



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Mitchell Gallo
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: May 11, 2016
Person Contacted: Abe Abuchowski, [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Abe Abuchowski stated the he went through ground school and flight training with Hugh Davis as his instructor in September 2015. Mr. Abuchowski stated that during flight training, he performed standard rate turns, stalls, single-engine out, short field landing(s), and approaches as part of his recurrent training. Mr. Abuchowski stated that he owns a Turbo Commander with -10 engines, which was the airplane used for his flight training with Mr. Davis. Mr. Abuchowski stated that he thinks that the first flight maneuver that was performed was standard rate turns in both directions and he thinks that the second maneuver was stalls and did not remember if the stalls were power off or power on. The next maneuver was with the airplane configured in the landing configuration to see how it descended. They then did some approaches. The flight maneuvers were performed at an altitude of about 5,000 feet to 6,000 feet mean sea level, and the “ground was not very high” where the maneuvers were performed and “at most 5,500 feet above ground level.” Mr. Abuchowski said that his recurrent training was the first one with Mr. Davis. Mr. Abuchowski’s copilot received recurrent training from Mr. Davis “probably a couple of months ago.” Mr. Abuchowski said that during recurrent flight training they performed slow flight, and single-engine out and “flew around for a while.” They performed turns with a single engine. To perform single-engine work, one engine was shut down completely and not simulated by retarding engine power of one engine. Mr. Abuchowski said that they all maneuvers were performed to airline transport pilot standards. Mr. Abuchowski said that Mr. Davis had the sequence of flight maneuvers written down and that was kept with Mr. Davis. Mr. Abuchowski said that the right engine was shut down for all of the flight maneuvers. Mr. Abuchowski said that he has a total flight time of about 1,600 hours and in the Commander, “probably around a little over 800 hours.” He said that all of the flight maneuvers were completed in a day, and the ground school was completed in one day, prior to the flight maneuvers. Mr. Abuchowski said he was “surprised” of the accident because Mr. Davis was “so careful” and it was “unbelievable; especially in a turn and it would go beyond a certain bank

angle.” He said that the single-engine turns were performed at half standard rate, with both engines, the turns were at standard rate, and teep turns were with both engines operating. The indicated airspeed, at which half standard rate turns were performed, single-engine, was about 120 knots.

Mr. Abuchowski said that he learned of Mr. Davis when he met him at Twin Commander University, which was a “get together of Twin Commander pilots.” Mr. Davis was recommended by Neil Rossof for recurrent training. Mr. Abuchowski’s copilot, Ethan Gilbert, received training from Mr. Davis several months ago.

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Date: May 13, 2016
Person Contacted: Ethan Gilbert; [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Ethan Gilbert stated that he received initial Turbo Commander training from Hugh Davis in January 2016. He received four days of ground school, in which he and Mr. Davis were the only two people present. The first day of training was all ground school and the second day of training was initially going to be all ground school but "weather wise it was best to fly." During the first day of training, they covered preflight and the airplane checklist. The first day of flight training, they began with steep turns and stalls; the flight was not more than 45 minutes in duration. They covered engine out on the second day of flight training. The first day of flight training was "basic airwork" and "maybe approaches."

Mr. Gilbert stated that airwork maneuvers were steep turns, approaches to stalls, power plant failure, unusual attitude recovery which was high nose and low nose recoveries in which Mr. Davis placed the airplane into those attitudes and Mr. Gilbert was to recover.

Mr. Gilbert said the sequence of airwork that steep turns were performed first followed by an approach to a stall. He said that it was not a full power on stall. The stalls had airplane configurations of flaps up and flaps down and in a slight turn. Mr. Gilbert said that steep turns were the first maneuver followed by stalls. He said that most of the stalls were straight on and there was also a stall with a climbing turn with "a little bit of thrust." Recovery was performed on the first onset of a stall. He said the stall recovery technique used was to relax pressure on the controls, let the nose come down, add power, and accelerate out of the stall. Mr. Gilbert said that Mr. Davis was training to airline transport pilot standards. If the stall was in a turn then you would bring the wings level.

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Mr. Gilbert stated that he did not make use of view limiting device during any of the training including approaches. Mr. Gilbert said that he would keep his head down in the cockpit.

Mr. Gilbert said that during training, Mr. Davis had his hands at the “ready position” at the controls. He did not recall Mr. Davis touching the controls with his hands while the maneuvers were being flown by Mr. Gilbert. He said that Mr. Davis’ hands were in the “guarded position.”

Mr. Gilbert said that the airwork was performed at an altitude of about 3,500 feet to 4,500 feet above ground level.

Mr. Gilbert said that he has a total flight time of 12,000 hours and about 100 hours of flight time in the Turbo Commander. Mr. Gilbert was a Part 121 pilot and now flies corporate. Mr. Gilbert said that Mr. Davis was “good” and he did not have “complaints or concerns for safety” during the training with Mr. Davis.

Mr. Gilbert said that steep turns were performed at an indicated airspeed of 130-150 knots. He said that the airwork was performed one time and not repeated.

Mr. Gilbert said that Mr. Davis told him that the he “helped design the Flightsafety program.”

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Date: April 11, 2016
Person Contacted: Gary Haston, [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Gary Haston stated that he was at his house near the creek to the east of the accident site. He originally saw the airplane and it "looked pretty high" and "up so high" he thought it was a small Cessna airplane that was "flying fine." Mr. Haston said that he then walked to his barn located about 25-30 yards away from his house and he started to hear that the airplane engine was "having trouble." He looked out from the back of the barn and the airplane "hit and blew up." He said that the engine sounded like it was "accelerating" and it was "cutting out" as if "starving for fuel." The engine noise sounded like it was "spitting and sputtering and then wide open rpm." He said that there was nothing "consistent" with the engine noise. Mr. Haston said that there was somebody that was sitting out on a porch that saw the airplane and that person was identified by the Williamson County police, Deputy Gurrera [sic].

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Date: April 10, 2016
Person Contacted: Larry Wood; Ganitt Aviation, [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Larry Wood stated that he arrived at Ganitt Aviation on April 9, 2016 before 0800. He said that Mickey Brethower arrived at Ganitt Aviation about 0830. Mr. Wood said that he pulled the ground power unit up to N690TH, the accident airplane, to use for its engine starting. Mr. Wood said that he saw Mr. Brethower and Hubert Davis walking around checking the airplane, with Mr. Davis talking about the airplane. Mr. Wood said that he heard Mr. Davis telling Mr. Brethower that they were going to perform "air work" at an altitude of 4,000 – 5,000 feet and approaches. Mr. Wood said that he thought that an altitude of 4,000-5,000 feet to perform air work was low and that it should be at least 10,000 feet. Mr. Wood said that he thought that the left engine was "slow" at starting. Mr. Wood said the Mr. Davis was a flight instructor from Houston and a former FlightSafety instructor that was recommended to Mr. Brethower by Eagle Creek Aviation located in Indiana and that Mr. Davis opened his own business, Debut Inc. Mr. Wood said that Mr. Brethower and Mr. Davis were to perform approaches in Waco, Texas. Mr. Wood had never met Mr. Davis before. Mr. Wood said that the accident airplane underwent maintenance in Oklahoma City and underwent a recent annual inspection at Corsair Turbines. Mr. Wood said that Mr. Brethower had flown the accident airplane about two times after the annual inspection.

Mr. Wood said that the accident airplane was last fueled when it was "topped off" in Houston. Mr. Wood said that he estimated that there was about 300 gallons of fuel aboard the accident airplane for the accident flight.

Mr. Wood said that John Fenoglio had performed maintenance on the accident airplane and that Mr. Fenoglio may know where the accident airplane logbooks are located.

Mr. Wood said that Mr. Brethower had been flying for about 5 years and owned airplanes that included Bonanza and Cessna 421 airplanes prior to purchasing the accident airplane about one year ago. Mr. Wood said that a friend, Mark Thompson, taught Mr. Brethower how to fly. Mr. Wood had a total flight time of about 12,000 hours and held type ratings. Mr. Wood said that the purpose of the accident flight was an annual recurrent training flight for Mr. Brethower, which was required by Mr. Brethower's aviation insurance.

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Date: May 2, 2016
Person Contacted: Neil Rossof, [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Neil Rossof stated that Hugh Davis transitioned him from a Piper Meridian to a Turbo Commander, and Mr. Rossof had a 40-45 hour requirement for the Turbo Commander. Mr. Rossof said that when he flew with Mr. Davis in "very harsh weather" in New Orleans, and Mr. Davis "saved his bean."

Mr. Rossof said that during one flight with Mr. Davis, one of the engines on his Turbo Commander lost an engine due to an oil leak, and they shut the engine down in flight. Mr. Rossof said that they were flying to Eagle Creek and the engine oil pressure indication fluctuated "all over the place." Mr. Rossof said that the airplane had undergone recent avionics work and a nut had not been tightened properly resulting in the oil pressure indication fluctuation. He said that during that flight, Mr. Hughes said, "What are you worried about?" and shut down the engine, feathered the propeller, and landed the airplane on the runway.

Mr. Rossof stated that he owns a Turbo Commander 690D with -10 engines, which was used for the transition training. He said that Mr. Davis transitioned him to the airplane, and Mr. Rossof took and passed an airline transport pilot certificate in the airplane. Mr. Rossof said he took the test for the ATP certificate at the Indianapolis Flight Standards District Office. Mr. Rossof said that he received his instrument proficiency and visual flight rules checks in his airplane with Mr. Davis. Mr. Rossof said that all the "work" was done in his airplane including single-engine holds and landings.

Mr. Rossof said that when he flew with Mr. Davis, the maneuvers were never in the same sequence, and Mr. Davis would change the sequence of maneuvers. The maneuvers included single-engine work and steep turns. Mr. Rossof said that turns in a Commander are "not easy." Mr. Rossof said that the steep turns were performed at an airspeed of 140-180 knots. They also

performed “hooded approaches.” Mr. Rossof said Mr. Davis was “very big” on non-precision approaches and VOR localizer approaches.

Mr. Rossof said Mr. Davis was “very concerned” with an accident that occurred in Conroe, which was a circle-to-land accident. Mr. Davis was “very big” on reading NTSB reports.

Mr. Rossof said that during flight training Mr. Davis made him put the airplane in a descent to the “barber pole.” They performed three stalls that included a landing stall with the landing gear and flaps extended and a takeoff stall with a medium amount of power. Mr. Rossof said that the practical test standards required a turning stall. Mr. Rossof said that the sequence of maneuvers “probably” began with steep turns followed by stalls. They performed turns around a point and S-turns along a road.

Mr. Rossof said that the altitude that Mr. Davis had him perform the flight maneuvers was about 5,000 feet to 8,000 feet mean sea level. The flight maneuvers were performed at different places and at Eagle Creek or they would perform the maneuvers in Conroe, where Mr. Davis was “based.” They had flown to Chicago and New York.

Mr. Rossof said that they performed single-engine work and Mr. Davis liked to pull back the right engine because that power control was closest to where Mr. Davis would sit, which was the right pilot seat.

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Date: April 11, 2016
Person Contacted: Richard Jacobs, [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Richard Jacobs stated on Saturday morning on April 9, 2016, “before or right at 1000, he was in his barn, just to the south, looking down on the cornfield. He was inside the barn when he heard an airplane that sounded like “it made an approach and came back;” it sounded like a “crop duster.” He said that “all of a sudden it sounded like it was trying to come out of a dive.” Mr. Jacobs said that he went outside to see where the airplane was at but it was not in his line of “vision”. He said that he saw an explosion, and he could still here the “propellers” after the explosion. He said that there was a “big plume of fire and smoke.” He told his wife to call 911. He said that the engines were running after the explosion.

Mr. Jacobs said that by the sound of it, it sounded like the airplane was coming back around again. The airplane sounded like it made a second pass, and the engines were “revved up full throttle.”

Mr. Jacobs said that his house is located about 1-2 miles south of the accident site, up on a hill and looking down upon the trees along the river.

Mr. Jacobs said that the airplane sounded “like it went around once.”

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Date: May 16, 2016
Person Contacted: Sabina Aguilar; [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Sabina Aguilar stated that the first time the airplane was “crooked” and it “looked like he was correcting.” Then the airplane left wing pointed straight to the sky and the right wing pointed straight to the ground. The airplane then descended with the nose pointed straight down to the ground. The airplane was not descending in a cork screw flight path. She did not see the airplane wings rolling as the airplane descended to the ground. She said that “it happened so quick.”

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Date: April 20, 2016
Person Contacted: Sabina Aguilar; [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: CEN16FA146

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Sabina Aguilar stated that she was outside when David Sadler saw the airplane. She said that they always watch the airplanes. She said that the airplane was “doing a turn” and it “went through it ok.” She said to Mr. Sadler, “boy it was awfully low.” She said the airplane was going into a turn and then went “totally sideways” and the engine speed did not change from the time the airplane was in the air to the time it hit the ground. She said the “throttle was not touched from the turn to the time it crashed.” She said she thought that the airplane was not “driving very fast” and the “engine speed was slow.” She said “it was like it wasn’t enough throttle to do that.” She said that the airplane was not upside down. She said the airplane was “totally sideways” when “it started coming down.” She said that at first the airplane was “slightly tilted,” it had a “little speed,” and “he would throttle up.” She said the airplane “was totally sideways” with “one wing up to the sky and one wing to the ground.” She said the “nose went straight down.” She said that there was no smoke and there was no sign that the airplane was in “trouble.” She said that she thought that “he was doing tricks.” She said that the engine speed was “steady” and “did not change.” She said that she did not see any fire from the airplane before the impact with the ground after which the airplane “burst into a fireball.” She thought “he was doing tricks.” She said that the airplane was white in color and had two propellers. She said that the accident site is across the field from her residence which is located at 325 County Road 428, Taylor, Texas. She said that there was no “visible sign of malfunction” of the airplane. She said the “engine speed was steady” and “thought he was practicing a turn.” She said that the left wing of the airplane was pointed to the sky and the right wing was pointed to the ground.

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