

Aaron Sauer
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety - Central Region

Date: 08/24/2021

Subject: CEN21FA376

Contact: Flight Instructor

According to the flight instructor, he knew the pilot for the about 20 years and had previously trained together in the pilot's Piper Malibu airplanes. He was aware that the pilot was interested in purchasing a TBM airplane about 2 to 3 months prior to the accident. The pilot purchased the airplane and set up training with the flight instructor.

The pilot was approved for insurance and they established a training plan that included 15 hours of dual instruction and ground school. The plan was for the training to be conducted in the Florida area; however, the weather was not good, so they conducted the training in the Midwest. The pilot and flight instructor completed 15.5 hours of dual instruction and several hours of ground instruction. During the flight instruction, the flight instructor stated the airplane flew well during all maneuvers and flight profiles. During one flight, the push to talk switch malfunctioned and that was replaced by maintenance personnel. The pilot and flight instructor were together for 5 days. He stated the pilot was a good student, in good health, and comfortable on the airplane systems.

On the last day of training, August 14th, the pilot dropped off the flight instructor in Cleveland, fueled the airplane, and departed to his home airport for his first solo flight. The flight instructor told the pilot to fly 10 to 15 hours by himself to get comfortable, and in addition, not to fly in marginal weather.

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Contact: Pilot's Friend

According to the friend, he and the pilot worked together for 17 years and had been friends for about 15 years. The two had purchased a Piper Malibu, and the pilot had bought out the friend's portion in September 2020. The pilot had routinely completed annual flight training with the same instructor for about the last decade. The friend and pilot had flown several hundred hours together over the years.

The friend reported the pilot was very competent, safe, cautious, and wasn't afraid to say no to a flight for an unsafe situation. The pilot was very good at managing airplane systems and energy, and the pilot maintained his airplanes very well; never had an in-op stickers in the airplane.

The pilot had numerous conversations with the friend about purchasing a TBM airplane and had considered the turbine Piper airplane. The pilot decided about 2 to 3 months ago to purchase a TBM. The pilot had a verbal agreement on another TBM, but the friend shared some concerns, and the pilot canceled that potential sale. The pilot then found the accident airplane and decided to purchase. The pilot then set up training with a flight instructor who was recommended by several people. The training was supposed to be in Florida, but due to inclement weather, the training was conducted in the Midwest. The pilot stated to the friend the training was adequate and complimentary to other training he had received.

After the training, the pilot completed two solo flights in the airplane which included a few approaches and pattern operations. The accident flight was a planned short cross-country to pick up the pilot's son-in-law. The pilot asked the friend to go, but he declined. He told the pilot he wanted him to have about 50 hours in the airplane before he would fly with him. During the previous flight, the pilot stated he had no issues with

the airplane, and he felt comfortable in the accident airplane. He stated the pilot was in great health; like to run marathons and waterski.

On the day of the accident, the pilot's wife had called the friend inquiring about his whereabouts. The friend learned of the accident from the state highway patrol.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Aaron M. Sauer
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: 08/23/2021
Person Contacted: Mr. Thomas Griffing
RE: CEN21FA376

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Thomas Griffing, stated he has known the accident pilot since about the 1990's. The accident pilot had co-owned a Piper Malibu Mirage (owned for about 15 years) before purchasing the TBM-700 about 2 weeks prior to the accident. Before purchasing the airplane, the TBM-700 had a large inspection completed on August 6, 2021, in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. After picking up the airplane sometime after the inspection, the pilot had been flying with an instructor and flying the airplane around the Midwest. After the training, the pilot had dropped of the instructor in Cleveland, Ohio, and the pilot brought the airplane to Port Clinton (PCW), his home airport. The pilot had flown the airplane on either August 17/18, and the pilot had no issues during the flight.

While the airplane was at PCW and some maintenance personnel were there inspecting another airplane for Mr. Griffing, the pilot asked if the maintenance could do a quick boroscope of the engine's hot section. The maintenance completed the boroscope and reported the "engine was gorgeous inside." After the boroscope, Mr. Griffing completed a 6 to 10 minute engine test run, with no problems noted. In addition to the boroscope, the pilot also had Mr. Griffing's company detail the airplane.

Mr. Griffing stated that the accident flight was possibly a trip to pick up the pilot's son-in-law from the Cincinnati area, and the flight was the first solo flight for the pilot in the airplane.

Mr. Griffing stated the accident pilot was a "very talented pilot" who was in excellent health. He stated the pilot also did everything right as it related to flight training. Mr. Griffing estimated

that the pilot had accumulated about 14 hours in the accident airplane (most of the time was dual instruction) before the accident flight.

After the accident, Mr. Griffing, who was in possession of the aircraft records, secured the records in the company safe. The NTSB requested Mr. Griffing ship the records to the aircraft recovery location in Tennessee.

Mr. Griffing offered to speak again should the investigation have any additional questions.