

Zachary Funk Witness Report

September 20, 2020

Location: Glenndale Airport (8I3)

Time of incident: Approximately 10:50 – 10:55 a.m. eastern time.

Weather conditions: Clear skies and +10 miles visibility. Wind was varying but primarily out of the east at approximately 5 knots as noted on KOKK's AWOS (Channel 113.50). The windsock on the field (8I3) confirmed light winds out of the east. You can also see the windsock in the picture below along with the smoke trail from the crash confirming wind direction.

My history with Jerry Long: Jerry and I have flown a lot of hours together. He was a private pilot with an instrument rating. He was working on receiving his commercial certificate for some time. He was a member of the EAA and the CAF. I never felt unsafe with Jerry, nor did I have a reason to question his judgement and piloting skill. In other words, he never scared me with his flying. I have never witnessed Jerry take unnecessary risks while flying.

Jerry was a retired engineer who spent most every day at the flight school at KOKK working on airplanes under the supervision of Steve Stants and Robert "Nathan" Davis. Jerry had worked on the Saratoga extensively over the last year and half. He probably had flown the Saratoga more than any other pilot in the last six months, but that is speculation on my part. Jerry was a thorough pilot who was by the book. He knew the numbers on airspeeds, weight and balance, take-off and landing performance, ect.

Jerry had mentioned to me on Saturday (September 19, 2020) that he stated he wanted to fly the Saratoga at the Glenndale Days BBQ Bash. To clear this up, he was telling me the story of how he came to fly the Saratoga at the event. He told me this story on Saturday (September 19, 2020). He did not mention which day in the week prior where he made his wishes known to Steve Stants. This event was to raise money for spinal muscular atrophy. All proceeds went to that cause. The pilots did not receive compensation.

Because Jerry wanted to fly the Saratoga at the bash, he wanted to get some more experience flying in and out of a short/soft field. Specifically, he wanted some training on flying in and out of Glenndale because he was cognizant of the power lines as all the pilots are. He decided to fly with Ty Lingo, who is a CFI/II with Flight Training Centers, and work on takeoffs and landings. Jerry had successfully piloted the Saratoga in and out of 8I3 the day prior (Saturday) without issue.

I have noted that Jerry suffered from small, chronic tremors. It did not seem to affect his flying, vision, or decision making, and I think he been cleared to fly on his medical. His tremors affected his hands and head where he would shake in small quick motions.

My position: I was PIC in a C172N taxiing out to on the west side of the runway to the north. I had a clear view of the approach path, runway, and taxiway in front of me. I was located approximately 1000 ft from the approach end of the runway. I have posted a photo below of the position I was in at the time of the crash. When I saw the crash occur, I immediately shut the plane down, deboarded my passengers, and ran towards the crash site.



The incident: I was observing the PA-32 Saratoga on final approach towards runway 18 wherein the pilot has to clear the electric lines prior to pulling the power back and landing on the 2048' x 110' grass runway. The chart supplements / A/FD states that the threshold is displaced 292' for the power line. The power line is also shown on the VFR section chart. The pilot of the Saratoga, Jerry Long, made his final approach call inbound as normal. He did not give any radio call stating any sort of distress.

The plane appeared low on approach, but I could not determine a relative airspeed from my head-on position. I also could not determine just how low the plane was. I did note that the flaps were deployed, and the engine was running all the way to the point of impact. The plane did not seem to recover prior to impact as the attitude of the aircraft was normal for approach. There was no attempt to climb over the power lines prior to impact. In essence, I believe this was a CFIT incident, but at this point, that is speculation.

The airplane clipped the metal pole at the top of the electric line and caught the electric line itself with the nose-gear and the right main landing gear. This caused the plane to violently yaw to the right (from the pilot's view) and cartwheel over on itself. It came to a rest in a corn field below on its back (belly up). The plane immediately caught fire upon impact.

After the crash: Johnathan Tharp, Glen Antione, one other bystander, and myself arrived at the scene first. The plane was burning, and we tried to see if anyone was alive. The bystander that arrived helped get Cameron Wagler out before John, Glenn, and I arrived. Cameron was riding in the very back row of seats. This Saratoga had six seats. The pilot and co-pilot seat and a club seating arrangement in the back. I do not know what seat the two young men who perished were located.

While this was happening, we heard a large "pop" sound and John called for all of us to clear the area. At which point a large fireball ignited. This suggested to me that fuel exhaustion was not the case. I do not believe fuel starvation was a problem as the engine appeared to be running normally at the point of impact. We did hear someone wheezing in the airplane prior to the fuel igniting, but we could not reach him or know where the sound was coming from.

I then left the crash scene to assist with finding fire extinguishers and making a path for emergency personnel to find the crash site as easily as possible.

I cannot tell if emergency personnel moved any of the wreckage after I left the scene, but I can state that none of the wreckage was moved by the initial people that arrived on scene (John, Glenn, another bystander, and me) other than what was needed to get Cameron out.

The pilots that were flying at the event were:

Jerry Long (Private Pilot, Instrument Rating)

Justin Harkcom (Commercial Pilot, Instrument Rating) Note- He only flew on Saturday (Sept. 19).

Steve Cusick (Commercial Pilot, CFI)

Ty Lingo (Commercial Pilot, CFI/II)

Nick Boland (Commercial Pilot, CFI)

Jerry Keller (Commercial Pilot, ATP, CFI/II, MEI)

Laura Stants (Commercial Pilot, CFI/II/MEI)

Myself (Zachary Funk)(Commercial Pilot, CFI)