoke or flames were visible. Once I made that assessment I concluded the best way to get these guys to safety was to load them in my helicopter, and Jacob the pilot was priority number one.

We had to remove what was left of the windscreen to access the pilot. It took roughly 20-25 minutes to get him out of the crashed helicopter, and another 5 minutes for us to load him in my aircraft (300WZ). Once he was loaded I flew him to waiting EMS at our staging area in Bedias, Tx.

Once I was able to return to the crash site Wayne Bomstad had been able to get himself free of the wreckage and was waiting at the edge of the woods. We then loaded him and flew him back to Bedias and waiting EMS.

My professional opinion of the cause of the accident is Pilot Error. The reason I draw this opinion is that because of the wind conditions the aircraft should have had sufficient enough power and performance to hover out of ground effect. And given the helicopters nose high pitch attitude during the beginning of the crash sequence, it leads me to believe the aircraft behaved erratically due to settling with power. The conditions that must be present for a helicopter to be settling with power are: airspeed less than ETL, rate of descent greater than 300ft per minute, and power applied.

When the accident happened the helicopter was completely stationary (except for the descent). So we can assume the helicopter did not have ETL. And given the nose high pitch attitude, all of the rotor downwash (induced flow) was being pushed in front of

the helicopter, which is one of the root causes of settling with power. In addition, upon seeing the aircraft on the ground after the crash the collective was in the full up position, which tells me the pilot raised it to slow the rate of decent. But this actually increases the onset of settling with power because it increases the size of the tip vortices. As for the rate of decent, the entire sequence took 30 seconds, and from 300-350 AGL would equate to a 600-700 foot per minute rate of decent. Which is double the requirement of 300 feet per minute to be in settling with power.

My time as a flight instructor allowed me the opportunity to teach and experience settling with power many times, and it is quite normal during the beginning of settling with power to experience a change in yaw, either left or right and mushiness in the controls. The uncorrectable right yaw could have been caused by the pilot raising the collective and increasing the torque, which became uncorrectable with left pedal due to the collective being in the full up position, maximum torque.

It is also my judgment; that it is easy for an inexperienced pilot to have a difficult time deciphering what is going on when things start happening quickly. And in regard to settling with power a very timely decision must be made to mitigate risk. At no time during the 30-second accident sequence did I see the pilot make any attempt to correct the situation.

I hope what I saw and wrote is able to help in your investigation. I am also grateful the accident wasn't worse. Feel free to contact me anytime for additional insight upon the events of August 22nd.

John Dumont, Chief Pilot
HeliBacon

[REDACTED]

Signed: [REDACTED]

Date: 9/3/2015