

From: [Sullivan PAM](#)
To: [Sullivan PAM](#)
Subject: FW: N771XW
Date: Monday, February 26, 2018 8:41:25 AM

From: Brad Libby [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 25, 2018 5:54 PM
To: eyewitnessreport <eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov>
Subject: N771XW

To who it may concern,

Nate flew my Eclipse SIC and PIC with me for a few years. Nate took a new full time job in December flying for the owner of N771XW.

I knew Nate Saari well. Nate and I had talked many times in the weeks prior to the accident. On one or more occasions he complained about avionics problems in 771XW. One morning, I ran into at Executive Air in GRB, and he showed me the airplane. I commented on how old the avionics were. He agreed and complained they were nothing like the glass he had flew recently. He complained the auto-pilot was temperamental. On one occasion a few weeks ago, he said the Attitude indicator and Flight director failed during and instrument approach. He completed the approach partial panel. During the conversation, I told Nate to not fly the airplane until that was fixed. He agreed the aircraft needed major work. I reiterated to him how important it was to have everything working. He agreed, but he thought there was a reluctance to spend more money on the airplane by both the owner and Ryan, who apparently managed the airplane.

I spoke with him last week, and he again complained what a "piece of shit" the airplane was. The questions I have is "who did the prebuy" and what was found? Why was the aircraft allowed to fly with known issues? Why did the people managing the airplane allow it to fly? Why weren't these issues getting fixed?

Nate was a great guy, and a great pilot. I have no doubt Nate did everything he could to try to save the plane and it passengers.

We are all saddened by these events. However, I am distributed by the lack of support he was receiving on the ground with the maintenance issues. If you want to talk more call me [REDACTED]

Brad Libby
Weconnect

From: [Sullivan PAM](#)
To: [Sullivan PAM](#)
Subject: FW: N771XW - CEN18FA107
Date: Monday, February 26, 2018 8:31:58 AM
Importance: High

From: Bruce J. Varda [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 25, 2018 5:35 PM
To: Assistance@NTSB <Assistance@ntsb.gov>
Subject: Fwd: N771XW

From: "Bruce J. Varda" [REDACTED] >
Date: February 25, 2018 at 16:29:01 CST
To: eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov
Subject: N771XW

Sirs,

I talked to the pilot, Nate Saari several times prior to the accident about the avionics and auto pilot deficiency's on N771XW and I recommended he not fly the aircraft until it is fixed.

Additionally, the morning of the accident, I talked to both the pilot and the owner in the lobby of Executive Air in GRB suggesting since they had avionics/autopilot issues he, the owner, should come out to the Conquest I was flying that morning and see the available upgrade to his Conquest. His response back to me is he is new to the aircraft and needs to crawl before he walks.

You also need to interview the manager of the aircraft Ryan Jahner and the possible WAK Aviation involvement. Ryan assisted Ponderosa Aviation in the acquisition. Who did the pre-purchase, if any and what did they find?

I also understand Executive Air of GRB did some work on the avionics/AP.

I will make myself available at your earliest convenience to discuss.

Respectfully,

Bruce Varda
Director of Operations
Superior Aviation
"The Only Way To Fly"

From: [Garcia Rolando](#)
To: [Sullivan PAM](#)
Subject: FW: N771XW Accident
Date: Friday, February 23, 2018 7:26:24 AM

Hello Pam,

This came in through the eyewitnessreport email.

Rolly

Rolando Garcia

Assistant Advisor
Special Ops & Interagency Coordination
Office of the Managing Director (MD-1)

Desk
Cell
Fax

(24/7) RESPONSE OPERATIONS CENTER "ROC" 1-844-373-9922

From: Terrance Sheehan [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2018 4:14 AM
To: eyewitnessreport <eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov>
Subject: N771XW Accident

Hello,

My name is Terrance Sheehan, I'm an airline pilot with Republic Airline. I was operating United Express flight 3708 from KORD-KCVG on Thursday evening 2/22. I was pilot monitoring on that leg, so I was working the radios. I was on the frequency that N771XW made his final transmissions at the time of the accident.

We checked on with Chicago center as we were climbing out of KORD, I believe the frequency was 121.12. I heard the controller assign N771XW a heading to fly. The pilot of N771XW responded in a slightly concerned tone saying something about having a trim issue, and "needing a minute to regain control of the aircraft." The transmission was obvious something wasn't right, but definitely not clear as to the severity of the issue. (I, probably like most pilots, assumed the trim issue was likely a runaway trim. I don't know how familiar a controller might've been with the potentially severe danger to a runaway trim, especially at a high speed.) The pilot's words of "needing to regain control of the aircraft" (implying that he had lost control) definitely caught my attention though.

The controller again emphasized the heading was for traffic avoidance, and repeated the instruction. Another pilot (I would assume another airline pilot) jumped on the frequency and said "he's having an aircraft control issue, he might need a block of altitude." Neither the controller nor the pilot of N771XW acknowledged the transmission. I heard the controller ask N771XW to say his altitude, to which there was no response. Probably 15-20 seconds later, the controller asked once more to say altitude, and I remember hearing N771XW key the microphone, but wasn't actually saying anything. It was more of a grunting/moaning/struggling sound with a lot of background noise (what sounded like airflow). I didn't hear any tones or alarms or anything that might've come from an aircraft warning/detection system of any kind.

I don't recall hearing any engine noise either. I would estimate another 30-60 seconds went by and then I heard N771XW key the microphone one last time and yell "yea, we're dead, we're dead, we're dead" and the microphone remained keyed for about 5 seconds after that until it cut out. The other airline pilot (who jumped on the frequency before) desperately yelled on the radio "roll wings level, roll wings level" but there was no response to that either. I heard the controller reach out to N771XW 3-5 more times on her frequency, and once on guard. I heard another controller reach out to N771XW on guard as well. About 2 minutes after the final transmission from N771XW the original controller was replaced by a male voice. We were handed off to the next frequency about 4-5 minutes later. I continued to monitor guard listening for a possible ELT, and never heard one, (neither with or without the squelch). I heard 2-3 other aircraft reach out to N771XW on guard, and one other controller.

If you have any other questions or would like to follow up, please feel free to reach out to me.

Thanks,
Terrance Sheehan



From: [REDACTED]
To: [Sullivan PAM](#)
Subject: Fwd: N771xw
Date: Saturday, March 3, 2018 1:39:37 PM

Thank you,
Ryan Jahner
[REDACTED] cell

Begin forwarded message:

From: Nate Saari <[REDACTED]>
Date: February 14, 2018 at 3:11:55 PM CST
To: [REDACTED] >
Subject: N771xw
Reply-To: Nate Saari <[REDACTED]>

Howdy,

Quick e-mail about aircraft. Right oil pressure in climb out from GRB was reading 20 psi. Fluctuated to 30 psi passing thru FL200. At FL280 was reading 40 psi after 5 mins. After 10 min at FL280 right side reading 50 psi. After 15 min oil pressure fluctuates between 40 and 60, then levels at 50 psi. 1 hr 20 mins into flight oil pressure was in the green and looked like it was working properly. Torque settings were spot on at 15 a side throughout all phases of flight. The DG was not working at all until 20 mins into flight so I hope you have a new one on the way. Next flight is the 21st or 22nd of next week. Thanks for the help.

Nate

From: [Ryan Jahner](#)
To: [Sullivan PAM](#)
Subject: N771XW
Date: Saturday, March 3, 2018 1:38:39 PM

Hello Pam,

Thanks for talking with me the other day. So here is all my information.

John and myself met at executive air in Green Bay in passing, and told him I could get him a better rate on flying to Kansas than what he was spending in a Lear jet. We have a 135 charter certificate. So I helped him fly to Kansas and a few other locations in our C441. In the process of flying him we started chatting about airplanes. He had told me that he wanted to acquire a C441 so I helped him with that process and we had found one out of Beaver Falls PA. N771XW. I had picked it up and flown it to GJT for a Pre-purchase inspection. After that I flew it back to GRB. I also did numerous trips in N771XW for Mr. Pagel and his team to Kansas and various other locations.

Regarding auto pilot issues, I never had any of those issues with the plane. Nate sent me an email regarding the Oil Pressure issue and I will forward that email to you so you can see this. But the log books will state a new HSI which was installed and checked and a Pressure regulator from N369WK which we let them borrow for the time being until the new one showed up. I had some small issues with the plane but nothing big or a GROUNDING ITEM. West Star aviation did the pre-purchase inspection and also did most of the required maintenance on the plane. Executive Air finished off some small items. Executive Air also did a hard check on that oil pressure issue and it was at 100PSI during the check, so we were trying to pin down what the issue was.

Also I had helped manage the Maintenance of the aircraft with Executive Air and the team there which is where all the Log Books are at (Tony is who you need to speak to, and when the NTSB comes up I can also help assist in this)

Also regarding the auto-pilot issue I pinned down the person and it came from Tom Zalanski which is channel 5 News for Green Bay and he is the one that stated Nate Saari had an auto pilot issue when he landed in Indiana.? This is second hand information to me.

Ryan Jahner




Virus-free. www.avg.com



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Bruce Varda – Superior Aviation

Date: February 26, 2018

Subject: – CEN18FA107

Mr. Varda stated that Nate Saari worked for him for about 3 years. During that time, he flew a Conquest and an Eclipse. The employment ended at the end of November 2017. Mr. Varga stated that Mr. Saari received a DUI and that he wasn't straight forward about it, so he suspended Mr. Saari for 30 days. It was during that suspension that he started flying N771XW.

He stated that Ryan Jahner managed N771XW and that Mr. Jahner was the one who arranged for Mr. Saari to fly the airplane. He wasn't sure what the exact arrangement was. He stated that Mr. Jahner assisted in the acquisition of the airplane for Ponderosa, but wasn't sure of the extend of his involvement.

He stated that he knows Mr. Saari has upset training in the past and that he believes he recently had training in the Conquest.

He and Mr. Saari spoke regularly. Mr. Saari stated several times that there were problems with the avionics and autopilot on the accident airplane. On February 3rd the pilot flew the airplane from Memphis in IFR conditions when the HSI spun on him and he flew the approach partial panel. He stated Mr. Saari told him the autopilot was inconsistent, but he didn't know the specifics.

He stated he saw the pilot and owner on the morning of the accident flight and offered to show them his Conquest with updated avionics. The owner stated that he needed to crawl before he could walk and rejected seeing the updated airplane.

Pamela S Sullivan
National Transportation Safety Board
Air Safety Investigator



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Ryan Jahner [REDACTED]

Date: February 28, 2018

Subject: – CEN18FA107

Mr. Jahner stated that all the maintenance records were secured at Executive Air in Green Bay. He provided the contact information at Executive Air.

He stated that he had flown Mr. Pagel as a customer and Mr. Pagel consulted with him when he wanted to purchase a company airplane. He suggested a Conquest would be a good airplane. Mr. Pagel asked him to help find an airplane, which he did. He found N771XW and did the prebuy inspection on the airplane. He also hired Nate Saari, who he has known since 2010, to fly the airplane. He was subsequently hired by Ponderosa to manage the airplane.

He had flown 15 to 18 hours in N771XW with the last flight being on November 30, 2017.

There were no outstanding discrepancies with the airplane that he was aware of. He stated that he told Nate that if he came across any issues with the airplane while on a trip, that Nate should let him know so they could get parts ordered and the maintenance lined up with Tony (Executive Air) so they could get the airplane fixed. After they purchased the airplane, they took it to West Star and had about \$[REDACTED] worth of maintenance done on the airplane. They fixed everything that was wrong.

They had recently had an issue with a fluctuation in an oil pressure indication. They had that looked at and it was determined that the engine PSI was adequate at the engine. The engines were due for a hot section inspection in about 220 to 230 hours. There was a previous problem with the HSI tumbling on a trip from California. The HSI was replaced about a week before the accident. The pressure regulator was ordered, but it was going to take 36 weeks to get the new one. Since his Conquest was down for avionics work, they had the pressure regulator removed from his airplane and installed it on N771XW. He was not aware of any autopilot or avionics problems with the airplane.

He did not have any contact with Nate on the day of the accident. He felt that if Nate had any problems with the airplane on the trip to EYE, he would have called him and told him of the problem during the day.

Pamela S Sullivan
National Transportation Safety Board
Air Safety Investigator



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Charles Beard

Date: February 23, 2018

Subject: – CEN18FA107

Mr. Beard is the property owner where the accident occurred and lives in a house on the property.

He, his wife, daughter, and grand children were in the house when they first heard the airplane. He said the engines were loud and like a revved motor. He state it sounded like the engines were “modulating” and “screaming” they were so loud.

It sounded like the airplane was coming from the west. They then heard an impact and thought that the airplane had crashed in their driveway, it was so loud. His daughter stepped outside and saw light in the field. They called 911 and went into the field to see if they could help.

Pamela S Sullivan

National Transportation Safety Board

Air Safety Investigator



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Jeff Flora

Date: February 24, 2018

Subject: – CEN18FA107

Mr. Flora has been an auto mechanic for many years and said he is very aware of engine sounds.

He was in his house located at 5091 W 600 South, Rossville, IN, when he first heard the airplane. His home is about ¼ mile west of the accident site. He stated it sounded like it was north of his home. He then heard the airplane in what sounded like a dive, and thought to himself, why would an airplane be diving at night. The dive sounded very long and very close to his location. A couple seconds later, he heard a “thump”.

He stated he wasn't able to tell if it was a single engine airplane at the time or if it had two engines, but the sound “normal” and “even”, and the engine(s) were running all the time until he heard the impact.

It sounded like the airplane was traveling from the west to the east.

Pamela S Sullivan

National Transportation Safety Board

Air Safety Investigator



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Scott Meador

Date: February 24, 2018

Subject: – CEN18FA107

Mr. Meador was visiting his daughter who lives on 680 West and about ½ mile north of Rt 26, about 2 miles from the accident site.

They were in the house and heard a loud motor sound. He stated it was very loud and steady. At first they thought it was a snow mobile engine. He stated a minute or two went by and they heard the same sound again. They went outside to look and heard a loud “bang.”

Pamela S Sullivan

National Transportation Safety Board

Air Safety Investigator

RECORD OF		☒ VISIT	☐ CONFERENCE OR	☐ TELEPHONE CALL	TIME 2:30 PM	DATE 02/26/2018	
NAME(S) OF PERSON(S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION Kenny Graham, FBO Manager						ROUTING	
						SYMBOL	INITIALS
Eagle Creek Aviation Services							
KEYE							
SUBJECT N771XW							
DIGEST Mr. Graham showed video of pilot and crew arriving at approximately 0930. He had video of aircraft being positioned for fueling at approximately 1025. Aircraft was fueled with 230 gallons Jet-A. Crew and passengers (together) arrived back at FBO at approximately 1902 and departed at approximately 1920.							
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED							
DATE 02/26/2018		TITLE Steven E. Stombaugh, ASI			SIGNATURE		