

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

May 13, 2022

Attachment 1 – AirNet II Personnel Interview Transcripts

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

CEN22FA096

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK *

ACCIDENT NEAR DEFIANCE, *

Accident No.: CEN22FA096

MISSOURI ON JANUARY 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: THOMAS HARMON, Pilot
AirNet

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:55 p.m. EST)

1
2
3 MR. ETCHER: Good afternoon. My name is Shawn Etcher. I'm
4 Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB investigating the
5 event that occurred near Defiance, Missouri. Today we're going to
6 be using a digital recorder. After the interview is complete,
7 we'll send off this recording to have it transcribed. Once the
8 transcription comes back, I'll go through it to correct any
9 misspelled acronyms, but I will not change any of the wording in
10 the transcript that you have said. Is it okay if we record and
11 transcribe this interview?

12 MR. HARMON: Yes.

13 MR. ETCHER: Great. In case you weren't aware, the NTSB, we
14 are strictly here for safety. We're not going to assign fault.
15 We determine a probable cause, but we've got to try and figure out
16 what that was, and that's what we're here interviewing you for, to
17 help us understand AirNet and everything surrounding it. You are
18 entitled to have a legal representation -- or a representative if
19 you will in here with you. Do you wish to have one?

20 MR. HARMON: No.

21 MR. ETCHER: Okay. I just have a few rules before we get
22 started if you will. Please answer all the questions to the best
23 of your recollection. If you have an opinion, please just let us
24 know it's your opinion, it's not a fact, and that's okay to have
25 opinions. That's great. They help us, too.

1 MR. HARMON: Right.

2 MR. ETCHER: And there's even questions I'll ask that I may
3 ask for your opinion, and that's okay. But if you interject an
4 opinion, just let us know so we don't think that's fact, it's --

5 MR. HARMON: Right.

6 MR. ETCHER: -- We can differentiate between the two.

7 MR. HARMON: Understood.

8 MR. ETCHER: If you don't understand a question, just ask for
9 clarification. That's perfectly fine. It's not a check ride. If
10 you give me an answer that I don't quite understand, I'm going to
11 ask to clarify it a little bit just to kind of help me make sure
12 we all understand the same thing. And the most important
13 question, if you don't know something, I don't know works fine, so
14 don't think you have to have an answer for everything. You might,
15 but know full well you can use I don't know.

16 MR. HARMON: Okay.

17 INTERVIEW OF THOMAS HARMON

18 BY MR. ETCHER:

19 Q. With that I will start with the toughest questions first, to
20 get the worst ones out of the way. Can you please state your full
21 name and spell your last?

22 A. Thomas Allen Harmon, H-a-r-m-o-n.

23 Q. And what is your age?

24 A. 29. Just turned 29.

25 Q. Happy belated birthday, then.

1 A. Thanks.

2 Q. What's your job title?

3 A. Chief pilot at AirNet 2.

4 Q. And what does that job title entail?

5 A. So my primary duties are I would say basically properly
6 staffing company flights, making sure pilots are training and
7 certified to our training manual and then basically providing
8 enough of those trained pilots to amply support our operations, so
9 I oversee all of our training, all of our checking including, you
10 know, the two people that we're talking about today, but those are
11 my primary duties amongst others. Others is record keeping, pilot
12 records primarily, duty flight time records each month, but, yeah,
13 I would say those are the nuts and bolts of what I do, and that's
14 90 percent of my time.

15 Q. Okay. Great. When were you hired on at AirNet?

16 A. So I was hired in fall of 2016. I believe it was November,
17 early November I was hired. So I worked there, I was upgraded to
18 captain on the Learjet a year after I was hired, so fall of 2017.
19 Shortly thereafter I worked in the training department as an
20 instructor, was hired into the position of assistant chief pilot.
21 I believe that was at the end of 2018, and then our director of
22 operations actually moved on to NetJets so Brandon ended up moving
23 his position. I stayed in the assistant chief position basically
24 until I had met the minimum requirements for FAR 135 at which
25 point I've been in the chief pilot position now for two-and-a-half

1 -- or going on two-and-a-half years.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah, two years and about five months, I think, to be exact.

4 Q. All right.

5 A. So that's a little --

6 Q. Excellent.

7 A. -- bit of time to sink my teeth in.

8 Q. You've got some time, that's great. What airmen's
9 certificate and type ratings do you have?

10 A. Just an ATP, multiengine and then only type certificate is
11 for the Learjet type.

12 Q. Okay. And now this is my toughest question or one of the
13 toughest questions we always ask. Do you got a ball park on total
14 time?

15 A. Just around 36, 3,700 hours total time.

16 Q. And do you have a bigger ball park on the time in the Baron?

17 A. Baron is probably close to 550 to 600 hours I think.
18 Learjet's about 12 or 1,300 -- no, about 1,500 hours in the
19 Learjet, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. Excellent. So as a chief pilot, you're -- it sounds
21 like you have a very busy schedule. Do you ever get to fly the
22 line often?

23 A. All the time. Um-hum. I would say most recently just
24 because of the nature of the pilot hiring, I've been flying the
25 line a little bit more lately just to help, you know, give the

1 rest of our guys a break, so get in there and take some of those
2 long trips, a couple -- usually about two weeks out of the month
3 I'll try to do a two or three day trip just to give some guys a
4 break just because the captains fly a lot and I do, you know, an
5 average probably of 60 to 70 hours a month which I feel like for
6 135 flying's kind of a lot. I feel like the airlines just do
7 that, you know, a month after month after month, and it's not a
8 big deal, but, yeah, I do fly the line quite a bit. Mostly in the
9 Learjet and then occasionally on the Baron I'll jump in and do
10 coverage or out and back to St. Louis, and then some charters here
11 and there with the Baron.

12 Q. Okay. Do you remember when the last time you flew the Baron
13 was?

14 A. On the line or just in training or in a check ride capacity?

15 Q. Either. When was the last time you flew it?

16 A. I gave a check ride in the Baron yesterday. That was a windy
17 day. I gave a Baron check ride yesterday. I flew it I believe
18 once last week, last -- I gave someone a check ride last Thursday
19 I believe. On the line, mid-January probably.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. All right. You actually answered a lot of these questions
23 already as we went through.

24 A. Yeah. And I would say that Baron total time's probably --
25 that's probably a low ball. Yeah, I bet it's more than that, but

1 I at least have that the last time I looked which is --

2 Q. Probably 5,600 I think you said?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay. It's more than that, then.

5 A. I would think so.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I'm not sure though.

8 Q. All right. So as a chief pilot you always have somebody to
9 answer to.

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Who do you have -- who do you have to answer to?

12 A. Our director of operations.

13 Q. Anybody above him?

14 A. Day to day, no. No, I pretty much answer to him and then he
15 runs things up the chain from his standpoint, but, no,
16 occasionally I'm in contact with our general manager, Barry Brakis
17 (ph.). His offices are up in Willow Run Airport in Ypsilanti, and
18 then, you know, I occasionally have interactions with our -- the
19 owner of the company, Doug Kalitta (ph.) just, you know, obviously
20 after the accident and everything we were all talking to each
21 other, in close contact with each other, then offering their
22 support for us in any capacity they could, so day-to-day, though,
23 you know, Brandon's the guy that I answer to, report to, and
24 constantly talking to even though a lot of times we're not even in
25 the same city because we might be flying a line or doing other

1 things, so, no, we're in pretty close contact, and, yeah,
2 definitely directly reporting to him --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- on almost everything.

5 Q. So I've been told by some of the pilots today that we
6 interviewed that if they have -- if they run into an issue on the
7 line while they're flying that you've made yourself more than
8 always available for them to call, but how do you maintain that
9 when you fly the line?

10 A. So typically how we try to schedule it is if I'm flying,
11 Brandon's not flying and then vice versa, so we tell the pilots if
12 you are not able to get a hold of one person, the other person's
13 available and vice versa, and that has been -- we haven't had an
14 issue where someone hasn't been able to get a hold of somebody in
15 the almost three-and-a-half years I've been doing this assistant
16 chief/chief pilot job, so typically what will happen is let's say
17 I fly that day, then I go on rest, phone calls go to Brandon, and
18 then vice versa, phone calls come to me when Brandon's out flying
19 and he's on rest.

20 Q. Okay. Now you said you started here as an assistant chief
21 pilot -- not you started your flying, but --

22 A. Right, yeah.

23 Q. -- you were assistant chief pilot. Do you have an assistant?

24 A. We do not. We're currently hiring for one, though. Yeah.

25 Most recently we've -- with the sheer amount of movement of, you

1 know, just pilots moving up to, you know, now guys that used to
2 have to work here for two to three years as captain to get hired
3 at, you know, NetJets or Flexjet (ph.) or those, you know, kind of
4 more corporate TE jobs which is typically where most, I would say
5 90 percent of our pilots end up going, seems like they can fly a
6 year as an FO on a jet and would get hired at those jobs nowadays
7 so it's been a lot of work to, you know, train, keep people
8 qualified, so now we're looking for extra help for that, so this
9 whole upswing in the pilot hiring, that seems like it's just been
10 going constantly since about September, so for at least from our
11 standpoint we see it as pretty and is necessary now to refill that
12 position.

13 Q. So since you bring that up, how -- what is the pilot turnover
14 rate here? Are you losing one every couple of months? One a
15 week? Help me kind of just quantify that.

16 A. So the last six months, or I'm saying -- let's see, two --
17 I'm trying to think. Ever since August we've been losing about a
18 pilot every I'd say on average six to eight weeks. We had a
19 number of guys who had flown here for a while through covid and
20 everything, so there was like a long delay of turnover. There was
21 no natural turnover going on through covid. We were up to I think
22 30 pilots total at one point which for us is a pretty decent
23 amount, and then all of a sudden, you know, the flood gates open
24 for hiring and people -- we had all these super high time guys
25 with, you know, PIC types and ATPs and places just ate them up

1 because they seem to like our people, but, yeah, I would say in
2 the last like since August it's been, you know, six to eight weeks
3 we've been probably having one person on average. Sometimes it's
4 longer, sometimes they go in bunches, it just kind of depends.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But, yeah, it's been a dog eat dog world I feel like lately
7 just with all these companies. It's nuts what some of these
8 places are hiring at now and places like NetJets which you can't
9 touch for -- until you're at 35, 4,000 hours, you know. Like I
10 would just be qualified to start working there now, and now
11 they're, you know, they're starting to pluck some of our FOs now
12 that have worked here as a first officer for a year, year-and-a-
13 half or something like that. It's incredible. Yeah, it's really
14 incredible.

15 Q. So you're losing some off the top. How hard is it to
16 replenish from, you know, getting people hired in?

17 A. It hasn't been too bad. We've had a pretty consistent flow
18 where we've been at least been able to maintain our pilot numbers
19 right around the low to mid-20s at this point, so we just finished
20 up a class last week of two guys. We have two individuals coming
21 in on March 7, so we've been doing on average about a class every
22 six weeks I think, and we're actually -- we're attempting to grow
23 which is hard again with this hiring climate for some stuff coming
24 down the pipe later in 2022, so we're going to probably start in
25 May doing classes of four, I believe, which is why we're also

1 looking to fill that assistant chief pilot position. More pilots
2 obviously means more resources that we need to make available, you
3 know, for these guys that you talked to earlier that are out
4 there, you know, in the rain and snow flying and need, you know, a
5 second set of eyes or something or just to talk about different
6 operational questions, so -- but, yeah, it's been decent finding
7 people, you know, good people. I try not to -- the one thing I've
8 been trying to fight this whole time is not lower the standard for
9 the type of person that we want to come in. I just don't want
10 that ever to slip or ever be jeopardized just because of how busy
11 we are, if that makes sense. That's constantly one of my worst
12 fears that I try to almost keep myself aware of, keenly aware of.
13 That's something I don't want to ever change, you know, because
14 that's how it was when I got hired here, always hiring the right
15 people, upgrading the right people, not just the next person in
16 line or the first person that fills out an application online.

17 Q. So what is your requirements to get on here? What's the
18 minimum?

19 A. Typically we hire pilots around 1,000 hours total time. We
20 don't -- like I'm sure you've seen, we don't have an official SIC
21 program anymore. We did have an exemption for, gosh, I think a
22 year-and-a-half or so, 17942 I think was the number on that. They
23 decided not to renew that which we completely understood. We
24 don't -- we didn't at the time have full dual controls in all the
25 Barons, dual set of instruments so I completely understand where

1 that -- I think it was -- yeah, where the FAA and -- I don't know
2 if it was our POI specifically that renewed that. I forget, but I
3 completely understand where they were coming from with that, so
4 how we build that time is we initially time people SIC in the
5 Learjet, qualify them on the Baron, put them through the same
6 training program as the people that do come in with their PIC
7 times, so if you're coming in with a 1,500 pilot who meets all
8 those 135 IFR requirements, they go through the same training as
9 somebody who comes in at 900 or 1,000 hours. Same check ride, and
10 then they build their time flying the 91 repositioning legs and
11 then flying SIC in the Learjet is how they build their time coming
12 in. Yeah, typically around 1,000 hours. We have hired lower than
13 that and obviously hired above that, too, just depending on the
14 candidate.

15 Q. All right. Is there a minimum requirement you guys need to
16 see from a pilot applying for instrument, actual instrument or
17 simulated instrument time?

18 A. Not typically. The unfortunate thing is when you hire them
19 around that level, you typically -- the actual instrument time is
20 low, and that's just a fact of the -- you know, that's just the
21 fact of the matter of those people. Mine was low, and, yeah, it's
22 hard. Unless they're like a couple thousand hour flight
23 instructor, and their double I, you typically -- or they're
24 coming, you know, from another charter operation or something, you
25 typically don't see that very much come out on an application, so

1 that's why we -- and that's, you know, the whole thing with this
2 accident and everything, you know, we try to do -- the biggest
3 thing we hit is instrument, instrument, instrument, instrument,
4 instrument. Everything you do, everything we do, everything you
5 do as a professional pilot, you know, that's why we use an FTD
6 that if you even breathe on it, it starts turning you in a
7 different direction, you know, simulating as much as we can, like
8 catastrophic instrument failures in that FTD, stuff that you
9 really can't do in the airplane, you can just cover up an
10 instrument, but that doesn't really simulate, you know, actually
11 how that instrument would, you know, stop working or become
12 inoperative during the course of flight, but, yeah, no, it's
13 typically pretty low actual time, you know. They have a fair
14 amount of simulated, but that's just the thing, you know as well
15 as I do simulated and actual are not the same thing.

16 No matter how much you try to realistically simulated it, I
17 guess, yeah.

18 Q. So obviously low time instrument with low time pilots could
19 be challenging.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. How do you guys mitigate some of those challenges or
22 concerns?

23 A. So the -- and kind of the process I went -- well, not kind of
24 -- the process I went through when I started here that I've been
25 trying to -- that we've been maintaining I would say definitely is

1 the fact that we don't even stick you in the airplane until you
2 have definitively proven in our FTD that you, you know, not only
3 can, you know, keep the airplane upright and straight ahead on an
4 altitude. You know, you're flying -- basically if you took the
5 135 PIC IFR check ride as if you can pass that in a -- basically
6 we make it so you fly that sim, you can do all our procedures,
7 maneuvers, instrument approaches, precision, non-precision
8 circles, if you can do all that in the FTD and pass an FAR 135
9 check ride, IFR in that FTD before we would even put you on a
10 plane. One, it's just kind of throwing away money when you put
11 people in the airplane and, you know, they're not ready for it.
12 You end up spending more money just purely flying in the airplane,
13 and the FTD's great for, you know, I know it can only be so
14 realistic, but it's harder to fly than the airplane, in my
15 opinion, and you'd ask most of these guys, you know, going back to
16 their indoctrination training like, oh, God, yeah, I remember that
17 thing, like I hated that thing. That was the way that, you know,
18 we mitigated that risk was, you know, we did -- our training
19 program has six sessions in that, five sessions of training with,
20 you know, kind of -- there's some I guess "stage checks" in there,
21 and then the sixth one being kind of the final progress check.
22 It's obviously not an official check ride or anything, but a
23 progress check that says, hey, if you're not doing these
24 procedures and you're not doing them within commercial or
25 instrument ACS, you're not getting in the airplane, you know, and

1 that's how we've successfully obviously up until this point been
2 able to mitigate that in my opinion, but, yeah, that's typically
3 how we attack that, because that's, gosh, that's just -- and I
4 talked to my friends who've worked in recruiting at the airlines,
5 too, that's just like the routinely -- or the routine thing they
6 see coming through the door with pilots is, you know, where do
7 they struggle in training, whether it be the 121 or 135 or
8 corporate gig, it's instrument skills. You know, I feel like
9 that's just our constant battle, especially people when we're
10 taking them into that first real flying job, you know. You go
11 into fly instruction or banner flying or survey, but I think the
12 really unique challenge of working at a job like this is, you
13 know, getting people actually instrument, not just instrument
14 current, but instrument proficient. But, yeah, that's -- I would
15 say that's in a long winded way how we try to -- attempt to attack
16 and mitigate that risk having low instrument time pilots.

17 Q. Yeah, no, that helps. So I appreciate that. It's good to
18 hear how you guys do things.

19 A. Yeah, and then personally from my perspective in the years
20 I've been instruction -- instructing and giving check rides, the
21 worst is when you go out on a check ride, especially with an indoc
22 person, and it's 10 miles and clear, and there's not a darn cloud
23 in the sky. Those are the days I absolutely hate training. Days
24 like yesterday I absolutely love training. You know, it was 800
25 overcast, it was 40 knot winds at 3,000 feet, and, you know, we're

1 getting bumped around a little bit, not excessively, and, you
2 know, those are the days I love to train in, but it's sometimes
3 the luck of the draw. I do remember George and Amanda's training
4 was mostly in the actual airplane. I'd say all but probably one
5 or two flights per person was mostly on VFR in VMC days if that
6 makes sense, so we had to simulate the instrument conditions which
7 again is just not as good as the real thing ever.

8 Q. How do you guys simulate the conditions then?

9 A. So we do have foggles that I occasionally use. The hard part
10 is we're usually in a trained, in course of a training flight
11 doing at least three instrument approaches where we're breaking
12 you out and, you know, having you do a touch and go to a go around
13 or having you do a low approach and then having you go around at a
14 lower altitude. Basically transitioning pretty often between
15 simulated and visual conditions, so in some cases we'll just use a
16 -- I have a ball cap that sits in my desk, we'll use that in
17 conjunction with the visor, but, yeah, sometimes foggles,
18 especially if the person's like me and they wear glasses, don't go
19 very well together, so we try to do our best that way, but usually
20 it's a combination of foggles, a ball cap and our visors on our
21 planes.

22 Q. Okay. Now I know -- when I was flight instructor I could see
23 students, you know, peeking, and is there a way to -- have you
24 guys found a way to stop that? I mean, I know you can put a wind
25 screen in front of your -- a visor in front of you --

- 1 A. Right.
- 2 Q. -- a ball cap, but they can still look up.
- 3 A. They can still look past it.
- 4 Q. Yeah.
- 5 A. Other than us just monitoring as the check airmen
- 6 instructors, no.
- 7 Q. Okay.
- 8 A. No.
- 9 Q. Do you look for anything specific? Do you watch their eyes?
- 10 A. I watch their eyes all the time. You know, when we're final
- 11 approach fix inbound, it's instruments outside their eyes and
- 12 that's kind of my scan as an instrument during check airman.
- 13 Q. Okay. Where are your pilot bases?
- 14 A. Here in Columbus, Ohio, at Rickenbacker Airport and then
- 15 Spirit of St. Louis Airport in Chesterfield, Missouri.
- 16 Q. Okay. And were both crew members based here?
- 17 A. Here in Columbus, that's correct.
- 18 Q. Here in Columbus. All right. I think you said earlier how
- 19 many -- about how many pilots you guys have.
- 20 A. I believe it's 22 pilots right now. I am not 100 percent
- 21 sure on that though. I'd have to look.
- 22 Q. Is that just in the Baron or is that in the Baron and Lear.
- 23 A. Everyone is dual qualified.
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. The only time that they're not dual qualified is when --

1 usually we have about a month period between when they finish the
2 indoctrination training to when we send them to flight safety just
3 to give them a little bit of a break. Otherwise it can be pretty
4 rigorous, immediately turning around and going to Tucson for two-
5 and-a-half weeks to do Lear training, so typically what we'll do
6 is we'll send them through indoctrination which is typically a
7 three week process. I believe Amanda's and George's was a little
8 bit longer due to the Thanksgiving holiday and then George was
9 sick in the middle of his training and was out for I believe three
10 flight days of training, so his took a little bit longer than
11 Amanda's, but, yeah, typically it's three weeks of indoctrination
12 training. They finish up, they're qualified whether it's just to
13 fly the repositioning 91 legs or 135 IFR legs, and then we'll
14 stick them with our more experienced pilots, I guess, for a
15 certain amount of time, and then usually about a month after
16 they're completed with their indoctrination training we'll send
17 them to Tucson as long as the schedule's working okay.
18 Unfortunately flight safety has sold off their other sim to the
19 Air Force, so they are currently the only Lear 35 sim in the
20 country is in Tucson, so everybody has piled in there, so it's
21 made scheduling a little bit interesting on our end. It's a dying
22 breed of airplane, I guess, or something like that. Because CAE
23 did the same thing, they sold off their sim not too long ago.
24 Q. Yeah. Okay. I know -- I asked all the pilots this morning
25 if they had a concern, what do they do, and they told me, but what

1 do you expect pilots -- if they have a concern flying the line, a
2 plane issue, whether maybe the pilots aren't getting along, what
3 do you expect of a pilot to do if they have a concern?

4 A. So use their resources. I kind of ask them to start, you
5 know, with the person next to them, if they're not solo which, you
6 know, typically we try not to run people as solo as much as
7 humanly possible in the Baron, you know, obviously use that other
8 crew member as immediate resource, and then no matter the day,
9 time, night, holiday, whatever, Brandon and myself are always an
10 open door, open resources. This week I would say is a good
11 example of how that worked. We had a gentleman who had been
12 working for us for about four months, five months now I believe
13 who was flying, and the weather out in Colorado and Denver was,
14 you know, it was going to be a mile in light snow, and he was
15 probably going to have to get de-iced so he reached out to me
16 about that process on I believe it was Monday night, and then we
17 had another pilot that later that morning who -- I don't know if
18 you saw that horrible weather system that came through on Tuesday
19 delaying his departure and what, you know, he wanted a second set
20 of eyes on his flight, and he was in the Baron, also. He
21 contacted Brandon. Those are the types of processes that we ask
22 because what we try to do is, you know, we realize obviously like
23 I just told you, these people come in, you know, with limited
24 experience with real life flying, so we want to make sure that
25 there's 100 percent an open door policy and that they know that,

1 and that's the actual -- that's not just what we say, but that's,
2 you know, you put your money where your mouth is, so-to-speak, so
3 when they call at 2:00 in the morning, you pick up your phone and,
4 you know, you sit there, you break out your iPad and you talk to
5 them for 30, 40 minutes, as long as it takes to, you know, make
6 sure that their general situational awareness and risk mitigation
7 is where it should be, I guess. So we use -- we try to -- we make
8 ourselves available to give them that experience when they're
9 naturally lacking that, you know. A wealth of experience coming
10 in here.

11 Q. And you talked about the pilot, the de-icing and things like
12 that. Have you ever had a pilot concerned with another pilot?
13 Whether it's experience, they're just not getting along. I mean,
14 you --

15 A. Yes. I had one instance where I had two crew members not
16 getting along. That was -- gosh, that was probably almost a year-
17 and-a-half, two years ago now. A captain who now works for
18 Kalitta Air, another guy who did eventually become captain works
19 for EJM (ph.) now, but we don't get a lot of those, though, like
20 crew member disagreements or disputes. One of the guys lost his
21 cool and basically the other guy had an issue with that, didn't
22 want to continue the flight that day because he thought he was
23 overreacting to a situation, and outside of that we have
24 occasionally I'll get a concern from a more experienced pilot
25 about a --- maybe a less experienced first officer. Typically

1 those are in the Learjet, though. I don't get those a lot in the
2 Baron between the Baron flight crews. What we'll do is, you know,
3 all this -- I would say every one of those situations is unique
4 and I would say all the ones that I've had reported to me in the
5 past I would say none of those people work here anymore. Those
6 have all turned over. A lot of those were situations I ran into I
7 remember as an assistant chief pilot when we had some of those
8 basically reported issues with some Learjet first officers just
9 not performing, you know -- getting through check rides, but, you
10 know, day to day just not performing how they should be with the
11 aircraft, so -- but, yeah, all those situations are definitely
12 unique. Those are some of the -- that's probably one of the
13 hardest parts of my job I would think is when you have people that
14 just aren't performing and you've got to figure out how to get
15 them back on track and do it quickly.

16 Q. Have you ever had people not perform that you kind of had to
17 say maybe this isn't for you?

18 A. Not to the point where I would say we've officially
19 terminated them, but to the point where we've more or less put
20 them on a -- you know, I've brought them in, talked to them, flown
21 with them, coached them back to where I think they needed to be,
22 and then re-released them on the line. I've -- in my experience
23 I've only really truly had to do that once with one crew member, a
24 gentleman who left us about a year-and-a-half, two years ago --
25 right -- actually, no, he left us right before covid, so that's

1 been quite a while now. Yeah, he went to go work for Mesa (ph.),
2 I think, after that, but we were to the point that basically he
3 was kind of at his last chance and, you know, it was going to come
4 to probably termination if he, you know, didn't -- if the reports
5 didn't start getting better with him, but I would say that's
6 probably the only time I've ever officially had to do something
7 like that.

8 Q. Okay. And what caused that or what was the --

9 A. Multiple --

10 Q. -- start --

11 A. -- concerned reports from our Lear captains, and not just one
12 captain. I think it was at least two or three different captains,
13 and then my personal experience after those reports going and
14 flying with that individual and then observing the regression I
15 would say of his skills and, you know, his was purely I would say
16 situational, a little bit of situational awareness, but purely
17 stick and rudder skills was something that we worked with that
18 gentleman on, but, yeah, that was multiple concerned reports from
19 multiple Lear captains in that case.

20 Q. Okay. Do you guys have an ASAP, FOQA, SMS?

21 A. We have ASAP. Currently I believe we have three pilot reps
22 if I'm not mistaken, and obviously, our ASAP manager and
23 oversight, but the FAA just changed. Our POI actually used to be
24 our POI and our oversight, but for obvious reasons that was -- she
25 transitioned that to another one of her colleagues because she has

1 only been our POI I believe for two-and-a-half years or something
2 like that, so she trained and tried to as quick I think as she
3 could to get somebody different into that FAA oversight position
4 on the committee there, the ERC, but we don't have -- outside of
5 that we don't have any other type of safety program officially.

6 Q. How's your ASAP program -- how's your perception of how the
7 ASAP program is working? Is it helping you guys? Do you see
8 concerns? Is it --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- altitude busts help me understand kind of in big general
11 terms.

12 A. It's almost weird, especially prior to this accident. Things
13 had been quiet for a little while and, I mean, probably at least
14 about six months things had been kind of quiet, but our -- we have
15 had some good feedback with procedures. Something as simple as,
16 let's see, over the summertime changing it, changing our emergency
17 check list location, you know, simple procedural things that I
18 think have been great benefits have only really come to me from
19 the ASAP committee because I don't know everything and I'm not
20 always -- I'm definitely not perfect and neither is Brandon when
21 it comes to, you know, making sure our procedures -- our
22 procedures I would say are probably never perfect. I think they
23 could always improve, but, yeah, it was weird. It was kind of
24 quiet for like six months previous to this where we really hadn't
25 had a recommendation or request from our ASAP committee. I'm not

1 sure if that's a byproduct of the, you know, maybe reports that
2 had gone down or something like that. I obviously don't have any
3 idea because we're not supposed to be involved with that, and we
4 aren't, but, yeah, for a while we were getting, you know, a couple
5 of recommendations I would say a year on things that they'd like
6 to see in training, like to see as far as things like check lists
7 and smaller procedures go. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. Do you have any ball park idea of how many ASAP
9 reports you get? I know you said you had kind of a dry spell
10 there for -- or at least not a lot of recommendations, but -- and
11 if you don't know, remember I don't know works just fine, too.

12 A. As far as how many reports get filed? Like --

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. -- quarterly or yearly?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. No, I don't.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I don't. We -- I would say I try to remove myself as much as
19 I can from that process other than when they come to me. I want
20 that to be completely untainted by me.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. On purpose I guess.

23 Q. Okay. And, like I said --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. -- I don't know is a good answer, too, so it's --

1 A. Yeah, I don't know. I do not know how many reports we get
2 filed --

3 Q. All right.

4 A. -- on a yearly or even quarterly basis.

5 Q. So if a pilot's out there flying a line, he's in -- we'll
6 just say Spirit of St. Louis Airport, and he feels -- he or she
7 feels that the flight should not go based on something with the
8 airplane or based on weather or whatever, I know you kind of
9 walked me through what the guy did going into -- you know, he
10 needed to be de-iced coming out of Denver --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. -- but can they refuse the flight?

13 A. Yes, yes. So the other night -- I'm going to use the example
14 from the other night because I think that's a good example of
15 where this was going to -- what would have happened. So they had
16 like light to sometimes moderate snow coming down. The
17 temperature was only like 5 Fahrenheit or something typically,
18 like brutally cold Denver night. The deice truck the, of course,
19 it's in the middle of winter, and they're -- somehow their deice
20 truck isn't -- you know, some issue with the FBO is they had a hard
21 time getting it lit, apparently to heat up. They had sprayed a
22 pass of type one on the Baron and snow had probably turned about
23 light snow at that point, but they passed over it and the captain
24 called me at that point and said, hey, Tom, you know, we're still
25 -- we haven't even left the ramp and, you know, we're just going

1 at least a preliminary, you know, pre-take off contamination check
2 here, and I still see snow accumulating on the wings. I said,
3 okay, have them go around one more pass and I said if that doesn't
4 work, then we're cancelling the flight. They went around. After
5 we had said that, it took them about another 5 to 10 minutes to I
6 guess warm the truck back up or something at which point the snow
7 had stopped. They went around another pass, you know, they did
8 their contamination check and, you know, it passed. They taxied
9 out and departed with no issue. Now if that captain would have
10 called me back and, you know, said something like, okay, well,
11 this is not -- you know, the airplane is contaminated, we cancel
12 the flight there. We've had it also -- and it seems like it's
13 always in the winter time because that's when you get the nastiest
14 weather, especially out there in the Midwest and Denver where, you
15 know, we've had, you know, not just airmets (ph.) but sigmets
16 (ph.) for severe icing reports, we've had multiple pireps (ph.),
17 freezing rain forecasted where we don't run those flights on the
18 Baron. We will either run them in the Learjet or tell the
19 customer that we're not running the flight flat out, so all those
20 -- what we try to do is, you know, we don't try to get too far
21 ahead of ourselves so if there's a winter storm coming let's say
22 Thursday we don't try to make those decisions on Monday. So we
23 try to, you know, as the weather develops and as the situation
24 develops, we try to make those decisions and get ahead of them as
25 an ops group, but ultimately at the end of the day I will never

1 ever, and neither will Brandon, tell some -- a pilot to get in
2 that aircraft and if they don't, you know, fly it from A to B
3 because of something that they're concerned of mechanically or,
4 you know, more commonly weather wise that they're fired or
5 something like that. We try to make it very clear that it's your
6 choice, you tell me no and the train stops, and we do something
7 else, you know, whether that's send a Learjet which is a little
8 bit more, you know, obviously competent in handling they're flying
9 over weather, you know. Obviously dealing with weather is a
10 little less complicated in a jet aircraft it seems like sometimes,
11 but -- or just, you know, figure out a different plan all
12 together, change the timing of the route, tell the customer we're
13 not shipping that day, what have you, so there's a lot of tools we
14 have from the operations perspective and I think our guys
15 especially that work in air ops do a really nice job of when
16 enough's enough, we just say no, you know. And I know our sales
17 guys hate it when we tell the customer no, but it has to happen
18 and it does happen periodically. I would say today's even a good
19 example of that. We told them to ship three hours early out of
20 St. Louis today because there's a big snowstorm moving in the
21 area. I'm sure you might know of since you're from St. Louis, so
22 we told them if they don't show up early today, then we're
23 probably not going to be shipping today.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So, I mean, it's -- yeah, that's -- those are -- that's kind

1 of our process, but I will never, and Brandon would never tell
2 anybody that if they, you know, weren't comfortable flying A to B
3 that if they don't do it they're out of here. You know, now it's
4 one thing if it's raining or if it's, you know, a mile or three-
5 quarters of a mile of fog, but even those situations if someone's
6 like new or not necessarily experienced and they call me with
7 concerns, we usually figure out an alternative. You know, maybe
8 they're in a weather situation they've never been it. It's legal
9 to fly, but maybe they're not necessarily comfortable doing it
10 then, you know, there's alternatives in that. You know, since
11 we're talking about it, the night of this accident I remember very
12 specifically I didn't hear a peep from the crew, and I've been
13 running that back in my head a lot lately, and especially after
14 the accident. I personally even looked at the weather that night
15 I remember on Saturday before their -- prior to their departure.
16 It was probably an hour, hour and 30 minutes prior to their
17 departure, and I don't know what you guys have found specifically
18 with your evaluations of the weather, you know. Everybody online
19 likes to say immediately ice, so they iced up, they iced up, they
20 iced up. I remember looking at it and I didn't -- you know, I saw
21 -- if I remember right, I saw light, maybe negative reports of
22 icing in the area for arrivals in Lambert (ph.), and, yeah, I
23 don't know, but I guess the reason I bring that up is specifically
24 from that crew I didn't -- and they -- George had reached out to
25 me prior about some different things, not necessarily weather

1 related, but questions about aircraft or ground operations or
2 something like that, so I know he wasn't afraid to reach out. He
3 never seemed like the guy that would not speak up if he needed to
4 or, you know what I mean. He would not not speak up if he needed
5 to, I mean -- I meant to say, and I didn't hear -- Brandon or
6 myself did not -- we didn't hear a peep out of them that night at
7 all. So, yeah, that was -- I just thought that was -- well, I was
8 -- it's just something I've been thinking about a lot, I guess is
9 what I'm trying to say.

10 Q. And I appreciate you sharing that with us, and we'll get into
11 that flight here --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- in just a little bit --

14 A. Absolutely.

15 Q. -- if you don't mind. Just a few more questions before we
16 get there.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Do you guys have dispatchers, flight followers, something
19 along that line?

20 A. Flight following. Um-hum.

21 Q. Following.

22 A. Two of our three gentlemen who work here in Columbus, they
23 are FAA certified dispatchers, but they're not required to be per
24 our operations manual, so they're just required to receive
25 operational control training and I think a little -- some other

1 operational training. I don't know specifically all that -- what
2 that entails. Mike, our operations manager manages all of that,
3 but, yes, there are three -- currently we employ three flight
4 followers.

5 Q. Does a flight follower, is their job just to follow the
6 flight or do they also, you know, work up weather packages for the
7 crews?

8 A. They don't work up weather packages for the crews although
9 they do monitor it. They don't work up an official weather
10 package of any sort, like a flight release or anything like that.
11 No, those -- that we leave on the crew.

12 Q. Okay. All right. Since the accident, the night of the
13 accident, whichever, did either -- did you have a flight follower
14 on duty at the time?

15 A. So our operation's a little interesting how that works. We
16 actually use our parent company partially for -- to help us with
17 our flight following procedures, so at the time of the accident,
18 flight following was being conducted from the 135 dispatch
19 department up in Willow Run, so they were our first point of
20 contact. Well, when air traffic control had notified the company
21 that the aircraft had fallen off of radar, they were the first to
22 be contacted, and then their procedures are to contact Brandon or
23 myself or Mike Utter (ph.), our here operations manager which are
24 the three primary operational control people we have listed in our
25 GOM.

1 Q. Okay. How do you guys -- what kind of risk assessment do you
2 guys do on your legs? I know it seems like I've been told several
3 times that the accident flight's leg from Spirit to Centennial
4 that was a pretty consistent run for you guys.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Did you guys do a risk assessment of that route to see if
7 there's something we can do? Do you guys do risk assessments on
8 any of your routes?

9 A. Like officially like an official risk assessment program I
10 wouldn't say so now. You know, we're constantly -- that's the
11 thing with being a smaller operation. Brandon and I are naturally
12 more hands on, but as far as that specific night or just overall
13 in general --

14 Q. Overall.

15 A. -- that route? Not on an official basis, no.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. No, we do I would say, you know, day-to-day flight individual
18 risk assessments, but, again, those aren't even technically on
19 paper, you know. I know that there's risk to major cities and
20 stuff that, you know, I don't know if any larger operators use,
21 but, you know, I know for example Ohio State Flight School uses
22 them for their flights and things like that, but as far as like an
23 actual like, you know, on paper thing, no, but, you know, we're
24 constantly evaluating in conjunction with those crews if they have
25 concerns and about risk management or any of those decisions as

1 far as -- usually it's weather. 99.9 percent of the time it's
2 weather. That -- they talked to us about it.

3 Q. So it just -- so I make sure I have an -- for the weather
4 fronts, I know you said you looked even that night at the weather.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Your crews look at it, but do you guys assess weather at all
7 when it comes -- I know you're assessing weather like you said
8 today, storm coming through, if they don't get their shipment
9 there three hours early, it's not going to happen.

10 A. Right.

11 Q. But do you guys do that on a regular basis? I mean, whether
12 it's a matrix you fill out or just -- is that --

13 A. Usually it's --

14 Q. -- dedicated to somebody?

15 A. Usually it's a conversation between our ops people and the
16 flight department, so our dispatch -- or flight followers, I'm
17 sorry, will, or us, will, you know, notice the weather event,
18 we'll talk to each other about it and, you know, how for our
19 scheduled flights that we're anticipating it's going to impact,
20 how we're going to, you know, help mitigate that risk basically by
21 either helping our customers ship earlier, later, potentially
22 cancel shipments in a fairly, you know, worst case scenario,
23 changing timing of the flights, changing what aircraft is running
24 the flight. I would say that's I guess how we conduct those risk
25 assessments.

1 Q. Okay. Now those involve cargo and customers.

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. Do you conduct the same risk assessments for part 91 flights
4 versus 135 or is there any difference?

5 A. I would say it kind of depends. So, for example, their
6 flight the day before was just a 91 repositioned flight to St.
7 Louis. There was no cargo that was going to be picked up that
8 night. That day those flights we very specifically tell the crew,
9 you know, this is, you know, what you're scheduled for as far as
10 the time goes, you know, contact operational control, you know,
11 someone with operational control per the GOM if you would like to
12 depart sooner in the day or later in the day depending on weather.
13 You know, so for those scenarios, it's very much -- since we're
14 just -- you know, they're on duty or they're expected to work that
15 day, they can reposition 91 whenever they need to. Now obviously
16 that changes when you're flying cargo on the back end because now
17 you're running into duty times, you know. You can't necessarily
18 position five hours earlier than you want to because you might run
19 into duty time on the end of your day when you're flying your 135
20 leg back, for example, but, you know, what -- for example with
21 this flight, there's always just that natural, I guess, you know,
22 the FAA always talks about the pay back. It's a real thing with
23 when it talks about risk management, you know, the operation, you
24 know, definitely adds an added layer of just planning or changes
25 your risk assessments slightly, I guess. You know, on this day

1 they were expected to fly out and back in that single duty period.
2 They couldn't -- how we have it set up with customer, they
3 couldn't fly out, for example, rest for, you know, 10 hours, pick
4 up the stuff and fly it back, but I would say just, you know, this
5 is our, you know, you have a leg in front of you, you know,
6 whether it's a go or no go decision, and there's work on board or
7 not work on board, it doesn't matter. I don't care if there's,
8 you know -- we've had it where there's literally been a liver on
9 board of our airplane and we've had to delay significantly with
10 the customer because of weather that I can think of to my
11 recollection, and even with this radio pharmaceutical stuff, you
12 know, yeah, it's critical medicine, but at the end of the day I'm
13 not going to force somebody into a situation that they're
14 uncomfortable with weather wise or airplane wise or whatever just
15 because there's boxes onboard the aircraft. Yeah.

16 Q. So the day of the accident flight they were to fly out to
17 Centennial and then wait however long?

18 A. Typically the customer's waiting on us out there --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- so they were expected to fly out of Centennial. They
21 usually get in on Saturdays I think somewhere around between 9:00
22 and 10:00 Mountain Time, and our customer's supposed to show up at
23 10:00 Mountain Time for an 11:00 departure I believe on Saturdays
24 if I'm not mistaken. And then they fly the -- they fly straight
25 back to Centennial with usually, you know, a couple hundred pounds

1 of cargo on board.

2 Q. Now how much -- now that's a considerable haul in the --

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. -- Baron I would assume. Is it four hours out? Three hours
5 out and three hours back?

6 A. It's usually four hours back -- four hours out and like
7 three-and-a-half or a little bit more coming back.

8 Q. So there's not a lot of flex on the front end, then, to go
9 out early by the time you factor duty time.

10 A. No, only about maybe three to four hours maximum --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- flexibility on the front end of that trip, yeah.

13 Q. So in that event on the accident flight for instance, if they
14 decided that there was something coming through they could have
15 left three hours earlier?

16 A. They could have left earlier, yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Certainly.

19 Q. Do you guys give them a time, like if you want to leave at X
20 you could or three hours earlier or --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. -- do you guys help them with that or is that something they
23 have to do on their own?

24 A. We'll try to get ahead of it and help them with it. You
25 know, that specific day I don't know if we as an ops group

1 necessarily saw anything that greatly concerned us with the
2 weather to, I guess, request that they leave early, and then they
3 -- from the flip side, we didn't have a concern come to us from
4 our flight crew about it. Now that flight on Monday they ended up
5 leaving an hour early to beat some heavier snow or what was at
6 least was forecasted. It never actually happened, but what was
7 going to be forecasted into Centennial that day, that was going to
8 bring the viz (ph.) down below a mile on the -- and they asked if
9 they could leave an hour earlier, and we said, yeah, absolutely,
10 so they just -- you know, we reached out for operational control.
11 We told them that's fine, you can depart early, here's your new
12 paperwork and that's what they did.

13 Q. Okay. All right. That helps me --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- get a picture of how you look at everything.

16 A. Yeah, absolutely.

17 Q. I appreciate that. Let's talk a little bit about training.
18 I know you do training and all that along with all your other
19 duties --

20 A. Right.

21 Q. -- as a chief pilot. I assume they're all trained in the
22 Baron that is here in-house?

23 A. Yes, that's correct.

24 Q. All right. So how -- when you guys do training, how do you
25 guys maintain a standard with all your pilots? You know, do you

1 -- there's always an expectation, you know, here's the minimum
2 standard, but how do you maintain the standard you expect from
3 pilots?

4 A. I would say primarily through constant communication between
5 the instructors and check airmen and the flight department which
6 Brandon and I are the only two check airmen at this point, so it's
7 constant communication between our currently two flight
8 instructors, Brandon and myself. When we, for example, if, you
9 know, let's say I have two instructors that are doing, you know,
10 the majority of the flight training for an individual, they come
11 to us on a check ride, maybe they pass or maybe we have to suspend
12 and retrain a few items. We come to them with feedback
13 constantly, so, you know, one thing recently we had been focusing
14 on was timely check list usage, these guys come in and they never
15 use the checklist. It's just fly your Sky Hawk, you do
16 everything, GUMPs checklist, everything's up here, right, so
17 forcing people to use a checklist is sometimes a learning curve
18 when they come into our operation, so that's been like for example
19 one thing specifically that as a check airman and instructor pilot
20 group we've been focusing on, but I would say that's a primary way
21 we maintain that standard is, well, one, I guess it starts with
22 the check airmen, you know, we're the wall, and, you know, you
23 can't -- no matter how great your need is for qualified pilots or
24 just pilots I should say in general, you can't let your guard drop
25 when it comes to letting people progress, you know, from that

1 training into the line flight. So that's a constant I would say
2 communication between Brandon and myself. And then making sure
3 that we're giving that same feedback to our instructors. Again,
4 we have the advantage of being a smaller operation so we can be
5 very hands on with our instructors. That becomes from what I
6 understand a huge challenge when you work at 121 or, you know,
7 Comair. I'm sure it's a massive training department. I don't
8 know how places like that keep that standard. It's amazing to me
9 how those programs -- and they do do it and that's what really
10 amazes me and I have a huge respect for it, but, yeah, I would say
11 it's just constant feedback, constant communication between that
12 group of those four individuals, the two check airmen to -- and
13 the two instructors. And then I would say FAA oversights
14 definitely -- personally I, you know, I've given three, maybe four
15 check rides that our POI, Elizabeth Swingles (ph.) observed
16 herself, Brandon does the same thing. She comes in and has to
17 observe I believe it's every two years at a minimum, but she's
18 done me a little bit more often because I went and did the Lear
19 135 check airmen stuff not too long ago, and it's always good to
20 get feedback from them, too, because, you know, obviously we can
21 build the standard up in-house, but how do you know that that's --
22 obviously, you know, they can be PTS, ACS, but you want everybody
23 to be better than that, and you want to make sure, you know,
24 you're not just giving the bare minimum check ride, either. So
25 it's nice to get input from her also when she comes and observes

1 Brandon and myself. You know, generally she has really, really
2 good things to say about us being thorough, so, you know, that
3 assures us a little bit on our end that we're doing the right
4 things as our desk check airmen to make sure that, you know, we're
5 not just letting people scoot through the program, so-to-speak.
6 Again, that's one of the things that keeps me up at night is
7 making sure that that never, ever happens no matter how great of a
8 need of pilots we have, ever. You know, I'd rather not do
9 business than put people out there that shouldn't be out there.

10 Q. Okay. You said your POI has come and observed some of your
11 checks.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. Are your Baron's equipment more than two seats?

14 A. Yeah, so we can put an optional jump seat in the back where
15 she will sit and then depending on the aircraft that we do it in,
16 she'll either -- it will at least have an intercom link between
17 the check airman and her since ultimately we are the ones being
18 observed. She can't necessarily communicate directly with the
19 pilot which is actually kind of a good thing, I think. It helps
20 the pilot realize, okay, that the FAA person's observing the check
21 airman, not necessarily observing me at this point, but, yes,
22 she'll have an intercom link between me and her, and she can hear
23 me talking to the pilot that I'm giving the check ride to, and
24 then she'll sit behind us and observe in the Barons, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It's not necessary. The last one we had to cut short, I
2 think. She got kind of motion sick back there. It's a typical
3 like 85 degree day last summertime and it was bumpier than all get
4 out, but, no, she sticks with it. Sits back there, and it's not
5 always very comfortable, either, because we don't have air
6 conditioners on the plane or anything, so it gets a little toasty
7 sometimes.

8 Q. I can imagine. Is that the last time she's observed you or
9 the last time she was here observing any check rides was last
10 summer?

11 A. I think, yeah. That was, I believe, that was the last check
12 ride observance she had was over the summertime. I don't have --
13 we have that obviously in my check airmen logs and my training
14 here in my pilot folder. I don't know specifically what month or
15 day it was, but it was this past summer she observed me.

16 Q. Okay. So help me understand a little bit here. The Baron
17 has a throw over yoke, single yoke that you can throw over.

18 A. Yeah, I would say three in our fleet have that, and then the
19 other three have the dual yoke.

20 Q. So why do you have some with dual and some with single yoke?

21 A. That's how -- basically that's how -- when I started here,
22 that's what AirNet systems had used forever. All our pilots --
23 I'm sorry, all of our Barons were -- I don't know how big the
24 Baron fleet. I think it was like 40 planes or something, 40
25 Barons that AirNet systems had. They basically consolidated the

1 fleet into as close of serial numbers they could get to try, you
2 know, there was a huge variation in the amount of -- the
3 equipment, avionics, throw over, dual controls, dual brakes, even
4 dual pedals in some cases between all the fleet, so they tried to
5 get serial numbers that were in a fairly similar range, but even
6 those weren't obviously all together because, you know, like you
7 said, it split into some throw over, some dual control, so -- and
8 then I guess the perspective was, well, it's a single pilot
9 airplane anyways, that's how we train, that's how we certify these
10 pilots is, you know, single pilot on this aircraft, but, yeah, the
11 -- other than that, I really don't have a good answer for that why
12 some are one way and some are the other way. I would say it's
13 more or less kind of what I've inherited from the flight
14 department perspective, I guess.

15 Q. No, I understand. But how do you train with an airplane with
16 a throw over yoke?

17 A. So we don't train in those.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. We do all our training and checking with the dual control
20 aircraft.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yeah. More specifically -- not negotiate, plan with our
23 maintenance department to have one here in Columbus at all times
24 because that's where we do conduct all our training and checking
25 actually here in Columbus, even if it's a St. Louis pilot --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- we'll bring them in to do the training and checking here.

3 Q. Oh, okay. All right. So in the -- let's talk about the
4 single throw over yoke --

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. -- for a minute. On that aircraft, was the accident
7 airplane, was it a single throw?

8 A. A single throw over yoke, yup.

9 Q. So on the accident aircraft, is there a push to talk switch
10 on the yoke for the pilot to talk to -- the intercom?

11 A. The pilot side, so there's a -- there is an intercom and then
12 there's a push to talk on the pilot side and the 585 Charlie Kilo
13 had a push to talk right where the jacks plug into, just
14 underneath the circuit breaker panel is where the right side
15 pilot's jacks plug in and it's a push to talk there.

16 Q. Okay. And that push to talk, can it be bumped inadvertently,
17 like pushed with your knee?

18 A. You -- not, no.

19 Q. No.

20 A. It's like a little hole and then it's got the push to talk
21 inside of it, so if you pushed your knee up in theory you kind of
22 push on it --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- inadvertently I don't think. Not to say that if you're
25 moving around or jostling around you can't hit it because

1 obviously --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- it gets a little cramped in there just like any general
4 aviation type aircraft. Even in a Learjet it gets a little
5 cramped.

6 Q. So -- and we don't know obviously. If the pilots -- the left
7 seater or the right seater needed the yoke and they threw the yoke
8 over to the -- from the left seat to the right seat, would the
9 left seater have any way to push to talk?

10 A. At that point no. No. It is our policy to not throw over
11 the yoke during the flight, or period, I'm sorry. Just period.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So not throw over the yoke, so, yeah, I do -- but, yeah,
14 that's our policy --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- is to not do that.

17 Q. So -- and I don't mean to speculate or anything --

18 A. Absolutely.

19 Q. -- if the pilot -- it was a 91 flight, the accident flight
20 was a Part 91, and I believe Amanda was to be flying that to build
21 her time up --

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. -- am I correct?

24 A. She was --

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. -- assigned to fly that leg, yes.
- 2 Q. So would she -- she would then be flying from the left
- 3 seat --
- 4 A. That's correct.
- 5 Q. -- is that how it's always required?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. The PIC's in the left.
- 8 A. Correct.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. That's correct.
- 11 Q. All right. I just wanted to make sure I was --
- 12 A. No, that's --
- 13 Q. -- getting all the pieces --
- 14 A. -- a good question.
- 15 Q. -- here in my head. So was there -- I know you guys -- all
- 16 things in aviation cost money, obviously.
- 17 A. Um-hum.
- 18 Q. Is there any discussion of having replacing the single throws
- 19 with dual throw overs --
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. -- dual yokes?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. All right. How's that discussion going?
- 24 A. It's in process. The actual changeover's in process now,
- 25 so --

1 Q. Okay. Well, good.

2 A. -- we figure regardless of whatever happens or comes out of
3 your guy's report, it's going to happen regardless, so again it's
4 not like we've heard necessarily anything that says, you know,
5 this is our smoking gun, but I feel like it's a -- you know, the
6 more and more we looked into it, it's not horribly cost worthy,
7 and it's a simple fix, and I think it brings a lot of peace of
8 mind to pilots, too, which is obviously important, so we're just
9 doing that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So that should be done I think at the end of March, no later
12 than the end of this upcoming month, yeah.

13 Q. Oh, for all of them to be retro fitted?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. The last one is scheduled I think the first or second week of
17 March. The second to last is actually doing that right now --

18 Q. Okay. Great.

19 A. -- while it's in for its 100 hour.

20 Q. Excellent. So how do you guys -- the single throw over yoke's
21 going away, but up until now you've had them. Do you guys have
22 any training or any guidance or procedures you do? Because if
23 you're the 135 pilot, let's just use that term --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. -- but you're on the right seat because it's the 91 flight,

1 and the 91 pilot's in the left seat --

2 A. Right.

3 Q. -- how do they help if the left seater's getting behind? Do
4 you guys give them any training to work together to --

5 A. We don't do any -- we don't put them together, I would say,
6 during their indoctrination training in that type of scenario. We
7 do -- I would say in an unofficial capacity, you know, have them
8 help each other, so typically what the pilots will do is the right
9 side pilot will work the GPS and radios, and then the left seat
10 pilot will just, you know, primarily be pilot flying at that
11 point, and I would say that just mirrors with obviously how we
12 conduct our operations as pilot monitoring, pilot flying of the
13 Learjet, so we encourage that, but do we specifically include that
14 in our indoctrination training program, no, we have them in there
15 operating as a single pilot --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- during the training program. We want to make sure that
18 they at the end of the day can do all those tasks by themselves,
19 and the most -- as much of the stressful environment that we can
20 create for them in training. That way you know ultimately that
21 they can, you know -- obviously if there's not someone there or
22 that someone has become, I don't know, incapacitated or, gosh
23 knows what, but, yeah, actually being a single pilot that they can
24 handle those tasks. We don't want to have them to have -- what's
25 the word I'm trying to say -- we don't want them to have help

1 during that initial training because we don't want them to expect
2 that to be there all the time.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But it's obviously encouraged when there is someone there to
5 help each other help especially if it's a real scenario, they're
6 being task saturated and they need someone to just pick up the
7 radios for example which, you know, is what we expected of this
8 crew at the time, and it sounds like, you know, from everything I
9 can understand that George was working the radios with the right
10 side, push to talk button and Amanda was flying on this flight, so
11 -- and that is to be expected and that is typically what the
12 pilots will do --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- in that two person scenario.

15 Q. Would you expect on the accident flight -- I know we don't
16 know what happened on the flight deck, but would you expect George
17 to be the one doing the GPS then or --

18 A. Most likely, yeah.

19 Q. -- I mean, I know it's --

20 A. Speculative, yeah.

21 Q. Yeah, it's not a policy you guys have.

22 A. Oh, I'm sorry, yeah, got you.

23 Q. But is that what your expectation would have been --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- considering how you train?

1 A. Especially in that scenario, you know, where obviously it's
2 -- you're taking off in a straight instrument IMC scenario I would
3 expect George and, you know, would fully, you know, if I had to
4 put my money on it in my opinion, he definitely would have been
5 doing that for her at that period of time.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. That was certainly the person he was to do was, you know, how
8 can I support you in what we're doing here. I realize that
9 technically you're the pilot in command, single pilot aircraft,
10 but, okay, I'll do radios, you know, what else do you need me to
11 do.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. That was the type of person that he was.

14 Q. All right. Great. That helps. During training do you give
15 unusual attitudes?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Are they VFR? Are they under the hood?

18 A. Under the hood recover simulated instrument.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then we do them in the FTD also, and in the clouds,
21 whatever you call it.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. Put them in the clouds in the FTD and try to make those ones
24 in FTD incorporated into like real life scenarios and we tried to
25 incorporate them into lightweight turbulence, you're coming out of

1 an approach, you're climbing to a level, all of a sudden you hit
2 wake turbulence and you're resulted in an unusual attitude or --
3 and then in the aircraft typically what I'll do from at least as
4 an instructor check airmen perspective, have them kind of close
5 their eyes and usually I'll have them put themselves in the
6 unusual attitude and then recover, but, yeah, we try -- we do it
7 under simulated conditions --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- so not like, oh, you're breaking at an IMC on a VMC. It's
10 -- you're just in a -- you're in the soup and you're in a --
11 simulated in the soup and you're in an unusual attitude, so
12 typically when we do that maneuver is we'll get a holding pattern
13 so a certain cleared area of air space, we'll get a block
14 altitude, usually 2 to 3,000 feet tall, and then use that,
15 combination of left and right air space and vertical air space to
16 do those unusual attitudes then.

17 Q. Okay. All right. Do you do any training on spatial
18 disorientation or awareness to crews on special disorientation at
19 all?

20 A. Could you define special disorientation? Like --

21 Q. Spatial, where you --

22 A. Oh, I'm sorry, spatial disorientation.

23 Q. Spatial. I probably slurred, sorry.

24 A. No, that's okay.

25 Q. I'll drink water.

1 A. Specific training. I would say -- no, I would just say
2 outside of the, you know, the simulated instrument and then the
3 unusual attitudes, I wouldn't say there's any necessarily specific
4 spatial disorientation training other than ground training
5 obviously when we talk about CRM and human factors, spatial
6 disorientation comes up, and we observe some. I believe
7 -- I can at least think of one accident we specifically talked
8 about either in our emergency training or crew resource management
9 training about spatial disorientation, but outside of that, no,
10 nothing officially I would say in the aircraft other than unusual
11 attitudes.

12 Q. Okay. I understand you guys have a FRASCA?

13 A. That's correct, yeah.

14 Q. Fixed device?

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. Do you guys ever fail the attitudes?

17 A. All the time.

18 Q. And is it a fast fail or do you guys do kind of that slow --

19 A. So the one in there is really nice. It's a slow, gradual
20 turnover.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. That's why I love that thing because it does an excellent job
23 of how I've always learned how that's going to happen, and then I
24 don't know if I've ever actually had one, experienced one myself
25 in my flying specifically, a primary attitude indicator failure,

1 but obviously they happen, especially with air driven gyro
2 instruments typically are the ones that will suffer from that, so,
3 yeah, it does a really nice job. It doesn't flag either or do
4 anything. It literally just starts turning over, so there's a
5 number of places inside of our -- sorry about that -- inside of
6 our training syllabus for the -- specifically for the FRASCA where
7 we do partial panel, and the big one that I do over and over again
8 is the attitude indicator. Usually everybody else figures
9 everything -- the other stuff out, but primary attitude indicator
10 failure is always going to be on there. And that's what our other
11 instructors are instructed to do, too. That one at least has to
12 make it in there once and see how those pilots react in those
13 situations.

14 Q. How do they typically react?

15 A. Gosh, it depends, you know. Sometimes people end up losing
16 it at 2,000 feet. You know, the first time -- it all depends on
17 how instrument proficient that person was before they came in the
18 door. I think that partial panel first activity is on the second
19 simulator flight so they've had a little bit of time to get
20 acclimated to the sim, but they're still, especially if they're
21 not -- maybe they're current, but they're not incredibly
22 proficient at that point, you know, some of them struggle with it
23 initially, and then guess what's coming the next day or two days
24 later is the same thing before they get kicked to the airplane and
25 start, you know, and before they're expected to fly the airplane

1 they need to be able to handle the aircraft in a situation like
2 that.

3 Q. Okay. Think back a little bit to the accident pilots. How'd
4 they handle that in a -- I mean, did you do any of their sim work?

5 A. I don't believe I did their FTDs. Not off the top of my head
6 I don't -- I did not do their FTDs. I believe that was primarily
7 Ethan Putsch, one of our flight instructors who did the FTD
8 training of them. To my recollection, I didn't have him coming
9 over to me saying, hey, they crashed, you know, they, you know,
10 did whatever, lost, you know, almost, you know, put in the ground,
11 lost 3,000 feet or something like that on an attitude indicator
12 failure or something like that, but, no, Ethan I've never had an
13 issue ever with him omitting or skipping material on our training
14 syllabus. Ethan's pretty darn thorough when it comes to adhering
15 to that syllabus.

16 Q. Okay. If a pilot was having challenges and needed more time
17 in the airplane or in the fixed -- in the FRASCA, is that
18 something you guys can do or is it --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- I'm sorry, you've got to make it by this point?

21 A. We do a lot for that. We're not like the airlines where we,
22 you know, from what I understand, the airlines, it becomes like a
23 -- wait a minute, I'm thinking what's -- ALPA it's an airline --
24 it's like a pilot union can get involved and then obviously
25 there's people from the training department, you have a certain

1 amount of time extra to do it, and if you don't do it, you know,
2 you're out of here pretty much. We don't have like a definitive
3 amount of time saying, okay, if you don't meet it by this time you
4 get, you know, only two extra simulator sessions. If you're not,
5 you know, proficient by then, then we stop --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- and we kick you out the door, but, yes. Both of these
8 pilots if I remember correctly had more than the minimum amount of
9 flight training. George's was, and I looked back at this today,
10 George did three training flights and was out a week sick.
11 Between the weekend and then after the weekend, him and his family
12 got sick. He came back six or seven days later from his previous
13 last flight, and, you know, hadn't -- wasn't at the point where
14 people normally are at that fourth flight because he had had, you
15 know, seven days of basically nothing where normally, you know,
16 primacy and getting as much time in there in a short amount of
17 time and, you know, it's really important with that learning,
18 initial learning process, so I remember having to do about four
19 hours of extra training with him which I believe was about two or
20 three extra training flights with him. The issue there, too, was
21 he -- that pushed us back a week with his training, and then it
22 ran into the Thanksgiving holiday, and then he ended up not doing
23 his check ride until the 1st of December I believe, so his
24 training was strung out a little bit because of his sickness and
25 then a holiday. Amanda's we did one extra training flight with

1 her. That was I believe -- I conducted that before I gave her
2 over to Brandon for the check ride. Specifically I remember the
3 focus of those were check lists and GPS usage if I remember
4 right --.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- for her, yeah.

7 Q. All right. Do you test them on autopilot usage?

8 A. Yes, we do. Yup, yup, and we do one coupled approach,
9 autopilot coupled approach on all the check rides and then we do
10 coupled autopilot training through our multiengine training
11 syllabus.

12 Q. Okay. When you're training pilots, do you want to see pilots
13 turn on the flight director and hand fly? Do you want to see them
14 raw data, if you will, without a flight director, or do you want
15 to see them on autopilot? Help me understand during training what
16 you -- what your expectation is.

17 A. During training we want them to be comfortable with the
18 autopilot usage, but not reliant. Typically where we'll allow
19 them to use it is as they're leveled off in between approach
20 procedures and stuff, as they're heads down briefing an approach,
21 setting up their GPS. As far as flying the approaches other than
22 the actual like on the lesson plan this is going to be our coupled
23 ILS, for example, today, they're not -- we typically are, you
24 know, we do not allow them to fly -- either ask them that it's off
25 -- to not have it on or fail it, simulated fail it. So on check

1 rides usually all I'll tell them is it's not available until we
2 come up on the coupled ILS approach. I'll allow them to do the
3 flight director coupled for the single engine ILS approach, but
4 Brandon's the same way. We don't let them just cruise around on
5 the autopilot the whole flight. We're very much we want you to be
6 able to hand fly this airplane up and down, so that is -- we want
7 them to be comfortable with it, but not reliant upon it because
8 our whole, I would say training philosophy if you will.

9 Q. How about on the line? What's -- is there an expectation of
10 autopilot usage or not usage or expect them to hand fly at
11 altitude?

12 A. Typically cruise will hand fly to altitude. I wouldn't say
13 there's an explicit procedure or anything like that in our
14 operations or SOPs or anything like that, but 99 percent of the
15 time at least from my observation being in the airplane with
16 cruise and then personally what I do in the aircraft and teach is
17 hand fly to altitude, level off, get the autopilot on, you know,
18 run your check list, you know, and then it's just monitoring and
19 then I would say most of the crews don't even fly coupled
20 approaches on the autopilot. Typically everybody's hand flying
21 their instrument approaches. The autopilots do a pretty darn good
22 job I would say. Even those older Bendix King autopilots do a
23 really, really good job of flying a coupled ILS. I think most
24 crews just prefer to hand fly them.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. That's kind of the, I guess, culture if you will, is, you
2 know, we're -- for freight pilots we're here to fly our airplanes,
3 not watch them fly themselves --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- so-to-speak.

6 Q. When they hand fly altitude, do they turn on the flight
7 director to do it or do they raw data?

8 A. Usually raw data for the most part.

9 Q. Okay. How about the accident pilots? Did you -- how was
10 their raw data flying skills?

11 A. Fairly good. Amanda specifically I remember through her
12 flight training -- Brandon did her checkride, but through her
13 flight training I specifically remember her always wanted to be
14 flying the airplane. That was her thing is that she wanted to be
15 flying it, and hand flying it as much as she possibly can and
16 you'd have to basically have to, you know, force her to use the
17 autopilot for -- in our training syllabus. George used it a
18 little bit more. I remember I did give him his checkride. He
19 would use it when he was diverting his attention was his primary
20 thing, you know, so when he was diverting his attention for a
21 checklist, he was programming his GPS or something like that, but
22 both were proficient raw data I would definitely say, at least I
23 didn't do -- like I said, her check ride, but I wouldn't have
24 signed her off for that check ride which I did. I wouldn't have
25 signed her off for that check ride if I hadn't thought she could

1 easily fly that airplane raw data.

2 Q. Okay. The flight directors do their analogue so they're, you
3 know, we teach the pilots there's natural limitations in there.
4 They're going to be a little bit behind the airplane. Those older
5 flight directors don't do -- there's high winds, they're not, you
6 know, perfect at that initial wind correction. They're not going
7 to put in that perfect 20 degrees of wing correction or whatever
8 it is right away, so we try to make sure that they know those
9 limitations, too, the flight director and then obviously when that
10 thing -- when the autopilot's following that thing when the
11 autopilot's engaged.

12 Q. Now I don't mean to put words in anybody's mouth here, but
13 sometimes when pilots are I don't want to say reluctant to use the
14 autopilot, but for lack of a better phrase it's -- they don't feel
15 comfortable with it or they don't feel, you know, like they
16 understand it well enough.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Was that a sense you got from Amanda because you said she,
19 you know, you'd have to sort of tell her to turn it on?

20 A. I wouldn't say that she -- in my opinion, I wouldn't say that
21 she was hesitant because she didn't know how to use it. She was
22 hesitant to use it because she wanted to be flying that airplane
23 all the time in training.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then I did two flights with her after that. Both were --

1 we don't run the route anymore, but it was just a quick route to
2 Toledo, Ohio and back out of Columbus here. She would hand fly
3 those legs, too, all the way there -- or, I'm sorry, all the way
4 back, yeah -- or, I'm sorry, all the way there because I flew
5 back. Yeah, we picked up in Toledo so --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- I don't know, and I'm not sure if that would maybe over
8 that course of, you know, two months I don't know how much she was
9 actually using it when she was doing her line flying. Like I
10 said, I only did those two flights with her and they were short
11 legs which I'm not sure if that's why she was doing it or if she
12 just truly wanted to be flying the airplane that much, but I don't
13 know if she, you know, potentially became less proficient or at
14 least less comfortable with it over that period of time or not
15 from training. Hard to say.

16 Q. All right. Do you guys have a way to keep track of a flight
17 crews' IMC time or a number of approaches they've flown or --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- is that incumbent upon them?

20 A. That's -- it's incumbent upon them to report that to us
21 monthly, so on a monthly -- the form is 20-1, so Section 2 of our
22 GOM says that by the seventh day of each month or each flight and
23 duty member -- sorry, each flight crew member needs to complete
24 and submit a flight duty tracking form, and on that flight duty
25 tracking form obviously has their duty periods, rest periods, and

1 then it does have their IFR times and logged approaches on there.
2 In addition day landings, night landings, and then for internal
3 tracking purposes we do Lear PIC and SIC times on there, too.

4 Q. Okay. All right. Do you have any times where pilots can't
5 maintain their instrument currency? I mean, it's beautiful clear
6 weather for months at a time, it'd be kind of hard to maintain
7 instrument currencies.

8 A. We give them a six month 297 -- the 135 297 check no matter
9 if they're 135 qualified or not.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So, no.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. At least legally speaking. Obviously you can go six months
14 without ever having to touch an approach, but yet that check ride
15 will get you every time.

16 Q. And I appreciate you saying that.

17 A. Yeah, yeah.

18 Q. That's what I need to know. Headset requirements. Is a
19 headset required to be worn during flight or is there any --

20 A. I wouldn't necessarily --

21 Q. -- requirement?

22 A. -- we explicitly require it although if someone told me they
23 weren't going to do it, I would tell them they need to be doing
24 it, but I would say that there's nothing in our GOM that says --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- you need to have a headset, but, yeah, in that airplane
2 especially you have to have it on. They both used theirs through
3 training, so I would expect it at the time of the accident they
4 both had them on.

5 Q. Why would you say that airplane you would want them to have
6 it on?

7 A. Loud.

8 Q. Oh, is it?

9 A. Loud. Yeah, those engines are loud. The Barons are -- as
10 far as they're just -- they're kind of breezy airplanes and
11 they're just -- you know, there's not a lot of soundproofing in
12 those planes and you have two, you know, IO520s roaring right next
13 to you, and it's a loud airplane if you don't have a headset on,
14 so normally a David Clark and especially a Bose headsets is plenty
15 to cancel out that sound, and then our intercoms are -- you know,
16 I've never had an issue with our intercom system that the avionics
17 guys have put on those planes over the years.

18 Q. Okay. Going back to my list, I see one question I meant to
19 ask.

20 A. Absolutely.

21 Q. Have you ever had any issues with the attitude indicator on
22 the Baron?

23 A. We have had -- there's at least one off the top of my head I
24 can think of that we had a slow failure, a departure out of the
25 Spirit of St. Louis, one of our Baron flights that was going down

1 to Fulton County, Georgia. Gosh, that was probably two to two-
2 and-a-half years ago now. I couldn't tell you if it was that
3 aircraft or not. Specifically that tail number was one of our
4 Baron fleets though. The pilot had an initial turn southwest or
5 southeast bound towards Fulton County after he departed I think
6 going west out of Spirit, turned, noticed it, he lost a couple
7 hundred feet of altitude, and then, you know, got it leveled. I
8 believe he declared an emergency although I'm not certain on --
9 and immediately returned back to Spirit that day I remember --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- without an event. That's the only one that when I was
12 racking my brain when all this obviously happened. I started
13 thinking back. That's the only one I can think of. None recently
14 though. None recently.

15 Q. All right. is there -- other than the attitude indicator
16 slowly turning and all the other instruments are saying you're
17 doing the opposite, is there any lights or illumination, or
18 anything that tells a pilot your attitude indicator's failed or a
19 vacuum failure or is there any --

20 A. The only indication you would get of a dual vacuum failure,
21 there is a vacuum gauge on the top left side. I would say it's
22 maybe four to five inches from your air speed indicator left of
23 that on the panel. There's two red bulbs on the Baron system for
24 the Baron vacuum system that pop out, red bulbs that pop out.
25 There is no annunciator system of any sort, though. You would

1 have to through your scan have to notice that.

2 Q. And it just pops out. It doesn't illuminate. It just --

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. -- is a --

5 A. It's a little -- it's just purely a little red, I think it's
6 plastic or something bulb that pops out.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yeah, that's it. There's no light or anything like that.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And then there's one obviously per vacuum pump.

11 Q. Right. I know you've flown with both crew members.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. I know others have, flew with one or the other or maybe both.
14 Has there ever been complaints about either crew member's
15 abilities or anything along that lines?

16 A. I did not have complaints about either crew member.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I -- the couple weeks leading up to the accident the two
19 gentlemen you talked to this morning, primarily Rob Park were
20 talking -- were flying with both of these two individuals. I
21 would debrief with Rob and he'd tell me how the week went. I
22 think they were both either three or four night flying weeks that
23 he did with Amanda and George if I'm remembering correctly. You
24 know, I would just -- we talked about things that they were
25 working on, some of the weather that they flew through, but I

1 didn't have any, hey, Tom, you know, this is a real issue come
2 from either of those guys, Aaron or Rob Park.

3 Q. Do you normally follow up with crews that are flying with
4 relatively new?

5 A. Absolutely.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Absolutely. There's nothing like, you know, in our official
8 procedures that says I need to do that, but I always do.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Mainly, you know, obviously out of my own curiosity, but I
11 really -- I want to know what people are doing so when they're not
12 in front of me, I don't know if that's -- I feel like the nosey
13 parent sometimes calling the teacher at school or something like
14 that, but, yes, yes, I do.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And I did follow up with -- for both of those crew members
17 specifically. I do remember following up with at least Rob Park
18 for both of them, just either via phone call or talking to him in
19 person through the office.

20 Q. Okay. What's your -- do you guys have a failure rate through
21 training? I hate the word failure. Unsatisfactory --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- rate through training.

24 A. So in all the check rides I've given, I've only given -- I've
25 only had one failure I believe in the two years that I've been

1 giving check rides. Fortunately the 135 regulations do allow for,
2 you know, the flexibility with suspend and retraining items, but
3 there was only one check ride that I felt that I needed to fail
4 just because of -- and I think it ended up being nerves for the
5 crew member, but anyways they're just -- I don't know if I even
6 bothered suspended and retraining on that one. It was just this
7 person was not in the right mode to fly. Altitude was all over
8 the place, the procedures were just not getting done. I failed
9 it, retrained, you know, passed on the second attempt. Brandon I
10 know has had a few failures issued, but as far as tracking like a
11 specific percentage, we don't do that.

12 Q. Yeah, just so I have it for the record, did either of the
13 accident crew members fail or --

14 A. No, they didn't.

15 Q. Did they have any retrains?

16 A. George did not. Brandon conducted Amanda's check ride, so I
17 would ask him about that. I believe she had one, but I don't want
18 to step on his toes there, so to speak. I believe she --

19 Q. You've got to give him something to answer, right?

20 A. Yeah, exactly. I think he had one on a non-precision
21 approach for her if I remember. That's what he --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. The feedback I got from him when I asked him about that, but
24 George did not have any retrains, no failure.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I remember George's check ride going smoothly.

2 Q. Now I noticed looking over both crew members' history and
3 hours and everything, neither one of them had a lot of hours in
4 the Baron.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. In fact, I believe they both were under 100 hours.

7 A. Yes, yes.

8 Q. And not a ton of time actual either, but that's kind of par
9 for the course it seems like.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Does that give you any concern or is that anything you guys
12 really look at, pairing people up with -- I don't want to say low
13 time because 100 hours seems like a lot, but --

14 A. Yeah, so I would say combined they probably had anywhere from
15 80 to 100 hours. I'd have to double check on that from our
16 records. So how that process normally goes is a close -- because
17 Brandon Hildreth, our DO and Micah, our air operations manager,
18 make the pilot schedule every week. That one, you know, was
19 specifically discussed I remember at the time in conjunction with
20 me because I obviously gave George's checkride. I'd been flying
21 with Amanda a little bit and had been in contact with some of the
22 people that had flown with her and George, too. That's something
23 that we talked about, you know, ultimately deemed between the
24 three of us in conjunction with the feedback that we had gotten
25 that that was safe, and then specifically talked to the pilots

1 about how they felt about it, too. We have in our GOM a specific
2 transport category crew pairing procedure. We don't have a
3 specific crew pairing procedure for the same sort of procedure, I
4 guess, for the Baron operations, though, so it's very, again kind
5 of a close knit operation sort of thing where we're all, you know,
6 kind of talking to each other, but we don't technically have an
7 official manual policy I guess for that --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- in our GOM.

10 Q. Then you said you talked to the crew members about it. Did
11 either of them have any apprehension or --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- hesitation?

14 A. None at all.

15 Q. Okay. All right.

16 A. Not even for that night. None. I got nothing, no expression
17 of concern from either of them.

18 Q. By -- you mean -- by that you mean nobody called you or --

19 A. No one called me. When I talked to them that week prior when
20 we had sent out that schedule, nothing. Nothing.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Yup, I'm comfortable with it, sounds good, you know, make
23 sure -- and, yeah, as long as so-and-so is comfortable with it,
24 I'm comfortable with it is the answer I got.

25 Q. Okay. All right. Now I know I've been asking you a ton of

1 questions for the last however it's been -- almost 90 minutes now,
2 but I'm always afraid -- even though I've asked a lot of
3 questions, it's so easy to miss one very important question or
4 whatever. Is there anything you can think of that I should have
5 asked, but I didn't that might help shed some light on something
6 that you've seen or --

7 A. I knew you guys were going to be asking us about the dual
8 controls and stuff like that. I would have probably brought that
9 up if you didn't say anything, but that's something that we're
10 looking very closely at, even if -- and that'll be done well
11 before any of this, you know, the official report comes out or
12 anything like that. You know, I hate that that's reactionary. It
13 seems like a little bit, but at this point, you know, we can't
14 just do -- I want to do something.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. I don't want to sit here sitting on my hands so-to-speak for
17 an entire year. Obviously, you know, you guys have to do your job
18 and that's how long it takes to do the job properly. You know, a
19 lot of, you know, people get frustrated like, oh, the NTSB takes a
20 year. I'm like, well, you've got to think of all the things that
21 these guys are doing and all the, you know, information they need
22 to prepare, but I think we're at least partially obligated as the
23 operator to do something, you know, and if it's something as
24 simple as, you know adding dual controls, looking into different
25 instrument systems which you are at this point right now,

1 obviously installing and ordering from Garmin makes -- takes some
2 time, but, no, that would have been the only question I would
3 probably have asked about is if, you know, that had come up on
4 your radar as a major concern for the accident. Obviously it is
5 and it's on ours, too, so, you know, I don't know if that would
6 have changed anything necessarily, but I guess only time will tell
7 with that. That's the hardest part is waiting, right?

8 Q. Yes, and we know that --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. -- and, you know, but we've got to do it right.

11 A. Absolutely.

12 Q. Anybody can guess.

13 A. No, I really appreciate everything you guys have done, even
14 up -- just until this point. I've obviously never worked with the
15 NTSB on a darn thing, and it's been as good of a process as it can
16 be, if you know what I mean. Obviously I never would want to be
17 here talking to you.

18 Q. I get that from a lot of people, so it's okay.

19 A. Yeah, but you and I believe Mike is his name have been
20 nothing but supportive and clearly just willing to help, and, you
21 know, sometimes you never know what you're going to get. I don't
22 know, sometimes the Government from a pilot's perspective is a big
23 boogie man. I know especially for these pilots, the FAA is that
24 way, but even that's changing now, so right now it just -- I
25 appreciate the guys, what you guys do and I understand that it

1 takes time to do it right because you could just throw out
2 speculations, but that doesn't help anybody at the end of the --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. -- day obviously, so --

5 Q. No, and, again, I appreciate all you've educated me. You
6 filled in some areas, some holes in my thinking, my understanding,
7 you helped fill those in --

8 A. Good.

9 Q. -- and that's helping me get a little bit better of a
10 picture. It still takes time. I mean --

11 A. Right, for sure.

12 Q. -- I'm a pilot, so my brain only can handle so much at one
13 time, right?

14 A. Yeah, in 135 world, I feel like airline to airline and 121
15 is, you know, at least from my outsider's perspective it seems
16 very similar, you know. You can, you know, go to another
17 department and things are done, you know, very similarly. 135s
18 can vary, you know, just by size and then obviously by aircraft
19 that they operate, and, yeah, it's -- I feel like it's such a --
20 not a wild west, but there's so much variation between, you know,
21 what we do compared to, you know, even what Kalitta does or what a
22 Ameriflight does and all that sort of stuff, so I completely
23 understand all the questions for trying to figure out what the
24 heck is -- what the heck's going on with the single, you know, 135
25 charter operator.

1 Q. Well, and you're right, there are a lot of differences in the
2 135 world, but the differences you see that, you know, it would be
3 nice if we were -- all 135 was kind of similar in certain areas.
4 Have you seen anything like that?

5 A. I think the -- I don't know. The thing that is just awesome
6 about working at a big one I would think that would be working at
7 a 121 is the sheer, you know, amount of resources you have just
8 because you have so many people behind you. I mean, the training
9 departments there I assume are hundreds of people deep from
10 creating training material to creating training modules to actual
11 instructors, check airmen. You know, typically airlines have
12 their own simulators and everything, and it's just -- not that I
13 don't feel like I can't reach out for resources with my company
14 here or hire more instructors or hire more check airmen, but it's
15 just -- it seems like it's hard to get those people, retain them
16 to the time that you, you know, would feel comfortable putting
17 them into an instructor role. You know, it used to be that that
18 was a big, you know, kind of cherished role especially at AirNet
19 Systems, you know, that was a big thing when you became an
20 instructor because you would need that to get under your belt,
21 maybe become a check airman. That was the only way you were going
22 to go work your big job at FedEx, but now it seems like you could
23 fly a couple years as a captain, they'll take you anyways
24 nowadays, and, you know, I think a lot of people are just kind of
25 passing beyond that position or don't have as much interest in it

1 anymore unfortunately, but I don't know, I assume probably the
2 airlines, the major airlines are even having those issues -- not
3 majors, but, you know, like the regionals and stuff, but now it's
4 -- I would say that's probably the hardest part about -- from my
5 perspective as a chief pilot in 135 charter companies is making
6 sure that just because you have a little less resources then, you
7 know, let's say a 121 training department that your pilots aren't
8 proficient and capable of, you know, going out and flying in the
9 toughest, you know, stuff you can put in front of them, you know.
10 Yeah, I think that's just the hard part of operating a small
11 charter company, period --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- for anybody, you know, whether it's Kalitta, whether it's
14 us, whether it's, you know, Quest Diagnostics or whatever. I'm
15 sure they probably have similar concerns. No, I think -- I could
16 go on and on about 135, too. I think the duty and rest
17 regulations need to be looked at again. I know that for years
18 there's been a lot of requests from people to the FAA to do that,
19 but from what I understand, there's not even been a reach out for
20 like request -- I forget what the official terms, before there's
21 even notice for proposed rulemaking, I think there's another
22 process before that that I can't remember exactly what it's
23 called, but, yeah, I think those could probably be looked at
24 again. You know, it takes a lot as a company not to just take
25 advantage of that system from a 135 operator perspective. I'd

1 like to think we do a really good job because, you know, looking
2 at those regs straight up, you can put people in some rough, you
3 know, flight and duty time scenarios still to this day and, you
4 know, I feel like, you know, the 121 airlines have moved on and
5 explicitly written that into their rest and duty regs, and I feel
6 like 135 just kind of gets ignored a little bit in that sort of
7 way, but I could sit on my soapbox all day about that. Just in my
8 little bit of time in the charter industry.

9 Q. No, and that's a great advantage that you have, and it helps
10 others learn, you know. We don't -- you know, we can see what it
11 is on paper, but the people that use it can see, well, this is
12 what it is on paper, but this doesn't work.

13 A. This is how it translates to reality.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. You know, day-to-day this is what works and what doesn't
16 work.

17 Q. No, so I appreciate that. But I know you're busy as well, so
18 we could talk all day on what needs to be changed.

19 A. Yeah.

20 MR. ETCHER: Before we do that, I will call this interview
21 concluded at 1536 Eastern Time.

22 (Whereupon, at 3:36 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK ACCIDENT
 NEAR DEFIANCE, MISSOURI
 ON JANUARY 8, 2022
 Interview of Thomas Harmon

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN22FA096

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lois D. Rush
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK *

ACCIDENT NEAR DEFIANCE, *

Accident No.: CEN22FA096

MISSOURI ON JANUARY 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: BRANDON HILDRETH, Pilot
AirNet

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:17 p.m. EST)

MR. ETCHER: All right. Well, good afternoon. My name is Shawn Etcher. I'm Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB investigating the accident that occurred near Defiance, Missouri.

Today we're going to be using a digital recorder if that's okay with you. After the interview, we are going to take that recording and send it off to have it transcribed.

The transcript will be part of the public docket at some point whenever we open that up publically. The audio portion will not be. I will not change anything on the transcript. I literally will just correct any mistypes, misspelled acronyms, things like that, but I will not change your words. But, like I said, this will become part of the public docket for this accident. Are you okay if we record it and have it transcribed?

MR. HILDRETH: I am.

MR. ETCHER: All right. You're also entitled to have a representative of your choosing if you wish to have one. Do you wish to have a representative?

MR. HILDRETH: I do not.

MR. ETCHER: Okay. I just have a few rules I always like to go through. Of course, we always ask that you answer the questions to the best of your recollection, but if you don't know an answer, I don't know works just fine.

MR. HILDRETH: Okay.

1 MR. ETCHER: This is not a checkride, we're just here to
2 learn. We love all the facts we can get because that helps us.
3 If you have an opinion, it's okay, just say it's your opinion.
4 There's even some questions I'll ask that may be asked in a way
5 what is your opinion on it.

6 MR. HILDRETH: Okay.

7 MR. ETCHER: And that's okay. We just want to make sure we
8 can differentiate between fact and opinion. If I ask a question
9 that you don't really understand what I'm asking, just ask for
10 clarification. That's perfectly fine. Because I assure you if
11 you give me an answer I don't quite understand, I'm going to ask
12 for some clarification.

13 MR. HILDRETH: All right.

14 MR. ETCHER: But, like I said, the most important, if you
15 don't know something, I don't know works just fine. Are you
16 ready?

17 MR. HILDRETH: Yes.

18 MR. ETCHER: All right.

19 INTERVIEW OF BRANDON HILDRETH

20 BY MR. ETCHER:

21 Q. I always go with the tough questions first --

22 A. All right. Go ahead.

23 Q. -- get the worst ones out of the way. Can you please state
24 your full name and spell your last.

25 A. Brandon James Hildreth, H-i-l-d-r-e-t-h.

1 Q. And how old are you?

2 A. I'm 32 years old.

3 Q. All right. And what is your job title?

4 A. My job title is the Director of Operations.

5 Q. And what does the Director of Operations entail?

6 A. A little bit of everything.

7 Q. I figured. Can you give me a nutshell of what that would be?

8 A. I'm responsible for operational control over our 135
9 certificate. I'm responsible for helping with training with
10 general operations manual, submitting op specs, working with the
11 FAA in regards to maintaining our company compliance with
12 regulations, and then just overall scheduling and helping run the
13 company.

14 Q. Okay. So a few things then.

15 A. A lot of things. Hands are in a lot of things.

16 Q. I can imagine. How long have you been in that current
17 position?

18 A. I've been the Director of Operations position for three years
19 now.

20 Q. Okay. How long have you been here?

21 A. I've been at AirNet for seven years.

22 Q. All right. Before you were director of ops, kind of give me
23 your history here at AirNet.

24 A. I started as a line pilot at AirNet. I -- in the Baron
25 position. I flew that position for a couple years, upgraded to a

1 Learjet SIC, Learjet captain. Ultimately I was an assistant chief
2 pilot with AirNet. I was the chief pilot for a couple of years,
3 and then was promoted to the director of operations.

4 Q. All right. And how did you get that promotion? Was it
5 somebody left? Somebody --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. -- quit? Fired?

8 A. Someone left for another opportunity.

9 Q. Okay. Perfect. So you obviously have some airmen
10 certificates.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. What certificates do you have in in type ratings?

13 A. Okay. I have an ATP commercial pilot certificate with a
14 Learjet type rating. I also have an instructor single engine
15 airplane certificate.

16 Q. Okay. Perfect. Are you also a check airman here?

17 A. I am a 135 check airman.

18 Q. All right. How long have you been that?

19 A. Probably four years.

20 Q. I told you, these are the tough questions.

21 A. Yeah, that is tough questions.

22 Q. Okay. About four years you said?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Now these are probably going to be the toughest questions for
25 you.

- 1 A. Okay.
- 2 Q. Just kind of a ball park number, how much total time do you
3 have?
- 4 A. I have roughly 3,800 hours total time.
- 5 Q. Okay. And of that, how much of it is in the Baron?
- 6 A. In the Baron --
- 7 Q. I told you. They get easier after these.
- 8 A. Yeah. Maybe somewhere between 500 and 1,000 hours.
- 9 Q. Okay. So about how many or exactly how many pilots does
10 AirNet have?
- 11 A. 22 pilots.
- 12 Q. Okay. Are they --
- 13 A. Somewhere in there.
- 14 Q. Are they split between aircrafts, some in the Lear, some in
15 the Baron or is it --
- 16 A. We hire everyone in as a Baron PIC, Lear SIC. It's the
17 position, so we fairly quickly do qualify everybody in both
18 airplanes.
- 19 Q. Okay. Great. In your opinion, how would you classify pilot
20 staffing here? You know, you do all the schedules I think you
21 say --
- 22 A. Yeah.
- 23 Q. -- and so are you understaffed, overstaffed?
- 24 A. I would say understaffed.
- 25 Q. Okay. It seems like everybody always says that, right?

1 A. Yeah, we're always understaffed.

2 Q. I mean, what would be an optimal number considering what you
3 have?

4 A. Ideally 30 pilots.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. All right.

8 A. We consistently run classes about every two to three months
9 to try and help with that.

10 Q. How many pilots do you typically lose in a two month period
11 or, you know, maybe you guys don't lose any, I don't know?

12 A. It's -- I mean, it's changed a lot in the last six months I'd
13 say.

14 Q. Okay. Changed lots as in --

15 A. We've lost a lot of people in the last six months.

16 Q. All right. Has that caused any additional challenges for you
17 guys?

18 A. Other than just overall staffing and our, I guess, experience
19 level overall has probably decreased a little bit.

20 Q. Okay. What kind of new hires are you getting in? What's
21 kind of their experience level?

22 A. Generally what we've gotten is 1,000 to 1,200 hour total time
23 pilots. It's usually in the range that we hire. We do get a lot
24 of flight instructors. We do -- so basic, have done their
25 training, flight instruction, and then they come to us, so I would

1 -- in that regard I would classify us as a time building type of
2 job, I guess --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- in that regard or experienced building would be a better
5 way to put it.

6 Q. Okay. Okay. Maybe in your opinion, maybe factually, the
7 pilots that are coming in, are they adequately qualified to do
8 what you expect of them or is there a lot of training that kind of
9 gets them up to the qualifications you need?

10 A. It just depends. Overall the basic instrument skills is the
11 number one thing that we maybe do that they don't come in with
12 that experience.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But we do a lot of training in that regard, I guess.

15 Q. How so?

16 A. How so.

17 Q. How do you train with that?

18 A. We do have a flight simulator, a Frasca 142 FTD that we start
19 everybody in to hone in on some basic attitude instrument skills,
20 and then all our flights are conducted under at least simulated
21 IFR conditions filed under an IFR flight plan to try and help with
22 that.

23 Q. And how do you simulate the IFR conditions?

24 A. Either we go fly in actual instrument. We don't back away
25 from doing that, I guess. We do have foggles available. We do

1 use limiting devices. Sometimes it's just flipping down the visor
2 of the aircraft or a ball cap, but all those things.

3 Q. Okay. All right. That helps. I've been told by most of the
4 people that we've interviewed today that if they have something of
5 concerning to them that they can reach out to talk to the chief
6 pilot or you. How often do you have pilots reaching out to you
7 guys with concerns of whatever?

8 A. Pretty frequently. Maybe more so to Tom as the chief pilot
9 than to myself. It's kind of that they seem to want to reach out
10 to him more, I guess, in that regard, but I'd say weekly --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- we have different people reach out to us about different
13 concerns while they're out on the line flying.

14 Q. And just help me understand what kind of concerns are they
15 reporting.

16 A. Well, for example, weather is a big one, so if somebody has
17 questions about weather, what we're seeing, what we're thinking,
18 different plans that we can maybe change either routing structures
19 or if airplanes or schedule issues, crewing issues, any of it.

20 Q. Okay. All right. Just for the record, did you have either
21 of the accident pilots reach out to you?

22 A. I did not.

23 Q. Okay. Did anybody have them reach out to them that you're
24 aware of?

25 A. Not that I'm aware of.

1 Q. Okay. Perfect. Now I know you're near the top of pinnacle
2 here, of the leadership chain, but do you have anybody you have to
3 report to?

4 A. Yes, I do have a boss, I guess.

5 Q. And kind of walk me through that.

6 A. We have a general manager who is based up in Ypsilanti,
7 Michigan. He works as more of the owner group, I guess.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. He is my boss.

10 Q. How often do you interact with --

11 A. I talk to him weekly.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Do you ever voice any concerns to him?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Without disclosing specific things, anything in general?

17 A. Yeah, I mean, we talked staffing issues. He holds a weekly
18 meeting with all of his management where we go around and, you
19 know, from -- our organization basically has several different
20 companies, so that management is different, people in similar
21 roles to myself in the other companies, and we talk about general
22 things, and then each individual goes around and shares, you know,
23 what's going on or different concerns that they may have. A lot
24 of times from those meetings then we'll have follow ups or they do
25 -- he does fly down and see us fairly regularly as well.

- 1 Q. Great. Does AirNet -- you have ASAP, FOQA, SMS?
- 2 A. We do have an ASAP program.
- 3 Q. From your perspective, how does that -- does it seem to be,
- 4 you know, welcomed by pilots?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. Do you have any idea how many reports ASAP gets?
- 7 A. Not really.
- 8 Q. Okay. Are you totally separate from that I assume?
- 9 A. Yeah, management usually stays out of it.
- 10 Q. All right. How long have you had ASAP?
- 11 A. Ever since I've been here, so --
- 12 Q. Oh, wow.
- 13 A. -- about seven years. Yes.
- 14 Q. Wow. All right. Great. Do you get any information from,
- 15 you know, the reports, like if they see trends or --
- 16 A. If they see trends, yes. We've had some check list items
- 17 that have been adjusted from ASAP reports. That's more where I
- 18 see it. I think Tom maybe gets a little bit more information in
- 19 regards to like trends of reports, but if it gets to the point
- 20 that we need to change a checklist item or something in the GOM,
- 21 that's when it gets to me, I guess.
- 22 Q. Okay. So do you pretty much do the modifications to your
- 23 procedures or GOMs --
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. -- all that, and then you submit that to the FAA?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. So speaking of the FAA, then how often do you interact
3 with your POI?

4 A. Monthly, I guess.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah, we keep in contact as needed. I feel like I can reach
7 out to her if there's something that I'm working on or that I have
8 a question about.

9 Q. Is that -- do you -- when you say monthly, is that -- do you
10 just pick up the phone and talk to her or is that --

11 A. Usually it's via email.

12 Q. Okay. How often does she come here in person?

13 A. Covid has changed stuff. So I would say I'd see her at least
14 quarterly.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Pre-covid, and then for check airmen recurrent rides and
17 stuff like that.

18 Q. How about post-covid now that --

19 A. Post-covid I haven't seen her quite as much maybe.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I don't know what post-covid is yet, so --

22 Q. How about --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- after March of 2020, how's that?

25 A. They weren't that -- from my understanding, they weren't

1 allowed to come out for a decent amount of time at least.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But she was always accessible if I needed her.

4 Q. Okay. Has she been the only POI you've had to deal with?

5 A. Fortunately.

6 Q. Well, that's good.

7 A. As the director of operations, yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. As the assistant chief pilot and chief pilot, no.

10 Q. So she got replaced -- that's terrible. She took --

11 A. She --

12 Q. -- over for somebody?

13 A. Took over --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- for someone else, yes.

16 Q. And how was that interaction with that POI?

17 A. It was different than with her.

18 Q. Okay. Different good? Different not so good?

19 A. Not so good, but I would say that the personality of our

20 previous DO and that FAA person probably clashed --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- more so than our current POI and myself.

23 Q. Okay. Politically well-spoken so very nice. All right.

24 Great. Does she -- does your current POI, does she administer you

25 as a check airman, does she do your --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- check rides?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. When is the last time you had your check with her?

5 A. I don't know the exact date --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- but I am current with my two year checks, so --

8 Q. Okay. So within the last two years.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. All right. Great. Do you guys have dispatchers,

11 flight followers, anything along that line?

12 A. We do have flight followers.

13 Q. And what do they do?

14 A. They --

15 Q. Besides what they say, right?

16 A. -- yeah, follow the flight.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. They do a lot.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. They send out trip paperwork on a weekly basis, they file all

21 the paperwork, they check pilots in and check them out for their

22 flight assignments. They track the flights. They deal with FBOs,

23 any customer items, they're usually kind of the contact between a

24 customer and the pilot, they are the pilot's first call I guess in

25 that regard if something's going on out on the line.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. They do have delegated operational control through me
3 obviously, but -- so if they do need to change a flight for some
4 reason in that regard, they can do that.

5 Q. Now you said they file the paperwork. Do they file the
6 flight plans or --

7 A. No, they -- our pilots file their own flight plans.

8 Q. Okay. Do they pull the weather for the pilots or do the
9 pilots have to do that themselves?

10 A. The pilots do that as well.

11 Q. All right. Now you said they have delegated authority
12 through you.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Is that on the 91 flights also or is that just a requirement
15 under 135?

16 A. That's a requirement under 135.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But if -- I guess in that regard it would be if they had to
19 divert or something like that, they're not making any major
20 changes to the flight without talking to me or Tom.

21 Q. Okay. Do they do anything with the part 91 flights? Do they
22 treat them any different than a 135 or --

23 A. No.

24 Q. All right. So even under the 135 side, the pilots still do
25 their flight plans --

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. -- do their weather.
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. And how do they do that? Is it on their --
- 5 A. Foreflight. We provide an EFB --
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. -- to the pilots.
- 8 Q. Great. Now when they file their flight plan, do they have to
- 9 print it off anywhere or just on their EFB.
- 10 A. They just have it on their EFB.
- 11 Q. Great. All right. Do you hire very many pilots or do you --
- 12 does somebody else do all that work for you?
- 13 A. I have someone who does a lot of the initial interviews and
- 14 then I'm -- lately I have not been as involved with the second
- 15 interviews. I've kind of passed that on to Tom. He's much more
- 16 involved with that portion of it. I -- if I have time I will sit
- 17 in on some second interviews, and we do discuss resumes, things
- 18 like that, so --
- 19 Q. Okay. All right. So you deal with at least -- kind of get
- 20 a --
- 21 A. I have --
- 22 Q. -- fingers in that pie?
- 23 A. I know what -- I have a good idea --
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. -- of what's going on.

- 1 Q. All right.
- 2 A. I kind of do more of the projections and say we need three
3 pilots here, we need four pilots here, that sort of thing.
- 4 Q. So I know you said you do the schedules for the week.
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. Typically, and I know that's a huge range, right?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. But typically how many flights do you guys operate in a
9 night, a week, a day?
- 10 A. I think our busiest day we have eight flights a day, and
11 eight routes a day I guess is a better way to put that. Each
12 flight can have multiple legs, so --
- 13 Q. And is that eight just in the Baron or is that --
- 14 A. No, that's total.
- 15 Q. -- between the whole -- okay.
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. How many's in the Baron?
- 18 A. The Baron, the max we usually do would be like three a day.
- 19 Q. Okay. All right. And is that -- and you said that's just
20 the route, right? That's the flight. You consider that just the
21 route.
- 22 A. Yeah.
- 23 Q. Okay. So the --
- 24 A. The --
- 25 Q. -- accident flight --

1 A. A repo and a 135.

2 Q. Okay. That makes sense now. What kind of -- do you guys
3 have like a risk assessment matrix you guys go through with --
4 when you look at routes or when you look at weather or pilot
5 experience of --

6 A. A formal one? No.

7 Q. How about informal?

8 A. Tom and I have a lot of discussions, yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. We sit closely together I guess. Our desks are right next to
11 each other, and I guess it depends on which specifically, but if
12 it's weather, a lot of times it's a phone call from the pilots to
13 us usually, and then we assess the weather or we talk through it.
14 If Tom -- usually like I said, Tom gets that phone call most of
15 the time because they don't like to call me in the middle of the
16 night. But -- so then Tom -- if Tom feels like he needs
17 assistance or needs my opinion on it, then he will definitely call
18 me, and we'll discuss it separately, come up with Plan A, Plan B,
19 Plan C, those sorts of things to try and work it out. As far as
20 crew pairing, him and I basically have conversations based on what
21 we've seen or different discussions that we've had with other
22 pilots who have maybe flown with people, and then look at -- take
23 flight times obviously into consideration as well, and then make a
24 decision on what -- at what point crews can be paired together.

25 Q. So the accident crew --

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. -- we understand they were both new hires.
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. In October?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. And neither one had a lot of time in the Baron. Combined, I
- 7 don't know. I mean, they were both under 100 hours, I know.
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. I don't remember the specifics.
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. Was that a consideration you guys had when you paired them
- 12 together to fly the route they did?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. And so what -- it sounds really cold to say, but what made
- 15 you feel like they could do it together safely?
- 16 A. Overall we had -- well, number one, they had both completed
- 17 our training which I feel like we've been very confident that the
- 18 training and the training standards have held up and have produced
- 19 a good pilot, at least through the seven years I've been here, so
- 20 there's value in that. At the end of the day I always tell Tom
- 21 because him and I are the two check airmen that, you know, there's
- 22 the standards and then ultimately you have to be able to go home
- 23 and sleep at night, so that's kind of in the back of our head, I
- 24 guess, when we give check rides.
- 25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. So based on that, they both had passed their check rides,
2 they both had completed the training profiles that we had for
3 them. They both -- we obviously don't pair them up together right
4 away, so we sent them out on the line with other pilots who had
5 flown several of the same trips with them, and then speaking for
6 George specifically, he had gotten to a point in conversations
7 with him as well that we decided that we could send him on a trip
8 solo, by himself, because he was 135 qualified, so we did that,
9 and there were no issues with that, and the feedback that he had
10 given us and the other pilots obviously have given good reports at
11 that point to send him solo, so we did that, and then ultimately
12 Tom had flown with Amanda as well, and based on the same
13 evaluation he had flown with her and thought they would be fine to
14 be paired together as well. We did look at their time. I believe
15 they both had roughly 50 hours in the airplane in a relatively
16 short amount of time, so their recency of experience was in that
17 aircraft was fairly decent. You know, we -- it doesn't -- I guess
18 when you get a Learjet type rating you're required to fly for 25
19 hours with another captain before you're released, so not to say
20 that that number specifically is good or bad, but that having over
21 the 30 to 40 hours in an airplane with the additional
22 conversations with the pilots or evaluations of flight on the line
23 with Tom on top of talking to the crew we felt that they were able
24 to fly the trip together.

25 Q. Okay. That helps me understand the process you guys go

- 1 into --
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. -- looking at it. I know you said you sent George out on a
- 4 solo --
- 5 A. Yeah.
- 6 Q. -- and he came back. Would you ever expect a pilot to say
- 7 they didn't feel confident with going out by themselves?
- 8 A. Yes, I think that they should be professional enough that if
- 9 they're not comfortable to do something, and we stress that enough
- 10 in our training that they need to voice that to me.
- 11 Q. Have you ever had any voice that to you?
- 12 A. I guess not that I can recall.
- 13 Q. Okay. And that's okay. I'm just trying to understand it
- 14 all, so I appreciate that. Since we're just talking about
- 15 training we'll just kind of stick on that for a little bit.
- 16 A. Um-hum.
- 17 Q. Both Amanda and George were in the same indoc class --
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. -- is that correct?
- 20 A. That is correct.
- 21 Q. Did you do either of their check rides?
- 22 A. I did Amanda's check ride, yes.
- 23 Q. How was that? I know that's been a few months ago.
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. I apologize.

1 A. It's kind of hard to remember the details specifically.
2 Looking back I do see that I suspended and retrained her on one
3 event. The -- what I do remember from the flying portion of it is
4 that her flight was actually very good. On a 135 check ride it's
5 not necessarily uncommon to get suspended and retrained. That
6 could have -- if I recall, it was more of a company profile type
7 of situation, so we just did another approach again basically
8 after we had talked about it and trained -- or suspended,
9 retrained, talked about it, and then shot the approach to
10 standards. Other than that I don't remember that many specifics
11 of it I guess. I'd like to. The oral portion of it, she
12 struggled a little bit initially with some of the ground stuff
13 which is where maybe I saw a little bit more concern with her, but
14 I think I was more of a test taking type of situation because I do
15 recall she I guess -- for example, there on the -- one of the test
16 questions it was like select all that apply, and she would only
17 select one answer rather than reading the directions of all that
18 would apply, so maybe a little too quick or not paying attention
19 to that detail I guess.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So -- but otherwise, nothing unordinary stood out or that I
22 was concerned about from her flying.

23 Q. Her stick and rudder abilities were --

24 A. Were very good, I thought.

25 Q. How was her scan?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. I mean, did you see any issues with her instrument scan at
3 all?

4 A. Not that I noticed on the check ride. At that point I hadn't
5 -- I didn't conduct any of her training flights, so we went
6 through the check ride profile and as I would expect at that
7 point, hopefully she is prepared to take a check ride if she has
8 been signed off at that point, so I didn't see anything that was
9 concerning.

10 Q. Okay. All right. That helps kind of -- when you do a check
11 ride, it's -- you know, it's always nice to get the check airman's
12 perspective.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. And I believe you said that one suspend and retake or
15 retest --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- was it an approach?

18 A. If I recall it was a non-precision approach, but I'd have to
19 look at the check ride form.

20 Q. All right. Okay. That works. How do you guys -- here at
21 AirNet, do you guys maintain a standardization across all pilots?
22 You know, do you -- there's always the bare minimum with the FAA,
23 but sometimes, you know --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. -- operators have a little higher standard maybe --

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. -- or something similar. How do you guys maintain that?

3 A. I mean, as far as test taking, we require the 80 percent pass
4 rates. Other than that, hard work I guess on the part of the
5 training department to evaluate and to be honest hold each other
6 to a high standard. We see a lot of different people with
7 different backgrounds and ultimately within the company we have a
8 lot of different experience level. You know, we try to promote
9 from day one. Ultimately the goal of becoming a Learjet captain
10 which takes a lot of work, and I think most people that we hire
11 have that goal in mind as well, so that's -- that mentality I
12 think is kind of where it starts, that you have to get to a whole
13 this level to be able to earn that title. So that's where it
14 starts, and then just following the standards that are laid out
15 that I believe I shared with you in our training syllabus and
16 stuff like that. That, you know, the bare minimums may pass you,
17 but it's not necessarily good enough. It can always get better,
18 so --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Promote that mentality.

21 Q. Great.

22 A. And everybody in the company knows. They all talk. The
23 pilots talk, so --

24 Q. When you guys have a nice, tightknit group like this, I'm
25 sure it does talk, so --

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. -- and you guys do have a tightknit group and it talks. Have
3 you ever heard of any complaints about either of the two pilots?
- 4 A. Not of those two, no.
- 5 Q. Okay. I mean, I'm sure you've heard of complaints probably
6 in the past --
- 7 A. Plenty.
- 8 Q. -- in your position.
- 9 A. Plenty.
- 10 Q. But not of those two, correct?
- 11 A. Hopefully we don't have to go into this. Not those two.
- 12 Q. Okay. As long as it's not those two, we're okay, yeah. Just
13 in very general terms, what kind of complaints do you hear?
- 14 A. I mean, I do -- we are very direct. We ask about
15 performance, flight specific performance. Tom and I are not
16 afraid to pick up the phone and call people who, you know, you're
17 flying with to ask how are they doing, how's this person, what's
18 something that they can work on, is this a good pairing or what do
19 you think about this? I feel like we try to do that at least
20 pretty regularly, and then, you know, what other complaints.
21 There's always route complaints, things, airplane complaints, all
22 sorts of stuff.
- 23 Q. Runs the whole gambit, right?
- 24 A. Anything.
- 25 Q. Yeah. Was there any complaints on 585?

- 1 A. Not that I recall --
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. -- specifically.
- 4 Q. Do you know in training do they teach anything about spatial
- 5 disorientation or unusual attitudes or anything like that?
- 6 A. We do teach unusual attitudes and we do check them on check
- 7 rides.
- 8 Q. Okay. And did you check Amanda's?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. And how was she able to -- I know obviously she didn't have
- 11 to be suspended and retrained --
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. -- but how did she do compared to what you see?
- 14 A. She was fine.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. Normal I guess.
- 17 Q. From your standpoint looking at Amanda compared to other
- 18 pilots you've checked --
- 19 A. Yeah.
- 20 Q. -- would you --
- 21 A. I --
- 22 Q. -- consider her --
- 23 A. Like I said, I --
- 24 Q. -- in the middle, kind of towards the top?
- 25 A. She was the middle probably.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Average.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. There are some that are exceptional, I guess, and I wouldn't
5 necessarily go that far, but there wasn't anything that was
6 concerning in regards to stick and rudder. I thought she had good
7 aircraft control --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- in that regard.

10 Q. All right. Great. Did you ever fly with George at all?

11 A. I did fly one training flight with George. Tom had asked me
12 to do an evaluation of George. I forget exactly what the scenario
13 was, but I think we -- he was getting closer to a check ride and
14 wanted me to -- a second opinion, someone else who was available
15 to go up and fly with him, and I did recommend on that one that
16 they continue to train a little bit, and I asked Tom to even maybe
17 put him back in the simulator for just -- which isn't necessarily
18 uncommon either because it's a very good IFR scan in the simulator
19 and obviously -- so I asked him to do that and I believe he did
20 that, so I didn't sign him off from that flight.

21 Q. Okay. Was the reason you wanted more -- suggested more
22 training for him was because of his instrument scanning ability?
23 He's a little -- help me understand what --

24 A. Yeah, he was --

25 Q. -- drew you to that?

1 A. I didn't feel like he was ready for a check ride because of
2 that. We were in actual IFR conditions in that flight, and I was
3 just having to -- we were in a hold and I was having to help a
4 little bit more than I would have liked to for a check ride or
5 similar to that is able to be out on the line.

6 Q. Okay. And you were helping hold like altitude heading
7 airspeed or helping set things up? Help me to understand what you
8 had to help him.

9 A. We do maneuvers while in a hold I guess to try and
10 oversaturate our pilots for that purpose, try and give them, you
11 know, a task to stay in a hold and maintain that on an IFR flight
12 plan, you know, within reasonable altitudes, and then go through
13 our stalls, our steep turn maneuvers while maintaining that hold,
14 so -- if I recall correctly, I was just trying to -- I was having
15 to help keep us in the hold a little bit more than I would have
16 liked to in regards to maybe like headings after we did a maneuver
17 getting right back on the correct heading.

18 Q. Okay. All right. Now when you're doing these maneuvers in a
19 hold, I assume you're not doing a race track hold. Are you
20 talking like a block of altitude and a block of space or --

21 A. No, we do a race track hold.

22 Q. Race track hold. Okay.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. All right. So looking through, you know, the records for
25 both George and Amanda, it does not appear either one of them had

1 a lot of actual instrument experience -- a lot. I shouldn't say
2 it that way.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. They were on the lower side if you will of actual time.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. You know, George had a lot of simulator time.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Is that a concern for you guys here at, you know, when you
9 paired them together at all?

10 A. It's always a concern, I guess, but we get a lot of people.
11 Basically most our pilots that we hire in don't have a lot of in
12 the clouds actual instrument time, even if they're coming as
13 flight instructors or aerial survey pilots, those type of things,
14 so in regards to that, the amount of time that they had in
15 comparison to other pilots or everyone else I guess in that regard
16 that we've hired, it wasn't unusually low in that regard.

17 Q. Okay. Thank you for getting them.

18 A. Sure.

19 Q. You answered more of a question than I --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- asked and I appreciate it because that's in my question,
22 so thank you. When you were flying with either one of them,
23 George or Amanda, did you watch them use the autopilot at all?
24 Did they use the autopilot at all?

25 A. Yes, yes. So we do -- on our check ride we do, although it's

1 not required, I guess, by the operation that we do anymore, then
2 we do have them use the autopilot and at least shoot one approach
3 with the autopilot on.

4 Q. How was their proficiency with using the autopilot?

5 A. From what I recall it was normal. It was -- there wasn't
6 anything unusual --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- or they didn't have issues with it that I recall.

9 Q. Okay. Great. So I know there's 135 qualified pilots and
10 then there's not, so there's the 91 pilots, right?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. I don't know how you guys classify them, but apologies if I
13 didn't use the right phrase.

14 A. No, that's fine.

15 Q. What allows the 91 pilot to become a 135 pilot? Is it just
16 strictly the hours or are there other requirements you guys have?

17 A. So when we do our training we do the same exact training for
18 all our pilots. They go through the same training profile. They
19 have to pass the same exact check ride, so at that point it would
20 be the only restriction is the hour requirement in place by the
21 FAA.

22 Q. And so once they hit that hour requirement, there's no
23 additional training they have to do.

24 A. Not specific training, no.

25 Q. All right.

1 A. There's a little bit of paperwork that they report to us what
2 their times are and then we make the adjustments paperwork wise on
3 our side.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But --

6 Q. All right. And George made that requirement because he's the
7 135 on --

8 A. Yeah, George I believe had all that time when he was hired.

9 Q. Okay. Was Amanda getting close do you know?

10 A. Amanda was getting close

11 Q. She hadn't quite achieved it?

12 A. She hadn't quite achieved it. She had reported -- I believe
13 I sent it to you, but she had reported the day before the
14 accident, and I believe was just a little short maybe on her IFR
15 or nighttime. I can't remember specifically.

16 Q. Okay. When they're flying the 91 flights like this flight
17 was, let's say it was a beautiful VFR. I guess -- are most of
18 your flights at night or day or is it a mix?

19 A. It's a mix.

20 Q. Okay. Well, let's just say it was a beautiful VFR flight.
21 Would you anticipate them doing a 91 flight because you have
22 another guy -- another person in the right seat, would you expect
23 them to be some hood time or anything or do you expect them to be
24 flying the line that we --

25 A. Yeah, we don't require them to do any hood time.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I guess they could, but they don't have to, no.

3 Q. Okay. It's not prohibited.

4 A. It's not prohibited, either, no.

5 Q. All right. I know we've kind of talked about a little bit,
6 you know, the pairing with low time.

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. I know you guys did a little bit of a risk assessment
9 informally I think was the phrase. When you guys did that, did
10 you and Tom and the pilots, did you guys look at -- I assume you
11 looked at all the weather, and the route and everything, but was
12 there anything else you guys looked at?

13 A. I guess not specifically that I can think of.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. In that regard, Amanda had done the route with another pilot
16 four nights the week before, the same route, but it was more just
17 a conversation with Tom and myself, and then anyone else that they
18 had flown with in that regard.

19 Q. Okay. So -- and I just want to make sure I have it very
20 clear in my head because I don't want to make any assumptions.
21 But if either pilot would have said, well, I don't feel
22 comfortable flying with the other one because of their
23 inexperience or lack of experience or whatever, would that -- is
24 that something they can do?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And what would you guys do?

2 A. Come up with a Plan B, C. Our plans change constantly,
3 daily, hourly, so finding another plan is always an option. We,
4 like I kind of said, we have our owners have other 135 companies
5 that have the same hazmat exemptions and everything that we do, so
6 it's not uncommon for us if we ultimately run out of people or
7 pilots to -- or the weather's just not good from where we're at to
8 call them and have them cover the trip.

9 Q. Okay. Do they ever call you to cover trips, too?

10 A. Not as often.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. We are usually busier than they are.

13 Q. Okay. Okay. Enough said. So the night of the event, let's
14 say either pilot called --

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. -- and said, man, I don't know, it's kind of not the best
17 weather, I don't feel comfortable with either one of our
18 experience, or, you know, I don't feel comfortable, you know, with
19 one or the other's experience --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- first of all was that call ever made?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. What would you guys have done had that -- because
24 they're out there --

25 A. Yup.

1 Q. -- not here and it's --

2 A. If we took that call, we would have made more phone calls to
3 figure out what a plan was I guess. I would have called probably
4 our head dispatcher or flight follower, I guess, to, you know,
5 talk about the schedule, see if we had anything available, see if
6 any of our Lears were maybe in position if we needed to change
7 crews. Because it was a 91 leg there's no reason that the 135
8 qualified person couldn't fly that if that's a more comfortable
9 scenario for the pilots, I guess, and I know previously that has
10 happened, and that's always an option if the more experienced
11 person wants to take this leg for a reason like that, that's
12 perfectly okay, and we would do that, but ultimately it's just
13 kind of see what our options are and then send whoever makes sense
14 in --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- that regard.

17 Q. All right. If George as a 135 pilot was uncomfortable with
18 flying based on whatever his experience -- maybe he didn't feel
19 like he'd seen that kind of weather, I don't know, there's a
20 gambit of reasons, right?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. If that would have occurred, Amanda couldn't have flown the
23 flight --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. -- out there by herself, correct?

- 1 A. Right.
- 2 Q. Or could she have?
- 3 A. She -- out there?
- 4 Q. Yeah.
- 5 A. She could have, but not in the 135 leg.
- 6 Q. So in that scenario, what would you -- has that scenario ever
- 7 happened?
- 8 A. I mean, that would cause us -- obviously to be able to do the
- 9 135 leg we'd have to find somebody to either pair together or find
- 10 another option. Yeah, I mean, I've had people who just flat out
- 11 say that we're not comfortable with this weather or we're not
- 12 going, you know. At that point we -- delays are an option or
- 13 there's a million different things that we can do at that point,
- 14 but, yes, I have had people just flat out say, no, we're not
- 15 comfortable with either this airplane or this weather or whatever
- 16 the situation is.
- 17 Q. And when they have said no, whoever they were --
- 18 A. Yeah.
- 19 Q. -- when they had said no was there any -- pilots always look
- 20 at everything as either punitive or not punitive, right? Was
- 21 there ever any punitive --
- 22 A. No.
- 23 Q. -- recourse for that?
- 24 A. No.
- 25 Q. Okay. Okay.

1 A. We make that -- try to make that very clear from day one that
2 you're welcome to say no.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Just an open line of communication.

5 Q. All right. Sorry, scrolling back through some of my
6 questions.

7 A. No --

8 Q. Back to the autopilot. I know you're probably tired of
9 talking about autopilot, so please --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- forgive me.

12 A. No.

13 Q. If they're hand flying, perfectly fine to hand fly, right?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. We promote it.

17 Q. It's promoted. Okay. So if they're hand flying, are they
18 encouraged to fly with a flight director or raw data?

19 A. I guess I don't really push either way.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I don't like people to be reliant on the autopilot because at
22 the end of the day we fly airplanes that are older in the
23 technology realm compared to some of the airplanes that are out
24 there today which can fly themselves, so I guess raw data versus
25 flight director, I don't -- I personally don't push one way or the

1 other.

2 Q. What do you see pilots doing typically? Do they ever pop up
3 the flight director when they're hand flying or do you
4 typically -- I know typically's such a big word.

5 A. Yeah, it's probably 50/50.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Some prefer to have the flight director. I see it more as a
8 personal preference, you know. Some people are more trusting in
9 their flight director and some people are not, so I find that some
10 people just prefer to not have to worry about it and just fly the
11 airplane and then I find others who like having the flight
12 director.

13 Q. How about Amanda or George? Do you recall that they had a --

14 A. I don't.

15 Q. -- favorite either way?

16 A. No, I don't, and only doing one flight with each of them, one
17 being a check ride specifically I guess I didn't really see that
18 side of it.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So -- because on a check ride we have to promote hand flying
21 to some --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- degree.

24 Q. Okay. If you had an instructor, or maybe you have had
25 instructors come to you and say, man, you know, I'm -- using an

1 example. I'm training Shawn, and he's always using the flight
2 director.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. You know, would that be a problem? Would that be good? Kind
5 of help me understand.

6 A. The flight director, I guess it wouldn't really throw a red
7 flag to me in that regard if they wanted to use it. Obviously
8 it's equipment in the airplane. As long as they're using it
9 properly then there's no reason they couldn't use the flight
10 director.

11 Q. Okay. All right. And forgive me if I asked this. I know
12 you said when you flew with George it was an IMC because you guys
13 were in a hold.

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. When you did your check ride with Amanda, was that VMC, IMC?

16 A. I believe it was VMC. I don't --

17 Q. And I apologize if I asked that.

18 A. Yeah, I don't 100 percent recall.

19 Q. No problem. All right. Since the event had occurred, is
20 there anything you guys have started to look at here that, you
21 know -- I know we haven't come up with a probable cause. I get
22 that.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Is there anything you guys are starting to look at, kind --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. -- of like, hum.

2 A. Yeah, I mean, we have started to install dual controls in all
3 the airplanes. I guess obviously that maybe has changed some
4 perspective in regards to if that's a good idea or not, but it
5 can't hurt, so we have done that, and the last one will be
6 completed next week.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So that. We've already been -- our owner called us the next
9 day -- maybe not the next day, but very shortly after, what can we
10 do, has been very -- what can we do to make things easier in the
11 airplane, so the plan is to put -- make sure there's a standby
12 attitude indicator inside all these Barons because at the current
13 time there's not, so those are two basic things I guess in that
14 regard to aircraft wise that have already been initiated in that
15 regard.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Great. Was there any procedures you guys
17 are looking at different?

18 A. I don't -- specifically we haven't really discussed that yet.

19 Q. And that's okay. You guys have already made changes. It's
20 only been a few months, so I get that, so I'm just trying to get
21 an understanding here.

22 A. Yeah. Yeah. I think ultimately, like everybody, it's trying
23 to figure out where we think those changes need to occur, if and
24 where.

25 Q. Right. So you can make a thousand changes, but if you don't

1 make that --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- most important one --

4 A. It needs to be --

5 Q. -- they do nothing for you, relatively speaking.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay. I get that. I feel like I've asked you a lot of

8 questions, but as I've always told everybody, I can ask 100

9 questions and that 101th question that's very important. Is there

10 questions that you can think of like, man, I can't believe he

11 didn't ask this, or, man, this might help shed some light on

12 something?

13 A. I guess not specifically question wise, I don't know if you

14 had any like procedure type questions of what may have and those

15 sorts of things. I --

16 Q. Well, I do see here I have one --

17 A. Okay. Go for it.

18 Q. -- procedural question, and it's back to that darn autopilot.

19 I don't know why I keep missing all these --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- questions on autopilot.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Is there a point when they cannot use the autopilot?

24 A. That we restrict?

25 Q. Yeah.

- 1 A. I mean, not specifically.
- 2 Q. I mean, they're not auto takeoff, auto land.
- 3 A. Right, right, right.
- 4 Q. But like on takeoff, can they engage it?
- 5 A. I mean, generally, yeah, they could at 50 feet if they wanted
- 6 to. I don't -- the autopilot in the Baron is -- doesn't do that
- 7 well with like climbs, I guess, and descents while maneuvering, so
- 8 generally I think it mainly gets used in cruise.
- 9 Q. Okay. When you fly it, when did you use it?
- 10 A. In cruise.
- 11 Q. In cruise.
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. You didn't use it to climb an hour?
- 14 A. Not really.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. No. But the autopilot in the Baron, you know, will shoot
- 17 approaches and like I said, we train on that, so I've -- I
- 18 personally have shot approaches with the autopilot in the Baron,
- 19 but in general I don't think it gets used on climb out that much.
- 20 Q. Okay. Okay. Now I just --
- 21 A. That's my opinion.
- 22 Q. No, and that's okay. Thank you for clarifying it's your
- 23 opinion. But there's no prohibition for them to --
- 24 A. No, they could -- yeah, they could be.
- 25 Q. Okay. Typically, again, the big word, you're flying -- on

- 1 the accident flight there was two pilots.
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. Sometimes you guy fly single pilot, correct?
- 4 A. Yes. Not very often.
- 5 Q. Okay. So when you guys were flying with two pilots, is there
- 6 a delegation of duties or is the left seater -- I use the left
- 7 seater, the pilot in command of that flight, are they to do the
- 8 radios, and the --
- 9 A. There's --
- 10 Q. -- GPS, the autopilot?
- 11 A. There's no requirement. Like I said, we try to promote
- 12 towards being a Learjet captain, so we try to promote CRM in that
- 13 regard --
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. -- so it's -- I would say it's very common if there's two
- 16 pilots in the airplane that maybe one's running the radios and
- 17 one's flying the airplane.
- 18 Q. Okay.
- 19 A. So --
- 20 Q. Did either of the pilots do their Learjet training?
- 21 A. No, they had not and they were scheduled.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. But had not.
- 24 Q. So they hadn't went through --
- 25 A. No.

1 Q. -- that kind of CRM --
2 A. Right.
3 Q. -- expectation.
4 A. Right.
5 Q. They were trained in it, correct?
6 A. Yeah.
7 Q. Okay. All right. I promise I'm looking through my list.
8 I'm like -- I swear you guys have talked sometimes as you've
9 answered -- talking you've answered a lot of them, so that helps.
10 But is there anything else you can think of that I didn't ask?
11 A. Not really.
12 Q. Okay. I know you're the king for the day here so it's okay.
13 A. King.
14 Q. You're always the king here.
15 A. I don't know about that.
16 Q. Is there changes that you can see that, man, we really -- I
17 wish these could be done, whether it's here, AirNet, or whether
18 it's in the national air space or --
19 A. Yeah, I mean, I think ultimately in the -- I think one -- I
20 went to a 141 program, and I think I had maybe one hour of actual
21 instrument time when I left that program, so it was very good
22 training. The simulated training was very good, but I think
23 pilots need real world experience, and I think they need a good
24 way that's safe to do that. So -- but I think it -- I think in
25 that regard that's probably every interview we ask, you know,

1 what's going to be the hardest part for you, and I'd say 90
2 percent of the time Tom and I can sit there and know off the bat
3 that it's going to be instrument skills because it's just a job
4 that requires instrument flying.

5 Q. Any thoughts on how to have a safe environment?

6 A. In a safe environment.

7 Q. Because, I mean, simulated instrument is just that.

8 A. Yeah. I think --

9 Q. It's simulated.

10 A. Right, right. I -- off the top of my head, no, not really,
11 but I think it needs to start in the training environments. They
12 have to -- I know there's a liability there, so it probably won't
13 happen to some of those schools, but the -- at the end of the day
14 it's different when you're in the clouds.

15 Q. It is. Well, I've went through my questions.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. I haven't found any that I've missed or overlooked, but I did
18 overlook autopilot there twice, so --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- maybe I'm missing something. But, again, I appreciate you
21 helping me fill in as much as you have. I mean, everybody I
22 interviewed today really did help a lot --

23 A. Good. I'm glad.

24 Q. -- so that speaks highly of your pilots. They were very --

25 A. Thank you.

1 Q. -- honest and, you know, they didn't hold back it didn't
2 appear, so I appreciate that.

3 A. We appreciate that.

4 MR. ETCHER: But at this point I will call this interview
5 concluded at 1718 Eastern Time.

6 (Whereupon, at 5:18 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK ACCIDENT
 NEAR DEFIANCE, MISSOURI
 ON JANUARY 8, 2022
 Interview of Brandon Hildreth

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN22FA096

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lois D. Rush
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK *

ACCIDENT NEAR DEFIANCE, *

Accident No.: CEN22FA096

MISSOURI ON JANUARY 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: ROBERT PARK, Pilot
AirNet

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:40 a.m. EST)

MR. ETCHER: All right. Good morning. My name is Shawn Etcher. I'm Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB and I'm investigating the accident that occurred near Defiance, Missouri. Just for reference, it's NTSB No. CEN22FA096.

Today we're going to be using a digital recorder to conduct the interview. Once we're done with the interview, I will send this recording out to be transcribed. Once the transcription comes back, I review the transcript just to correct any typographical errors. Sometimes APU get spelled ABU, for instance. I don't change any words you say other than just misspelled acronyms, if you will.

MR. PARK: Okay.

MR. ETCHER: And then that transcript itself will actually become part of a public docket at some point as this investigation nears completion, but if it's okay with you, we'd like to record and transcribe. Are you okay with that?

MR. PARK: Yup, I'm okay with that.

MR. ETCHER: All right. As with all our investigations, you're entitled to a representative of your choosing if you choose to have one. Do you wish to have one at this time?

MR. PARK: Not at this time.

MR. ETCHER: Okay. If you decide during the interview that you need one, please just say so. We can pause the interview and

1 we can -- you can get whoever you need.

2 MR. PARK: Sounds good.

3 MR. ETCHER: I always have a few grounds rules when we start.
4 If you -- we'll ask a lot of questions, but if you don't
5 understand a question, just ask for clarity. It's okay because
6 sometimes it didn't come out of my mouth the way I thought it was
7 in my brain because if you give me an answer that I don't quite
8 understand, I'm going to ask for a little bit more clarification
9 just to help me. If you don't know an answer, I don't know works
10 just fine or whatever. If you have an opinion on something, just
11 let us know just so we can separate opinions from facts. Do you
12 have any questions before we get started?

13 MR. PARK: No.

14 MR. ETCHER: Okay.

15 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT PARK

16 BY MR. ETCHER:

17 Q. I always start all the interviews with the toughest
18 questions, get them out of the way as quick as we can, so could
19 you state your full name and spell your last?

20 A. Robert Eugene Park, and it's P-a-r-k.

21 Q. All right. And how old are you?

22 A. 24.

23 Q. All right. Is it okay if I call you Robert?

24 A. Rob, please.

25 Q. Rob.

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. Okay. What is your job title, Rob?
- 3 A. I guess AirNet Two pilot.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. More specifically an FO, so --
- 6 Q. An FO in what?
- 7 A. Both, or I guess PIC in the Baron and FO in the Learjet.
- 8 Q. Okay. Great. When'd you get hired on here at AirNet?
- 9 A. I think my start date was June 21, so I've been here for
- 10 about seven months.
- 11 Q. June 21 of 2021?
- 12 A. 2021, yes.
- 13 Q. Okay. I was trying to do math in my head, and I'm like let
- 14 me put a year out there. All right. And so are you a line pilot?
- 15 A check pilot?
- 16 A. Just a line pilot.
- 17 Q. A line pilot, okay. Do you guys do lines here or reserve or
- 18 just --
- 19 A. No, it's just kind of all one pool, so --
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. -- basically we have five days on, two days off and then any
- 22 days that we're not scheduled to fly we're on standby.
- 23 Essentially basically we're, you know, we're available for call
- 24 out if they need us, so --
- 25 Q. Okay. How long of a call out to they give you?

1 A. So like it's supposed to be an hour. We're supposed to be
2 within an hour drive of the airport --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- no matter what during those five days on if we're, you
5 know, in base. Typically, you know, it's like the next day. I've
6 only had like one flight where they've called me out and been
7 like, hey, get to the airport as soon as possible, so --

8 Q. Okay. All right. I assume you have airmen certificates and
9 type ratings?

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. What are those?

12 A. Commercial multi instrument, CFI, CFII and MEI.

13 Q. And any type ratings?

14 A. Learjet SIC.

15 Q. Okay. Medical certificate?

16 A. Yes, first class medical.

17 Q. Any limitations?

18 A. No.

19 Q. All right. Lucky you. Wish I was young. Now this is the
20 toughest question, so if you don't know it's okay, but do you have
21 an idea of about your total flight time?

22 A. I think I just passed 1,500 hours, so I'm like 1,530, 1,540.

23 Q. Okay. And this is probably the toughest yet. Any idea how
24 much time you have in the Baron?

25 A. I think 80 to 90 hours.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Somewhere in that ball park.

3 Q. See, you got the toughest questions out of the way now. Now
4 it's all easy from here. Can you kind of give me a nice cliff
5 notes version if you will of your aviation history?

6 A. Sure. I went to Ohio State, did their flight training
7 program there. That was -- I started that in 2015, so I did four
8 years of flight training, got all the way through commercial CFI,
9 then turned around and instructed for Ohio State for about a year-
10 and-a-half, got my CFII and MEI while I was doing that. Built up
11 about 1,100 hours, and then while I was in college I did an
12 internship with AirNet, so I was just like in the office doing
13 paperwork stuff and kind of learning the background there, and
14 then that's kind of how I got introduced to AirNet and then when I
15 got my hours, I interviewed and got hired here, so -- and I've
16 been flying here in the Baron and the Learjet ever since.

17 Q. Okay. Excellent. Now is it Ohio State or is it the
18 Ohio State?

19 A. No, it's the Ohio State.

20 Q. I just wanted to make sure because that's what I was always
21 told, so, all right.

22 A. It's only informal settings.

23 Q. All right.

24 A. Or during football games.

25 Q. Exactly. That's usually where I hear it.

1 A. Yup.

2 Q. Very loudly pronounced, so -- all right. Let's kind of start
3 easing in if you will now to AirNet, kind of help me understand
4 the structure here. Who's in your chain of command?

5 A. So when I'm in the -- I guess technically anybody that's more
6 senior than me I kind of see it as, you know, an authority figure,
7 so like if I'm flying in the Baron, you know, a captain, you know,
8 I default to them for a decision -- well, not -- if I'm PIC then I
9 default, you know, I'm the decision maker obviously, but, you
10 know, if I have a question, whatever, I'll default to them, and
11 then I guess for an actual company structure above me would be
12 like our chief pilot which is Tom Harmon, and then our DO, Brandon
13 which I think you've been talking with, right? And then really I
14 guess any of the operations guys so our flight dispatches, like
15 Michael Ott and Rick Shore. Yeah, they're the ones that have, you
16 know, operational control and can kind of I guess for lack of a
17 better term boss us around a little bit.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Does that answer your question?

20 Q. It does. It helps me because I don't know AirNet.

21 A. Right.

22 Q. So it kind of helps me understand how the system is for you
23 guys and kind of helps me move along because we want to make sure
24 we interview the right people as well, so it helps. So thank you.
25 In your opinion, how would you classify pilot staffing here at

1 AirNet? Do you guys feel like you're adequately staffed or is it,
2 I'm flying all the time, we're understaffed?

3 A. In the bit that I've been here, it seems like there's a bit
4 of an ebb and flow, so like when I got hired it was right at the
5 end of covid, and they had retained like all their pilots, and it
6 didn't seem like there was a staffing shortage at all because, you
7 know, they had a bunch of pilots for the amount of flying they
8 did. Right when I got hired people started leaving because, you
9 know, things were opening back up, better opportunities, and, you
10 know, we were flying quite a bit, so like I think in December I
11 had like 95 hours flying time, and I was pretty tired during that.
12 And then, you know, they're starting to bolster back up and
13 recently it hasn't been that I haven't felt like I've been, you
14 know, stretched too thin.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. But, yeah, so --

17 Q. About how many hours a month would you normally -- how many
18 hours a month do you typically get?

19 A. I think I've been averaging besides December I think I've
20 been doing right around 50 to 55.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So not a whole lot -- that's what they, you know, they
23 advertise you're guaranteed 55 hours a month, and I think they hit
24 that pretty well.

25 Q. Okay. All right. So that month you hit 90-some hours, did

1 that -- are you salaried or is that --

2 A. Yeah, it's salaried, but then they break down your salary
3 into an hourly rate based on that 55 hours, and then every hour
4 you fly over that 55 hours you get that hourly rate.

5 Q. Okay. Great. That helps so I appreciate that. Do you know
6 about how many pilots AirNet has?

7 A. I think it's -- I think we're like 15 to 20 here in Columbus
8 and then in St. Louis I think it's -- I want to say 10-ish. I
9 don't know, have an exact number.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I could pull up our schedule and count it if you want.

12 Q. Oh, it's all good. Brandon can get that for me as well. I
13 just kind of like to understand from your perspective about how
14 many. Are you based here, then, in --

15 A. Yes, I'm based here in Columbus.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Since they have two pilot bases, are they
17 both -- do you know if the St. Louis pilots, do they have their
18 own chief pilot out there or is it still --

19 A. No, everything operations wise is here in Columbus. There,
20 it's just a crew base out there.

21 Q. Okay. If you had a concern, you were out flying the line or,
22 you know, flying with a pilot, or weather, airplane, some concern,
23 how would you communicate that?

24 A. I would literally just pick up the phone and call Tom,
25 Brandon. If neither of them picked up, I'd start calling like

1 Mike, the -- I guess the chief dispatcher I'd say. They're
2 supposed to be on call like 24/7 for us, so, you know, if our
3 dispatch ends at like 1:00 a.m. and then they get in at 6:00 a.m.,
4 so if we're out flying in that gap, you know, they're supposed to
5 be on call and answering phones if we have any questions like
6 that, so --

7 Q. All right. Do they typically answer the call or do you have
8 to kind of --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- go down the --

11 A. For the most part. I -- I think there's only been once or
12 twice for like my first person that I called didn't answer, and I
13 called the next person and they picked up right away, so --

14 Q. All right.

15 A. -- usually -- because like Tom and Brandon fly themselves, so
16 usually if it's like, you know, a Sunday or Monday when
17 everybody's kind of out flying, you know, they might be in the air
18 and, you know, not able to answer their phone or they might be
19 asleep given, you know, what time it is, but --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- yeah.

22 Q. Do you normally do most of your flying is at daytime?
23 Nighttime?

24 A. It's a pretty even split, I'd say. I think I got half my
25 Learjet time at night right now. Yeah, I mean, obviously during

1 the winter when the sun goes down early, you know, we fly mostly
2 like, you know, afternoon into the evening into the, you know, way
3 into the night. There's some routes we do where it takes off at
4 like midnight and get back at, you know, 5:00, 6:00 a.m. or
5 whatever, but, yeah, it's a pretty good mix of daytime and
6 nighttime.

7 Q. Okay. So we're talking about if you had concerns you'd reach
8 out to your chief pilot or the director of ops.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Have you ever had to do that, you know -- let me rephrase
11 that. I know you said you had done it for the few times it had to
12 go to the second person. Give me some ideas or just kind of
13 general topics, what would you call them about?

14 A. One of the times I had to call was actually like my first I
15 guess winter flight. I think it was a Saturday night and the
16 Baron was left in the hangar which they do for us, so like prep
17 the airplane fuel it and everything and then stick it back in the
18 hangar, and then we show up on, you know, Saturday night, nobody's
19 in the office, nobody's here, and we have to like open the hangar
20 door and pull it out. I didn't know that, and I'm just like,
21 well, the Baron's kind of heavy to pull by hand. See, I was just
22 like is somebody supposed to come and pull this out for us and I
23 think I called Tom and he's like, no, you guys can do it. You
24 know, it's a little heavy, but it's doable, so we opened the
25 hangar and pulled it out and left, so that was kind of a benign

1 thing. One of the other ones was actually when I flew with
2 Amanda. It was the week before the accident. We were going into
3 -- or leaving Columbus to go to St. Louis. We were just
4 repositioning for the night and there's, you know, forecast icing
5 in the area, and neither her nor I really had much experience with
6 icing at all, so I just wanted a second opinion on, you know, the
7 forecast and, you know, make sure I'm not missing any pertinent
8 information to make a good decision, so I called -- I think I
9 called Tom first. He didn't pick up, and then I called Brandon,
10 and he basically said, you know, he's like, all right, just give
11 me a minute. I'm going to hang up and check the weather myself,
12 and then he called back a few minutes later and he's just like,
13 yeah, this is what I'm seeing, I think you guys will be okay, you
14 know, just kind of keep this in mind. If you have to go somewhere
15 else, you know, this is kind of what I'm thinking, and we were
16 pretty much on the same page, so --

17 Q. Okay. Have you ever posed a question to him that they didn't
18 know the answer and they had to go look it up? I know you just
19 gave me an example of Brandon needing to hang up to look at the
20 weather --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- but --

23 A. I don't think I've ever had a question where they didn't
24 necessarily know the answer. I mean, there's some -- there is one
25 time in particular where -- so basically for our hazmat operation

1 if like the transport index or whatever is too high for the
2 airplane, basically we have to survey it and make sure like the
3 radiation level's, you know, on track, get too far into the weeds
4 because I don't understand completely the weeds either, but
5 basically you need essentially a Geiger counter to make sure, you
6 know, just to survey the airplane to make sure the radiation level
7 isn't too high -- or not necessarily too high, you're just
8 observing it, right, so that way it gets recorded properly so that
9 your exposures are recorded properly. We're flying out to Denver,
10 and I had never needed a survey meter on this route before, so I
11 didn't bring one, and it turns out they started shipping more
12 boxes and we ended up needing one, so I called Tom and he's just
13 like, never had this happen before, so he basically said like,
14 well, the best thing you can do at this point is just load
15 everything and then fly it back, and then as soon as you land,
16 leave everything as it is and take the survey so at least we have
17 the information. That was about the closest I've been to him like
18 not knowing.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And it was just kind of like an odd ball scenario pops up and
21 he had to work through what the best way to handle it was. It
22 wasn't necessarily that he didn't know.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So --

25 Q. That helps. Okay. Hearing that typically they're good at

1 getting responses to you.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Do you feel at that time you had to call do we need to pull
6 the aircraft out of the hangar, somebody coming to pull it out,
7 did you feel like Tom was more really, come on, guys, or was it,
8 oh, well, no, here's what we do. Was it more open arms if you
9 will or --

10 A. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Tom is very good about that, you
11 know, understanding that, you know, newer pilots might not
12 necessarily -- especially like the less trivial, but -- what's the
13 word I'm looking for -- you know, things you might not have
14 experienced being a newer pilot, he's very, you know,
15 understanding that it might not be as obvious to some people as to
16 other more experienced pilots, especially like the company's
17 goings on.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. He was totally fine with things like, oh, yeah, this is what
20 we do, so --

21 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. Good. Does AirNet, does it have an
22 ASAP or a FOQA or anything --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- or --

25 A. We have an ASAP program.

1 Q. Have you ever used it?

2 A. Once.

3 Q. How did that work for you? Was it what you expected? Was
4 it --

5 A. It was -- I mean, the situation was pretty benign. It kind
6 of ended up being a non-event, but just a, you know, CYA I filled
7 one out anyways and, you know, I told the guy I was flying with to
8 fill one out, and he actually was an ASAP member, a committee
9 member, so, yeah, pretty much we just agreed that we were going to
10 fill one out and then, yeah, so just went online, filled out the
11 form, and he was like my committee member, the guy that I was
12 flying with, so he gave me a call and was like, hey, yeah, you
13 know, we got the application and, you know, you're all -- you're
14 good. I doubt anything will come out of it and, you know, I
15 didn't hear any follow up. There's nothing like from the FAA or
16 anything like that, so --

17 Q. Okay. All right. Do you feel like the -- I know you used it
18 once and it was benign, but do you feel like all pilots feel it's
19 a usable system? Do they have apprehension of, gee, if I write
20 this up and --

21 A. Not that I've --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- observed from anybody. Not many people like talk about,
24 you know, things they, you know, submit or that they did submit or
25 whatever, but, yeah, I haven't heard anybody say like I'm not

1 submitting because I don't want it to come back at me or whatever.
2 They make it pretty clear that, you know, it's for our benefit and
3 it's there to help us, and help everybody else, too, so --

4 Q. All right. Do they communicate the deidentified information
5 out to you guys to learn from, you know, somebody made an altitude
6 deviation or somebody did an approach wrong because of something.
7 Do they put that out so you guys can kind of understand what's
8 going on or --

9 A. Not that I've seen. I haven't seen any information come out
10 of the committee in that way.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. It seems like most of those kind of events people, you know,
13 it just kind of makes the rounds anyways.

14 Q. Right. Okay.

15 A. But, yeah, it's a pretty tight kind of group of pilots.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Since it's a tight group of pilots, is
17 there a list or any known issues, like is there a list of pilots
18 saying I do not want to fly with this person, or can you refuse a
19 pilot? Help me -- do they have that kind of situation here at
20 all?

21 A. There's no like hard and fast list that I'm aware of. I
22 know, you know, I don't think there's anybody that like straight
23 out refuses to fly with anybody else. I know, you know, some
24 people, you know, their personalities don't mesh as well as
25 others, you know, you're going to get that in any job, yeah.

1 There's certain individuals who, you know, are super well-liked by
2 anybody, you know. It's a normal job like that. You're going to
3 kind of have those interpersonal issues, but for the most part,
4 everybody is pretty respectful of each other and, you know, gets
5 along and works well together.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. You know, everybody understands when you get down to it, you
8 know, we've got to fly the airplane and fly safely obviously,
9 but --

10 Q. Okay. Good. I know pilots, we always put self-imposed
11 pressures on ourselves, but do you ever feel any pressure coming
12 from the company to complete a flight or, you know, you really
13 need to get there because of --

14 A. I've never experienced like, you know, get this done or it's
15 your job. They do not do that here. You know, I think they kind
16 of -- you know, they definitely encourage you, like, hey, get this
17 done, you know, it is, you know, like it is your responsibility to
18 complete the flight, but they're never, you know, threatening in
19 any manner. And I think a lot of pilots, you know, kind of put
20 self-imposed pressures on themselves, you know, myself included
21 because they kind of understand that expectation, but if you say
22 like, no, I don't like the weather, I'm not going there, you know,
23 I don't like what's going on with this airplane, they've never
24 been -- they've never come after anybody as far as I've seen
25 because of making those decisions. They understand that, you

1 know, PIC decision to go or no go, that's that --

2 Q. Okay. Good. Have you ever yourself refused a flight or an
3 airplane?

4 A. No. I've never outright refused. There was one flight it
5 was right after the accident, Tom wanted me to go with him just
6 kind of, you know, kind of get back on the horse, but it was like
7 two days after, you know, and I was still pretty shaken up and it
8 was in the Baron. I mean, it was, you know, a decent weather
9 night, you know, whatever should have been, no problem. The
10 flight ended up getting cancelled anyways, but I think that's the
11 only time where I like refused. I was just like I'm not ready,
12 you know, I just need a few more days, but --

13 Q. Did they understand?

14 A. Yeah, yeah, they didn't put any pressure on me to get back
15 into flying or anything like that, and so --

16 Q. Okay. I think I got a pretty good picture, but I always like
17 to hear, to make sure I understand the picture, but how would you
18 classify the work environment here? Is it hostile at all? Is it
19 completely open door, open arm concept? Kind of help me
20 understand the work environment.

21 A. I'd say for the most part it's open, you know, open arms, you
22 know. I'm not exactly sure how to phrase it, but, you know, I've
23 never felt any hostility, you know, as long as you kind of have
24 the right attitude, you know, understand that, you know, we're
25 kind of, you know, we're freight dogs, and I'm using air quotes

1 for the record, so it's understood that, you know, we're -- you
2 know, part of the job is dealing with inconveniences, you know,
3 dealing with late work, dealing with bad weather, middle of the
4 night, so as long as you kind of have that attitude of, all right,
5 you know, let's just get the job done, get home kind of thing, you
6 know, nobody's coming after you, you know. Does that answer --

7 Q. It does. It helps.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. I get what you're saying. I just -- that's the picture I was
10 pulling, but I wanted to make sure I had the picture you were
11 drawing for me clear enough, so it's always nice to just make
12 sure, so I appreciate that. Has there ever been any event -- I
13 know it's kind of a small pilot group, you said earlier,
14 everything kind of spreads like wildfire almost -- I'm
15 paraphrasing what you said, but has there ever been a time where a
16 pilot, the famous got called on the carpet for something, and
17 reprimanded by management that you're aware of?

18 A. Not that I'm aware of. There's been one event with a pilot
19 where I was actually in the plane with him, and they just got
20 behind the airplane and kind of rushed it to the ground. Like
21 they pulled in the approach too tight essentially and exceeded the
22 limitation of the airplane a little bit, but I didn't -- you know,
23 I was very close -- you know, I was right on the edge of calling a
24 go around, but he pulled it off, and, you know, I got -- that kind
25 of made the rounds a little bit, and then I got a call because it

1 made it back to the operations staff, you know, and they just
2 wanted to talk and understand, you know, exactly what happened
3 because, you know, it's like a game of telephone, you know, it
4 gets exaggerated and I think by the time it made it back which I
5 should have, you know, kind of told them about that right on the
6 onset, but by the time it made it back it made it sound a lot
7 worse than it actually was.

8 Q. And you're surprised?

9 A. So, yeah, I just kind of set the record straight with that,
10 and I don't know if they followed up with him. I think -- because
11 I think he was in recurrent training and flight safety anyway, so
12 I think after that they kind of just did a flight or two with him.
13 I don't know exactly what happened, but --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah, I think they addressed it. I'm not sure.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. You'd have to ask them.

18 Q. I think -- pilots talk, we all do.

19 A. Right.

20 Q. You know, and especially a small pilot group, like you said,
21 it's like telephone. It gets added onto just a little bit, so I
22 just -- I wasn't sure what everybody could hear and everything
23 was, so I appreciate that. Let's kind of talk a little bit about
24 training if you will.

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. When was your last time you had recurrent -- have you had a
2 recurrent yet?

3 A. Yeah, we did a six month recurrent or I did a six month
4 recurrent, it was -- I forget what the reg numbers were for it,
5 but it was basically ground over all the company's SOPs, over all
6 of the Baron information, and then did a flight check in a Baron,
7 and used that as my six month -- or I was coming up on like six
8 months for instrument currency so I used that to reset that, so --

9 Q. Okay. Instrument currency, you bring that up. That's a
10 little later down here in my question, but since you bring it up,
11 how hard is it to keep current with instrument?

12 A. I mean, every six months we're supposed to be doing a check
13 ride of some sort, so it shouldn't be an issue. I think I had all
14 the approaches I needed, it's just that on the line I haven't had
15 a hold, so to fulfill the holding requirement so in training and
16 the check ride, you know, you do a hold, so that was really all I
17 needed to fulfill that, but other than -- I mean, I got -- you
18 know, I've done plenty of instrument approaches, you know, so I
19 think most people are more than proficient on that.

20 Q. Okay. When you do your recurrent flight, is it day, night?

21 A. It's during the day, pretty much whatever the conditions are.
22 I mean, like obviously if it's like, you know, straight out
23 thunderstorm or heavy icing or whatever, you know, they'll just
24 say let's do it another day, but if it's, you know VMC, IMC,
25 whatever, they'll go up and train in it.

1 Q. When you did yours, do you remember was it VFR? IFR?

2 A. For this last recurrent I did one training flight just to
3 kind of review, and, you know, everything was fine, and then did
4 the check ride, and both days it happened to be VFR.

5 Q. How do they simulate instrument conditions or do you?

6 A. So for the one approach he like took the sun visor and just
7 put it down and he's like I'm not going to make you wear anything,
8 but that's your simulated instrument.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Just so I couldn't like see the runaway and everything out in
11 front, but, yeah, typically they don't make you wear like view
12 limiting devices or anything like that.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Do you go up and do unusual attitudes or
14 anything like that?

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. Do you do that VFR or simulated IFR?

17 A. I think for this last one there wasn't any kind of view
18 limiting device or anything. It was just VFR, whatever the
19 conditions were.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yeah, so we happened to be in VMC at the time and did them.

22 Q. All right. Was that -- is it hard to do them with a view
23 limiting device than VFR or --

24 A. It's been a long time since I've done them in -- with a --
25 we'll just call it a hood.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. I've done it with a hood on. I don't think they're really
3 any harder one way or the other. I mean, I think the limitation
4 of the exercise is you know that the unusual latitude's coming so
5 you're like, well, I've got a 50/50 shot if it's nose up or nose
6 down, and then you're just, you know, figure that out and then
7 recover. Also never really had one happen to me in real life that
8 I had to, you know, to deduce and fix it.

9 Q. Okay. All right. The Baron has a -- is it a single yoke or
10 is it two yokes?

11 A. Depends on which airplane you're in. Some of them, and I
12 think we're moving towards getting all of them retro fitted with
13 dual yokes now, but some of them have -- I'd say it's -- before
14 the accident it was two or three Barons had dual yokes, and then
15 the rest of the fleet which is like another five or six had single
16 yokes.

17 Q. Okay. So a single yoke airplane, does that add complexity
18 when you're flying with somebody that's newish here?

19 A. Can you define complexity?

20 Q. Sure, let me reset the stage. So you guys do 135 and 91
21 flights, Part 91 flights, right?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. And if you're flying with somebody who's not qualified to do
24 a 135 flight because they don't have the minimum requirements,
25 then I'm under the impression, and please correct me if I'm wrong,

1 that they do the Part 91 leg.

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. When they do that, the yoke's in their hands, and so you as
4 the non -- as the pilot monitoring has no yoke in front of you.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Does that add any concerns to you being able to -- because
7 you don't know maybe their experience level?

8 A. Right. I think initially, yeah, it's kind of -- kind of
9 sketches you out a little bit. I mean, especially me as a CFI
10 just not having the controls there.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. In general just not having any way to control the airplane
13 there is a little bit of concern. All of the flights that I did
14 before I had my 135 mins, you know, whenever I flew with somebody,
15 I was flying the 91 leg, you know, and then they're, you know,
16 more qualified, air quotes again person, you know, they're flying
17 the 135 leg, so they've more senior to me, so I was a bit more
18 comfortable with that knowing that they had, you know, seen all
19 the stuff, been through it, that kind of thing. But, yeah, it
20 definitely concerns me a little bit, especially now with the
21 possibility of flying with, you know, newer guys coming and being
22 that person that's sitting in the right seat on the 91 legs and
23 not having any control like that.

24 Q. You said seated in the right seat on the 91. So is it always
25 -- do you always fly from the left seat?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah, it's company policy in the Baron, and it even says in
4 the training slides that throwing the yoke over is prohibited, so
5 whoever's in the left seat, they're PIC, they're making, you know,
6 they're doing everything basically.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I don't doubt if things got really, really bad whoever's in
9 the right seat might be like, all right, let's, you know, but to
10 my knowledge I don't think that's ever happened.

11 Q. Okay. You've never thrown the -- had the yoke thrown?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I've never even, you know, done it on the ground to see how
15 it works.

16 Q. I take it they don't even teach how to throw it?

17 A. Nope.

18 Q. Okay. Okay. When you're seated in the right seat, is there
19 a push to talk switch so you can do the radios for them or is it
20 all on the left side?

21 A. Again I think that depends on the aircraft. I know in the
22 past there was at least one airplane that didn't have a push to
23 talk, but I think and I'm not sure, but I think all of them have
24 since had one added, so there is one. It's like down underneath
25 the panel where like your headphone jack is. I think they all

1 have a button now on the right side at least, so whoever's in the
2 right seat can do radios.

3 Q. Is there a way to do that from the left seat, the push to
4 talk? I assume there's one on the yoke?

5 A. Yes. Yeah, yeah.

6 Q. But it -- I know this has never happened, but if the yoke was
7 thrown to the right seater for some reason, is there a way for the
8 left seater to -- do they have a push to talk over there at all?

9 A. I don't think there's one separate from the one on the yoke.

10 Q. Okay. Okay. All right. That helps. I appreciate that. So
11 let's start kind of easing in. I know you're here because, you
12 know, you're a pilot here so you can help me understand some of
13 the procedures which I appreciate, but you also I understand had
14 flown with, and I think you said a little bit ago you flew with
15 Amanda the week prior.

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Did you ever fly with George?

18 A. Yeah, I did essentially the same trip towards the beginning
19 of December with him.

20 Q. Essentially the same trip as --

21 A. So like the one that they were on, and the one that I did the
22 week before with Amanda I did with George as well. So basically
23 what they would do is take a crew pairing for the Baron and then
24 send them out. They'd reposition them out to St. Louis either on
25 a Saturday, or I think in this case it was a Friday, Friday night,

1 and then they do the route number 247, so 108 -- route 108 is from
2 Rickenbacker to St. Louis, the Spirit of St. Louis and then back,
3 but they'll split that up and you just fly the first leg out to
4 reposition, and then you do route 247 which is now route 270 --
5 they renamed it, which is from Spirit of St. Louis to Denver
6 Centennial and back and you do that in one night, and then you're
7 on rest, and then depending on what they need, you either do that
8 like two nights in a row, and then the following night you do the
9 last leg of 108 and come home. You come home, I think, depending
10 on what you're doing, like Tuesday or Wednesday morning, and then
11 that's usually your week, so you start on, you know, Saturday
12 night, and you're done by Wednesday morning or whatever. See, I
13 did that stint, air quotes again, with each of them, George early
14 December and Amanda the week before.

15 Q. Okay. Now let's go back to December then when you flew with
16 George.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. And I know that's been two plus months ago, so details may
19 not be as crisp as they were, and that's okay. How would you
20 classify his skills of flying, you know, handling the Baron,
21 flying that route?

22 A. There was nothing out of the ordinary that struck me as like,
23 you know, really, really good or really, really bad. He just kind
24 of seemed average at it. We didn't encounter that much adverse
25 weather. I think we picked up a little bit of ice in Centennial,

1 but not enough to appreciably change the performance of the
2 aircraft, so, yeah, he just seemed like a very calm demeanor, kind
3 of safe pilot. He was a little bit I don't want to say rusty
4 because rusty implies having not done something for a while, but,
5 you know, you could tell he was new. It's like using foreflight
6 and using the avionics in the airplane, just kind of navigating.
7 We have the Garmin G600s I think, the touch screen GPSes in there,
8 and just kind of like knowing like the menu pages and how to
9 navigate that. He was kind of slow on which, you know, nothing
10 that struck me as, you know, bad or incompetent, just, you know,
11 he's new, you know, kind of struggled through it the first couple
12 times and eventually kind of get the memory of how to program it
13 and everything, so --

14 Q. Okay. Okay. So the flight from Spirit to Centennial, was
15 that a -- do you recall if that was a 135 or a 91 leg?

16 A. So all of the ones going from Spirit to Centennial are 91
17 legs.

18 Q. Oh, okay.

19 A. Yeah. So we fly out empty, pick up cargo, and then bring it
20 back to the Spirit of St. Louis.

21 Q. And you do that all in one night?

22 A. Yeah, and take off I think it's 6:00 -- somewhere around
23 6:00 p.m. central time, land in Centennial. It's about a four
24 hour flight, so just before 10:00 is what they aim because I think
25 the pickup for the cargo is at 10:00 and then fly back. Yeah, and

1 you're getting in usually between like 3:00 and
2 4:00 a.m. in I guess Central time.

3 Q. Okay. That gives you some hours pretty quick then.

4 A. Yeah, yeah.

5 Q. Especially if you do that two nights straight.

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. Okay. So on that leg when he was -- I guess if it was a 91
8 and he was with you, so I'm guessing he was probably the flying
9 pilot out?

10 A. Right. He did -- when I flew with him, he had all of his 135
11 time. As far as I know, he like, you know, had all the paperwork
12 and everything done and that's what he told me, so the first time
13 -- so we did 247 two nights in a row. First night he flew the 91
14 legs and then he wanted to swap the second night, or I think he
15 gave me the options. I was like, all right, if you want to fly
16 out that's fine so we swapped and I flew the 91 leg and he flew
17 the 135 back, just kind of move him around so he gets an -- you
18 know, experience, you know, kind of doing an approach and whatever
19 into each airport, so, yeah, that's what we did.

20 Q. Okay. When he was flying and you were -- did he fly from --
21 is it company policy that you have to fly from the left seat, is
22 that correct?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. So he was in the left seat, you were in the right
25 flying out. Did he use -- well, let me ask -- back up one step

1 further. Do you recall -- I know you said you picked up some
2 icing you thought going into Centennial. Was it IFR? VFR flight?
3 A. I mean, all of our company flights are IFR. Pretty much the
4 only time we do anything VFR is if we take off and pick up our
5 clearance in the air in like an uncontrolled field, then
6 obviously, you know, we take off VFR, whatever. So we were on an
7 IFR flight plan. I think the ceiling was between like 1 and 2,000
8 AGL out there, so whatever that is in MSL. And ATC put us up at
9 10,000 feet momentarily for traffic which put us up in the clouds.
10 That's where we picked up the ice, and then, you know, we started
11 the approach and, you know, quickly got back underneath it and
12 were able to land pretty much VFR, like I don't remember, you
13 know, if the pattern or, you know, final approach fix or whatever,
14 I don't remember any of those details, you know, exactly where we
15 broke out, but it wasn't like we were shooting approach down to
16 anywhere close to mins.

17 Q. Okay. Did he use the autopilot at all? Was it hand flying?

18 A. So normally, and I think this -- I don't remember
19 specifically, but I think what happens was, you know, for the in
20 route state, you know, you just put it on altitude and nav mode on
21 the autopilot and let it fly the straight line, and then usually
22 when we start getting vectors for an approach, you'd click it off
23 and hand fly it and I think that's what he did. I don't --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- remember exactly. I don't think he coupled it onto an

1 approach at all. I think he hand flew it from when we started
2 getting vectors and --

3 Q. Okay. And how was his handling ability of the airplane in
4 the clouds vectoring around, things like that?

5 A. Nothing stuck out to me as like this is scary. Yeah, I
6 didn't think anything was like super remarkable or, you know, you
7 just -- he seemed fine. I was pretty much picking up the slack
8 on, you know, the radios programming approach, whatever, and just
9 kind of walking him through everything, so, yeah, I was trying to
10 make it so all he had to do was fly the plane and I thought he did
11 fine on that.

12 Q. Okay. Did the company have a policy on autopilot usage? Do
13 they require you to use it? Do they tell you you can't turn it on
14 until a certain altitude?

15 A. There's limits on when you can activate it and when it needs
16 to be deactivated. I think on departure if I'm remembering
17 correctly it's -- can't turn it on below 1,000 feet, and then for
18 an approach, it needs to be turned off by 200 feet, so basically
19 minimums on when you should be transitioning and the landing, but,
20 yeah, as far as anything else like that, you know, there's no --
21 nothing from the company that says like you need to hand fly
22 approaches or anything. It's just kind of what people do, you
23 know. You just flew three hours on the autopilot, you know,
24 unless the weather's really, really bad where, you know, you need
25 to do the precision approach or whatever, most people like to hand

1 fly it and kind of get that experience, so --

2 Q. Okay. And I don't mean to put words in your mouth, but that
3 seemed to be how George did it? He liked to hand fly it or --

4 A. From what I remember, yeah, he was kind of -- did it the way
5 that everybody else does it.

6 Q. Okay. Do you guys have to wear headsets or can you do it
7 without headsets? Is there a requirement?

8 A. I don't think there's a requirement. I've never seen anybody
9 not wear a headset

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Those airplanes are pretty dang loud and I don't think
12 anybody's ever not been like furnished with a headset. I should
13 be more specific. Like nobody's not had a headset, so like they
14 provide their own.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And I know in the Learjets at least there is like a spare
17 headset and, you know, we have like a little crate in the back
18 with extra supplies and, you know, documents and all that stuff
19 just in case, you know, one breaks on the road you can use that.

20 Q. Okay. All right. So it kind of helps me understand George a
21 little bit. Now let's think about the flight the week before the
22 accident --

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. -- when you flew with Amanda. What can you recall about
25 that? How was her abilities to handle the airplane, weather,

1 flying and all of that?

2 A. Um-hum. So the worst weather we had was the first night, you
3 know, I mentioned it previously when I had to call Brandon just
4 get a second set of eyes on the weather and everything, and that
5 was a 91 leg, and she -- I think she had her or she was very close
6 to getting her PIC time, but she didn't have the paperwork so she
7 was like supposed to fly the 91 legs, but that night she asked me
8 to fly it because of how bad the weather looked. I said that's
9 fine, I'm actually a little more comfortable with that anyways,
10 especially because it was a single yoke aircraft that we were in,
11 so I flew it out and, you know, she ran the radios, set up the
12 approaches in the GPS and everything. I think it kind of struck
13 me, you know, the same with her as it was with George, that, you
14 know, she was still getting used to the avionics and kind of where
15 everything was and how to set it up and everything, but nothing to
16 the point where it was, you know, same as George, nothing that,
17 you know, struck me as, you know, a red flag. I flew the first
18 night out. We did pickup, you know, a decent amount of ice to
19 where it did really affect the performance of the airplane about
20 the last 30 or 40 miles coming into St. Louis. Yeah, we landed,
21 and then the next night, you know, that kind of weather system
22 moved through and then for the next -- I think we were out there
23 just one more night so we did 247 once to Centennial and back, and
24 that was pretty much, you know, fine. She did, and she told me
25 that she's like -- she said that this was the first time she had

1 ever experienced an autopilot and using one, and the first night
2 when we went out to Centennial, she went to engage the autopilot,
3 and I don't -- I didn't see like what setting she put it on or
4 anything, but she seemed to be like fighting it a little bit
5 because it was trying to do something that she didn't want it to
6 do, so she was like manually just holding the airplane back, and
7 eventually she clicked it off, you know, and reset it and it was
8 fine, and I kind of walked her through to make sure that, you
9 know, the right settings were on and verify that they're activated
10 and engaged, and that was the only time that I saw her like
11 struggle with that. After that, you know, it was fine. Hand
12 flying abilities, you know, kind of just like George. There's
13 nothing that really struck me as, you know, really, really good or
14 really, really bad. She seemed fine to me. She said that she had
15 some experience as a CFII and IMC, and then on one of our
16 departures when she was flying, you know, we went through like a
17 cloud layer and she even asked me, she was like we were in IMC,
18 and I was like, yeah, we were in it for about a minute. She was
19 like, oh, good, because she wasn't even looking outside, she was
20 just, you know, focused on her instruments. Yeah, nothing kind of
21 out of the ordinary. I just kind of thought, you know, those
22 little things, you know, they kind of get worked out as they get
23 more experience. Does that answer all of it?

24 Q. It helps. It does.

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. It helps a lot. Do pilots usually tell you how much, if
2 they're low IMC time, you know, low actual IFR time?

3 A. No. I mean, like, you know, we're just like sitting in
4 there, you know, whoever you're with, you just kind of talk to
5 them and see, you know, when you're getting to know somebody, oh,
6 yeah, you know, how'd you do your training, what's your
7 experience, that kind of stuff. You know, I don't sit there and
8 interrogate anybody on, you know, what exactly have you done, how
9 good are you, you know, that kind of thing. But, you know, just
10 kind of get to know each other, you know, know what your
11 background is, and that was something that came out. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay. Now you had mentioned that she wasn't too familiar
13 with autopilot. This was the first autopilot she's used or
14 however you said it. And you said something like you weren't sure
15 how she had it set, she was kind of fighting it a little bit so
16 she took it off. Did she understand what she was doing after she
17 took it off or was there a -- did you kind of have to I don't want
18 to say walk her through it, but, you know, what was your
19 understanding of it.

20 A. See, and this is one of those things where, you know, it's
21 been so long that the memory isn't super clear. It's not like we
22 sat there and had an in-depth chat on exactly, you know, how the
23 autopilot works. I guess to be more clear, she hadn't experienced
24 using it. She hadn't been in an aircraft with an autopilot until
25 she came to the company.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So everything she flew prior to that I guess didn't have
3 autopilots. But, yeah, it was just kind of a fleeting thing
4 where, you know, she turned it on, you know, it wasn't doing what
5 she wanted, so she turned it off, and then I think I told her, I'm
6 just like, you know, make sure it's on nav. It might have been
7 heading mode, and I think we were still climbing so I said just
8 leave it in pitch mode and then flip it on and it, you know, was
9 doing what it was supposed to be doing after that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I think that was about it on, you know, that situation.

12 Q. Okay. All right. That helps.

13 A. I kind of see it, you know, when I'm there with those newer
14 guys, you know, I'm not necessarily like a trainer or a teacher,
15 you know. I'll answer any questions, let them do experience,
16 whatever they want to do, but, you know, I'm not going to sit
17 there and harp on them for knowing or not knowing unless it's
18 really, really bad which I haven't experienced yet, so --

19 Q. Okay. Just so I understand how you turn on the autopilot in
20 the Baron, can you kind of walk me through your flying, you're
21 hand flying, now you want to put the autopilot on. Kind of walk
22 me through how would you turn that on?

23 A. Right. Do you want me to pull up the cockpit?

24 Q. If that helps you, sure, feel free.

25 A. If I can find one in a reasonable amount of time. Yeah, so

1 this isn't the greatest picture, but -- so like up here is I guess
2 the status of the autopilot --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- so like if you have heading mode, nav, whatever, there's a
5 light that comes on that says, you know, it's armed or captured or
6 whatever, and then down here -- so this is the pilot side yoke.
7 Those switches behind the yoke there are the autopilot switches,
8 and that has, you know, like heading, nav, back course, all that
9 stuff, and then there's a switch that's kind of like a light
10 switch, so to engage the autopilot, you select the modes you want,
11 so if you're, you know, straight and level and you want to do nav
12 or heading, you hit heading and nav, and that brings up the flight
13 director on the attitude indicator there, and then you flip the
14 light switch on essentially, and that engages the autopilot.
15 It'll do --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- whatever.

18 Q. Okay. Do you guys normally not have the flight director on
19 until you're getting ready to engage the autopilot?

20 A. It depends on what you're doing. In the Baron typically I
21 don't turn it on until I'm ready to like activate the autopilot.
22 Some people like to fly, you know, with the flight director on all
23 the time. I just think for departure, you know, you've got so
24 many different things going on, you know, I just like to, you
25 know, fly how I learned to fly and not use it, but some people

1 like to, you know, use the heading mode and everything, and as far
2 as I remember, Amanda was kind of in the same boat that I was,
3 that, you know, just kind of get up in the air until, you know,
4 the tasks lessen a little bit, and then kind of sort things out,
5 get the autopilot on and then keep moving.

6 Q. All right. How about George? Do you remember -- I know that
7 was several months ago --

8 A. Right.

9 Q. -- and you've flown with many since I'm sure.

10 A. Yeah. I think he was kind of the same way as well. That's
11 kind of the way the training environment in the Baron is as well,
12 so, you know, a lot of people, you know, fly the same way they
13 were trained, especially when they're right out of training.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. You know, the way we train is, you know, you got, you know,
16 three airports or whatever around Columbus, and you go out and you
17 hop from one to one to one and do, you know, approaches,
18 maneuvers, whatever, so a lot of people, you know, when they're in
19 in like the pattern environment, you know, they -- it's just too
20 much. It's kind of like task saturation if you're trying to use
21 the flight director and do all that stuff at the same time while
22 you're training in, you know, a new aircraft to you, so -- and
23 then they get on the line, myself included, and just kind of do
24 the same thing that they did the training. Does that make sense?

25 Q. It does. Okay. No, and I appreciate that because it's just

1 -- I need to know how you guys do things, and, you know, it could
2 be one way in the book, but --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- people do it differently maybe online, and that's what I
5 need to understand as well, so I appreciate how you're explaining
6 it. Is there ever any concerns, issues, anything like that with
7 pilots who may not have 100 hours in the Baron flying with pilots
8 who don't have 100 hours in the Baron?

9 A. Issues or concerns from who?

10 Q. Pilots themselves. You know, if I have zero hours in the
11 Baron, so if I finish training, I'd have however many hours in the
12 Baron, and then let's say I got paired with you, and you only had
13 70 hours in the Baron, would that give you any concern?

14 A. I kind of look at it more from, you know, like if it's like a
15 perfect summer night and there's nothing between us and St. Louis
16 and it's just, you know, out and back, you know, quick, you know,
17 it's, you know, four, five hours whatever, you know, that wouldn't
18 raise much concern for me flying with a new person because, you
19 know, everything's VFR, you know, it should be a pretty easy
20 flight. If it was, you know, wind shear, and IMC, and icing and,
21 you know, and I'm flying with somebody who's new, and, you know, I
22 don't have a lot of experience myself, that's what kind of raises
23 my concern is when those compounding factors start adding up.
24 Some people might be different than me, but that's kind of the way
25 that I look at it.

1 Q. All right. And I know you had mentioned that Amanda the week
2 before had said, hey, you want to fly this leg out to Spirit
3 because you guys had -- the weather wasn't crystal clear and blue,
4 and does that happen often? Does it ever happen besides that one
5 time?

6 A. It's not happened in my experience. That's the only time
7 when people, but, you know, it's also not something that's like,
8 hey, I switched seats, you know. It's not something you really
9 talk about, so --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- I don't know if it happens or not.

12 Q. I was just --

13 A. It's just a decision between the two people flying, you know.

14 Q. Right. Okay. Do they -- do you know of how often they pair
15 up people with 100 hours or less than 100 hours in the Baron
16 together or is that even anything they even --

17 A. I know they --

18 Q. -- consider?

19 A. -- do make considerations. They make more of those
20 considerations once, you know, it's like in the Learjet because,
21 you know, when I was, you know, a fairly new FO and there were a
22 couple new captains, you know, they didn't want us paired
23 together, that kind of thing. They do do it in the Baron a little
24 bit, but, you know, the Baron makes up such a small percentage of
25 the overall operation I'm not -- I couldn't tell you exactly, you

1 know, their decision making process or how much --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. -- they actually look at it. It did surprise me a little bit
4 seeing those two on the schedule together, but, you know, they
5 both seemed like perfectly competent. I wouldn't say, you know,
6 they're the dream team or anything like that, but, yeah, there's
7 nothing that stuck out to me that said like they shouldn't be
8 together, you know. It just kind of surprised me a little bit I
9 guess.

10 Q. Why did it surprise you?

11 A. Because like in my mind they were pretty new, and I didn't
12 think they would pair two, you know, they were -- you know, I'm
13 assuming you were aware they were in the same indoc class and
14 everything. They started at the exact same time so they had the
15 exact same experience with the company, but then, again, I wasn't
16 keeping like super close tabs on, you know, what exactly -- you
17 know, because apparently George had done a couple trips by himself
18 at that point, just real short ones, and I think, you know, the --
19 this is my opinion, making that clear, I think from operations
20 stand point their biggest concern was putting two new people
21 together would be kind of the operations side of the job, not just
22 flying, so, you know, understanding like, you know, this is where
23 we pick up, this is how we do paperwork, this is, you know, how we
24 handle the boxes, that kind of stuff, not -- I don't think -- and,
25 again, this is my opinion, I don't think there was any concern on

1 their end on their piloting abilities being paired together.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah. I think part of the concern and the surprise on my
4 part, too, was that being a winter flight, you know, there's all
5 sorts of hazards that aren't necessarily present in the summer
6 that may or may not foresee, so putting two relatively new people
7 in the airplane together would have been my chief concern with the
8 possibility of winter weather.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So --

11 Q. Okay. And that helps. I just wanted to make sure I
12 understood why you were surprised. I just --

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. I wanted to make sure I got an understanding of that. The
15 accident airplane, 585 --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- have you ever flown that one?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Do you remember when the last time?

20 A. I was actually flying with Amanda on the 247 the week before.

21 Q. Oh, the Spirit to Centennial and back?

22 A. Centennial and back, yes.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Yeah, that was kind of weird watching because like I watched
25 the NTSB press briefing from right after when it happened and he

1 said that, you know, the last flight that it did was from
2 Centennial to St. Louis, the airplane, and I was sitting there
3 thinking, I was like I was the last person to fly that, so, yeah,
4 I was the last PIC of that airplane before that flight.

5 Q. I hate having you go back and relive stuff, but can you kind
6 of walk me through that, you know -- how was that airplane when
7 you flew it?

8 A. There's nothing that really stood out. I mean, in terms of
9 flight characteristics it's just like every other Baron.
10 Avionics, don't remember any issues with that. The only thing
11 that I do specifically remember was -- so on the Baron, on the
12 door handle, I don't know if this shows -- no, it doesn't -- so on
13 the door handle, you know, you've got to rotate it to close.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. And it has a little, or it's supposed to have a little metal
16 like notch disk that slides and covers up, opened or closed
17 depending on if it's open or closed, so it displays what the
18 status of the door is, and I noticed on that airplane it didn't
19 have that little metal disk and when we departed Spirit -- or not
20 Spirit, Centennial coming back, the door popped open right after
21 takeoff and we had to come back around and close it and then we
22 came back, and I know actually the two times the Baron door has
23 popped opened on me was with George and with Amanda, and I think
24 -- I'm pretty sure with George it was that same airplane as well.
25 I'm not 100 percent sure. I'd have to go like back and dig

1 through my log book, but with Amanda for sure it was that
2 airplane. See, that was the only kind of quirk of that airplane
3 was that it was not obvious that, you know, whether the door was
4 open or closed. Some people have their tricks to make sure that
5 it's open or closed or, you know, whatever. But, yeah, so it
6 didn't have like that little metal disk in it. I know it had a
7 tendency to pop open, especially, you know -- I think if the
8 door's like actually closed, it doesn't, but it's possible to
9 think it's closed and then it pops open if that makes sense.

10 Q. It does. Okay. When it popped open, did it change any
11 handling characteristics or just got noisy?

12 A. Yeah, the airplane just felt draggy, you know, after we kind
13 of cleaned the airplane up and got into the pattern, I mean, it
14 was really cold because it was a January night. I think that's
15 the one thing that I do remember, and it was pretty loud. I
16 remember once we started configuring to land, so we're like base
17 to final, putting the gear down, getting the flaps in, you know, I
18 didn't think much of it, but put full flaps which I think is 40
19 degrees in that airplane, and noticed that, you know, the stick --
20 stick started shaking real bad which in hindsight I'm assuming was
21 because it diverted air flow over the horizontal stabilizer.

22 Can't obviously confirm that at all, but with the door open and
23 then the flap going down, it just disrupted the air flow going
24 back there, and the plane was like tugging to the right, but it
25 wasn't anything unmanageable, I would say.

1 Q. Okay. All right. Do you remember any mechanical
2 irregularities with that airplane? Anything -- can you defer step
3 on it?

4 A. You can. We have a fleet MEL for the Barons. We did write
5 the combustion heater up that night because it broke when we were
6 flying back to Spirit, but, you know, that shouldn't change the
7 handling characteristics at all, and I'm assuming that was fixed
8 before it went out again, but other than that, no mechanical
9 issues that I was aware of.

10 Q. Okay. Autopilot worked just fine?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Flight director, all that, everything was working --

13 A. Yup.

14 Q. -- as expected.

15 A. Yup.

16 Q. Okay. Great. I know I've asked you a lot of questions, and
17 I appreciate you've actually have helped me understand both the
18 pilots, the airplane operations here. You've filled in so many
19 grey area blanks I had, so I appreciate that. Sorry again to have
20 you relive all that --

21 A. No, that's fine.

22 Q. -- but it really helped, and although I asked you a lot of
23 questions, it always concerns me that there's one question that I
24 didn't ask and, you know, you're like, oh, if you just asked it
25 might help you understand something else even more.

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. Is there anything you can think of that I didn't ask that
3 would help or that I just didn't ask?

4 A. No, I mean, I kind of like had an idea of what I was going to
5 say, you know, for the different events, and I think we kind of
6 covered everything.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I'm assuming you've got contact information for later on
9 if --

10 Q. And I'll --

11 A. And if you want my contact information that's fine, too.

12 Q. I'll give you one of my cards, too --

13 A. Awesome.

14 Q. -- so that way if you come up with anything later, please
15 reach out, email, call, whatever's easiest.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Because I want to get all the information I can.

18 A. Yes, absolutely.

19 Q. It's okay. I always like trying to leave an interview on a
20 more happy note, if you were king for a day, and who wouldn't want
21 to be king, right? Is there some kind of changes that you as a
22 pilot using the air space, the airplanes, whatever, is there
23 anything you can think of if you were king for a day and you could
24 make a change, what would it be? Maybe there's multiple things.
25 I can see the wheels turning.

1 A. I don't know. I mean, I feel like flying the back side of
2 the clock definitely sucks. You know, if I had my perfect
3 aviation job, not flying at, you know, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00 in the
4 morning would be great. You know, and I think they've kind of
5 done a little bit of this recently, but like not expecting the
6 Baron to do as much winter flying. You know, I mean, obviously we
7 don't know if, you know, it was icing or anything like that, but I
8 think there should be more limitations on the Baron flying in ice
9 even though it's, you know, an icing rated aircraft because you're
10 getting a lot -- you know, especially with this job, you're
11 getting a lot of people who are coming from, you know, flight
12 instructing survey that have done nothing but, you know, fair
13 weather flying, you know, flying in maybe some IMC time. You
14 know, I was talking to some other pilots, you know it's possible
15 to come into this job having never touched a cloud. You could
16 have done, you know, your instrument commercial and gotten all of
17 your 135 PIC instrument required time under the hood, and flying
18 under the hood or in a simulator is nowhere close to being in the
19 clouds, so I think kind of understanding that like, you know, I
20 don't think that was the case with George and Amanda, but, you
21 know, there is potential for that, and lots of potential for
22 people to come in without having the experience and kind of
23 getting that idea of, you know, I just need to figure it out, you
24 know, and it's not the fault of the company or, you know, the
25 personnel in any way because they're always, you know, if you have

1 any questions, call me. Everybody says that and they mean it.
2 You know, but like, you know, pilots are type A personalities, you
3 know, I want to get it done, you know, and show that I got the
4 right stuff, that kind of thing, and I think a lot of people will,
5 especially new people, are a little bit deterred just from that
6 own like self-perception of, you know, I've got to kind of prove
7 myself, but they might not speak up and ask those questions and be
8 like, hey, this weather doesn't look good or, you know, I don't
9 quite feel comfortable, so I think having maybe a limitation on
10 the Baron of, you know, especially like really bad weather, like,
11 you know, if there's anything more than, you know, moderate or
12 greater icing forecast, you know, requires chief approval to force
13 that conversation I think might be a good thing to implement
14 because I know that, you know, they're not going to forbid flight
15 in known icing with that airplane because it's just not possible
16 with our operation. It's not going to happen.

17 Q. Okay. No, that's great, and I appreciate that, you know.
18 You're the end user if you will, and you guys see things
19 differently than people in training see it, and differently than I
20 might see it, so it's good to understand and that's, you know,
21 things we always want to look at, so I appreciate that. You did
22 mention that back side of the clock flying is tiresome, 3:00 a.m.
23 flights. Do they have a fatigue policy here?

24 A. I mean, if you say it, like no questions asked, you know, you
25 go home and rest.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah, but, you know, they don't -- it's non-punitive, you
3 know, whatever. They're totally good with that, you know, but
4 again it's kind of that self-imposed, you know, do I want to spend
5 another night in St. Louis or do I want to go sleep in my own bed,
6 you know, that kind of thing.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. You're just like, all right, I've just got to push through
9 for two more hours and I'll be home and it'll be over with.
10 That's kind of the I think the big thing there, but, again, it's
11 kind of integral to the operation on how things work for our
12 business, so --

13 Q. Okay. Did -- since we brought up fatigue I want to ask, did
14 either of the crew members show any signs of fatigue? I know they
15 were all kind of new with this back side of the clock and --

16 A. Not that I saw. Not to the point where, you know, they're
17 barely holding their eyelids open, you know. There's been moments
18 like that. I won't lie about that, but, yeah, not -- no. I mean,
19 especially like with Amanda on the flight back which was the
20 really late leg from Centennial, you know, I mentioned our heater
21 broke so it was freezing in the cockpit, and it was impossible to
22 almost be flying there falling asleep when, you know, you can't
23 feel your toes or -- so we were wide awake on that one. Yeah, I
24 mean, they might have been a little tired, but not to the point
25 where it was like seriously affecting performance or anything like

1 that.

2 Q. Okay. All right. Great. Well, I appreciate it, and you've
3 given me a lot of information, so thank you.

4 MR. ETCHER: We can call this interview concluded at 11:54
5 Eastern.

6 (Whereupon, at 11:54 a.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK ACCIDENT
 NEAR DEFIANCE, MISSOURI
 ON JANUARY 8, 2022
 Interview of Robert Park

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN22FA096

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lois D. Rush
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

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FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK *

ACCIDENT NEAR DEFIANCE, *

Accident No.: CEN22FA096

MISSOURI ON JANUARY 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: ETHAN PUTSCH, Pilot
AirNet

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:00 a.m. EST)

MR. ETCHER: Well, good afternoon. My name is Shawn Etcher. I'm an Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB investigating the event that occurred near Defiance, Missouri.

Today we're going to be using a digital recorder. After the interview is complete, I'm going to send off the recording to the transcriptionist to have them transcribe it. The audio portion of this recording will never be part of the public docket, but the transcript will. Are you okay with us recording that?

MR. PUTSCH: Yes.

MR. ETCHER: Okay. Once I get this back from the transcriptionist, I will correct any typographical errors they have, but I will not change any of your wordings or anything like that. In case you're kind of wondering what our purpose here is is we're investigating the accident, but we need to determine the probable cause at some point, and to do that, we need to make sure we understand all the facts, and part of the facts is understanding the crew, and their training and all that, so that's why you're here with us today -- or with me today I should say. You are entitled also to a representative if you wish. I don't see anybody here. Do you want a representative at this time?

MR. PUTSCH: Not at this time.

MR. ETCHER: Okay. I just have a few rules, if you will. If you need a break, you need to go talk to somebody, just say so and

1 we'll take breaks, whatever we need. If you don't understand a
2 question, please ask for clarification. It's okay because you
3 give me an answer that I don't quite understand, I'm going to ask
4 for a little bit better clarification. If you said something and
5 you realize I didn't quite -- I kind of misstated something, it's
6 okay, just restate it however you want. We just want to make sure
7 we get all the facts we can. If you have an opinion -- and some
8 of my questions are an opinion of yours, but if you have an
9 opinion, just tell us that, you know, my opinion or however just
10 so we can differentiate between opinion and fact because that kind
11 of helps us. Opinions help us, too, but we want to make sure we
12 don't take an opinion as a fact.

13 MR. PUTSCH: Right.

14 MR. ETCHER: All right. So if you're ready -- oh, I forgot
15 the most important question or most important rule. If you don't
16 know something, I don't know is perfectly fine whatever you want,
17 it's no big deal.

18 INTERVIEW OF ETHAN PUTSCH

19 BY MR. ETCHER:

20 Q. So we'll get started with the toughest questions first. If
21 you could state your full name and spell your last?

22 A. My full name is Ethan Nathaniel Putsch, last name's spelled P
23 as in pappa, u-t-s-c-h.

24 Q. And how old are you?

25 A. 36.

- 1 Q. Okay. Can I call you Ethan?
- 2 A. Absolutely.
- 3 Q. Okay. What is your job title?
- 4 A. I'm pilot, AirNet, captain on the Lears and then an
- 5 instructor pilot as well.
- 6 Q. Instructor pilot in the Lears or the --
- 7 A. The Barons.
- 8 Q. In the Barons. Both or just the Barons?
- 9 A. I think more technically the Barons.
- 10 Q. Okay. All right. Do you do flight training or do you do
- 11 ground training or both?
- 12 A. Both.
- 13 Q. Okay. And we'll get into some of the more training here in
- 14 just a little bit. I assume you have airmen certificates and type
- 15 ratings?
- 16 A. I do.
- 17 Q. And what are those?
- 18 A. Commercial, single, ATP, multi, CFI, ground instructor --
- 19 Q. Okay.
- 20 A. -- and then type rating in the Lear, of course, PIC.
- 21 Q. Excellent. Current medical?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. First class?
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. Any limitations?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Must be nice. Now these are probably the hardest questions,
3 kind of ball park numbers, can you give me an estimate on your
4 total time?

5 A. An estimate would be I think I'm a bit over 6,000 total. I
6 would have to go back to get very close.

7 Q. Estimate works for me. Approximately how much in the Baron?

8 A. Again, I'd really have to go back and look. I don't pay
9 attention to the totals too much other than just putting it in the
10 log book. 5 or 600 hours would be an estimate, give or take.

11 Q. All right. And that's okay. So I know you said you were a
12 pilot, line -- a trainer?

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. How often? Is it 50/50 you fly the line? 50 percent of the
15 time you train or is it more one or the other?

16 A. More actually flying in the Learjets.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then, you know, instructor as needed.

19 Q. Okay. All right. In your opinion, this is your opinion, how
20 would you categorize your staffing here at AirNet?

21 A. As far as?

22 Q. Pilot staffing.

23 A. Just the amount of people versus work load or --

24 Q. Do you think you have -- again, it's your opinion, do you
25 think you have enough pilots to do what your work load requires?

1 Are you working more than you feel like you should? Working less?

2 You're overly staffed? Kind of just help me understand.

3 A. No, I mean, I don't think I'm overworked or under per se.

4 You know, there's -- we lost a number of people to, you know,
5 Flexjet and various places, summer, fall, somewhere in that area,
6 so it was kind of a -- kind of getting back into where we were at,
7 but I don't really see us being overworked per se or anything.

8 Q. Okay. All right. I know being an instructor pilot and a
9 line pilot is a full-time job, but sometimes people do other
10 things here. Do you have any other duties?

11 A. As far as just in the company?

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. That's pretty much it.

14 Q. Okay. All right. Who's in your chain in command? Who do
15 you report to? If you have a problem, who do you go to?

16 A. Well, Brandon Hildreth is director of operation and then
17 Tom Harmon for chief pilot, so generally speaking those are the
18 two that I start with.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Do you have to go to them very often with any concerns or
22 challenges or problems?

23 A. No, not really. I mean, other than just the occasional
24 something happened in the airplane where we might to MEL something
25 or something along those lines just to kind of get that

1 conversation started.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. You know, as far as just, you know, I don't know, crew issue
4 or thereof or whatever the case may be, I don't really ever have
5 too many problems around here.

6 Q. Okay. All right.

7 A. So --

8 Q. If you notice something, you're out flying the line and you
9 notice something, you know, an approach doesn't work right or an
10 airport's tough, or there's a problem with an airplane, I know you
11 said you can reach out to the chief pilot or director of ops, are
12 they always available 24/7 or is there like a form you can fill
13 out for stuff that's not urgent?

14 A. Generally speaking it's pretty easy to get a hold of one of
15 those two guys --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- in some form or another depending on what the case may be.
18 You know, with the -- and then you've got a couple of guys on
19 dispatch depending on the situation that are also very available
20 to kind of start figuring out whatever the case may be out there.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Do you -- does AirNet -- do you guys have
22 an ASAP, FOQA, any kind of SMS type?

23 A. We do have an ASAP program.

24 Q. In your opinion, how does that program work? Does it work
25 well? Never used it? Have no idea?

1 A. I've used it personally a couple times just for little,
2 minor, deviation for one reason or another, you know, flew an
3 altitude monitor feed just by looking for traffic or something
4 like that, and in my experience it's been straightforward, pretty
5 easy to use. Again, I've only had to use it a couple of times in
6 the last couple of years, so nothing -- I don't have too much
7 experience, but it seems fine.

8 Q. Okay. Great. I always like to just kind of know how the
9 programs work or if they don't work why not, so I appreciate that.
10 When you're out flying, is there ever any pressure put on you to
11 complete the flight, to take the flight? I know pilots, we all
12 have our own self-imposed pressures, but is there any pressure
13 from above, like you really got to get this flight there?

14 A. Generally speaking the only pressure I've really had is my
15 own, like you said. You know, there's just kind of the nature of
16 what we do with the pharmaceuticals and the organ transplants and
17 stuff, there's -- again, that's probably more my pressure than
18 anything, but I've never really felt pressured by anybody in the
19 company to do something that I didn't want to do --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- whether that be fatigue or whether -- whatever the case
22 may be, you know. I've turned down my share of flights for one
23 reason or another, illness or whatever, and never really been a
24 question.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So --

2 Q. How long have you worked at AirNet?

3 A. I think it was January 2016, so six years.

4 Q. Okay. Don't make me do higher math yet, it's still early in
5 the day.

6 A. Yeah, it's -- I had to stop and think about birthdays, so --
7 for myself --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- so --

10 Q. So in that six years I know you said you've turned down
11 flights for illness and things like that. Has that been before
12 you reported or when you're on the road?

13 A. Generally it's -- I'm still probably at home. There's been a
14 couple of times where it's just out on the road and not feeling
15 that great or something and it's just kind of like, hey, just, you
16 know, I've got this going on or something, and it's, again, hasn't
17 really been an issue ever, so --

18 Q. Okay. Have you ever had to refuse an airplane?

19 A. Just for like a mechanical issue or something along those
20 lines?

21 Q. For, yeah, mechanical, whatever.

22 A. I'm trying to think of an actual like instance. You know,
23 there's been the occasional time I'll go preflight something and,
24 I don't know, last week I had a recognition light on the tip tank
25 of a Lear was out and they ended up fixing it. Sometimes it's

1 something stupid like that where you just swap airplanes and be
2 done with it. It's never -- yeah.

3 Q. Okay. All right. I think I have a pretty good
4 understanding, but how would you classify the work environment
5 here? is it hostile, open door, open arms, however you want to
6 call it?

7 A. Again, my experience has been pretty open and
8 straightforward. I think everybody, whether it be any of the
9 pilots or management, Brandon and Tom, all those guys, I've never
10 had an issue going to them just to even ask an opinion or whatever
11 the case may be.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So --

14 Q. Perfect. So let's start getting a little bit down into the
15 training if you will. I know that's -- you do some of that in the
16 Baron. When is the last time you conducted training in the Baron?

17 A. I'd have to go look at my log book. It's the last couple of
18 months between having covid a month ago and a little bit of
19 pneumonia after it, so it's a little bit of a blur. I did some
20 training flights in the last few weeks anyway, a couple of weeks
21 or so ago.

22 Q. Okay. Was that with the new hires? Was it with recurrent?

23 A. It was with an INDOC class, yes.

24 Q. Okay. As an instructor, you know, you get your first look at
25 new pilots coming on.

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. How do they -- in your opinion, how do they look compared to
3 the pilots here? Are they -- I don't want to say really green,
4 but are they easy to train? Is it -- are there challenges because
5 of inexperience? Kind of help me understand from an instructor's
6 viewpoint.

7 A. From just new people coming in.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. I've seen a mix of pilots, you know, anything from, you know,
10 people that have whatever amount of experience that's a little bit
11 more time than the average guy coming off flight instructing to
12 some of the guys that might have been VFR out -- VFR tours in
13 islands and so on, so it's a little tough to give you an -- this
14 kind of an answer. It's a little, you know -- it's varied.

15 Q. Okay. Vary works. It's perfect. And I think -- correct me
16 if I'm wrong, I think you said you do ground training as well?

17 A. I do do a little bit of ground yes.

18 Q. So typically on a new hire, how long is the ground training?

19 A. For an INDOC class?

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. Typically it's about a week or so at least.

22 Q. And what do you cover in that?

23 A. Anything from, you know, far and the AIM to GOM, op specs,
24 you know, refreshers on weather and so on.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. So a little of everything.
- 2 Q. Cover systems? Aircraft systems --
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. -- of course? Okay.
- 5 A. Absolutely. Yes.
- 6 Q. During ground training do you guys teach -- do you have any
- 7 modules for crew resource management?
- 8 A. We do.
- 9 Q. How long is that?
- 10 A. I'd have to go back and look through the actual module to
- 11 tell you how long it is, but, you know, we certainly do get into
- 12 that.
- 13 Q. Okay. During ground training, INDOC training, sorry, when
- 14 you're doing that, have you ever had pilots not make it through
- 15 that?
- 16 A. As far as the INDOC itself or --
- 17 Q. Yeah. They --
- 18 A. -- the written test?
- 19 Q. -- do the INDOC -- yeah, the written test. They did -- they
- 20 don't make muster and they're asked to leave or --
- 21 A. I personally with the instruction I've done, I think
- 22 everybody that has done it has gotten through, so I think there's
- 23 been only maybe one that I can think of off the top of my head or
- 24 two people that have ever had an issue with a written test and one
- 25 was literally just multiple choice and select all that applies and

1 didn't realize it was that kind of a choice and it was more of a
2 didn't quite understand that that was an issue, and wasn't a
3 knowledge aspect, it was more of a testing aspect if that makes
4 sense.

5 Q. Okay. Yeah, it does. Okay. How long is typically the
6 flight training for an INDOC class?

7 A. Again, you know, generally we stick them in the sim after we
8 get done with the ground portion so we teach them, you know,
9 procedures, SOPs, all that, and we'll give them the Baron so
10 typically they're in the airplane for again about a week or so.
11 You know, the -- yeah, so --

12 Q. Do you have a Baron simulator then or is it like a -- what
13 kind of a sim are you talking?

14 A. I'm sorry, it's a Frasca, so --

15 Q. Oh, okay. Like a fixed training device?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. All right. And then you said it's about a week in the fixed
20 training device and the airplane or a week in the airplane after
21 the fixed training device is -- after the FTD's done?

22 A. Typically about a week both.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So --

25 Q. And --

1 A. I'm sorry, a week each, so a week in the airplane, about a
2 week in the training device as well.

3 Q. Oh, okay.

4 A. So --

5 Q. And that week in the airplane, is that flying the line or is
6 it just getting out doing maneuvers, getting familiar with the
7 airplane?

8 A. That is more actually kind of around the area, maneuvers,
9 approaches, those sorts of things.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. It's not actually just out flying a route.

12 Q. Okay. Is that training day time? Night time?

13 A. Typically it's in the day time. I do know that they've done
14 some night training flights as well, so --

15 Q. Would you classify AirNet's flight schedule as 50/50 day to
16 night, mostly night, mostly day?

17 A. The Baron, since I'm not flying the Barons typically on a
18 route, just more in a training environment, I am not super
19 familiar with all the things the Barons do.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. You know, in the Learjets, typically it's a daytime schedule,
22 you know, a little bit of night as well, but typically it's
23 daytime.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. Once crews get through ground training, the FTD
25 and then the flight training, do you ever get any -- do you, and I

1 don't mean you being the training department or you as a trainer,
2 get any feedback from pilots that have flown with the pilots that
3 just went through INDOC on how they're doing?

4 A. As far as just me hearing things from other pilots that might
5 have flown with --

6 Q. Right. Like if I went through INDOC and I ended up flying
7 with somebody --

8 A. Right.

9 Q. -- do you ever get feedback from that somebody on --

10 A. I mean, occasionally.

11 Q. Is it general terms good, bad, kind of --

12 A. Generally it's good.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Because sometimes we, you know, we always
14 hear when things aren't so well so that's why I just wanted to get
15 that classified there. In the training, I know in the Frasca you
16 can be IMC all day long in there. Do you give them unusual
17 attitudes or is it just typically in approaches and things like
18 that, or do you typically is it just procedure training, here's
19 how you set this up, how you --

20 A. No, in the Frasca it's, you know, we certainly do all the
21 procedures, SOPs, all the things to get them, you know, understood
22 what we want and expect and then, you know, we'll obviously do the
23 approaches and things like that, but we also are getting into
24 failures and unusual attitudes and things along those lines as
25 well.

1 Q. Okay. How about in the airplane? What do you guys do in the
2 airplane?

3 A. Same sort of thing, so again just making sure they're
4 actually doing SOPs and so on there. We do do unusual attitudes,
5 the turns of light stalls, engine outs, so pretty much try to
6 cover everything.

7 Q. Okay. When you do approaches or unusual attitude, any kind
8 of air work, obviously you can't for takeoff, but for anything
9 else, do you do it in IMC or do you do it on a VFR day?

10 A. We'll do it on both, so, you know, we'll go up and shoot
11 approaches if it's IMC and all. Obviously that's kind of hit or
12 miss depending on what you get day to day, so --

13 Q. Okay. If it's not IMC, how do you simulate IMC when you do
14 training?

15 A. Typically visor down. I'm watching eye sights and make sure
16 they're actually looking inside, hats, some kind of -- you know,
17 something to kind of restrict and make sure they're actually
18 looking where they're supposed to be looking.

19 Q. Do you make them wear a hood or goggles or foggles or
20 whatever you want to call them?

21 A. Usually I've got the visor down and some kind of like hat or
22 something on them to really kind of make sure they're --

23 Q. Okay. Typically when you take a -- and you -- and I want to
24 just make sure I understand it correctly, you take brand new
25 recruits that just went through INDOC into IMC conditions to do

1 flight training, is that correct? If it's available. I don't --
2 A. Yeah, I mean it's going to depend on day to day and kind of
3 where we're at.
4 Q. Okay.
5 A. You know, there's certainly some judgment call on day to day
6 weather, I mean --
7 Q. Right.
8 A. -- you know --
9 Q. It's weather.
10 A. Yeah, it's -- so, yes.
11 Q. Okay. And please correct me if I'm wrong, but the Baron has
12 only a throw over yoke, correct?
13 A. Not all of them. They're getting switched over. I've heard
14 that now they're all going to have duals. We did have throughout
15 the years I think at least two Barons that had dual controls.
16 Q. Okay.
17 A. So -- and we need to use those for training.
18 Q. Those were used in training?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. You never did the single yoke --
21 A. No.
22 Q. -- in training.
23 A. No.
24 Q. Okay. That's good because I was wondering how you got
25 control back if --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. All right. So when you're simulating IMC, how do you
3 see air work being done by these new recruits, these INDOC? Are
4 they proficient at attitude flying? Do you have challenges
5 within, you know -- presumably they're all instrument rated so
6 they've all had training on attitude flying.

7 A. Right.

8 Q. But have you --

9 A. You know, again, just kind of an overall, I guess -- what's
10 the word I'm looking for -- you know, it's -- with all these
11 different people you've got varied skill levels and experience,
12 right?

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. So it's hard to give you just an absolute like, you know,
15 defined answer there, but for the most part, the guys when they
16 get in the Baron area in pretty good shape.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Especially after being in the Frasca, so, you know, you might
19 have a person that's a little rusty or something like that. It's
20 just, you know, looking for standards and so on so you just work
21 with them and get them up to a point where they're actually
22 meeting standard and being able to do what they should be able to
23 do.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So --

1 Q. Okay. If during flight training or even Frasca training if
2 somebody needed more time, are they given more time or is it --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- you get X number of hours and then you're --

5 A. No, it's always been a -- you're given more time basically.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So --

8 Q. Have you ever had a pilot in the past -- and maybe I should
9 ask how long have you been doing flight training here?

10 A. I'm trying to remember exactly. I don't remember exactly
11 when I started. It's been a couple of years at least.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Something along those lines.

14 Q. And that's fine. A couple years.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. A year.

17 A. I'm not positive on that.

18 Q. That's a good ball park. During that time have you ever had
19 a pilot go through training, but, you know, they're just not
20 getting it and have they ever --

21 A. I truthfully, personally, my experience with the bit of
22 instruction, and I don't do everybody, right.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. I've always gotten them to a point where they've met a good
25 standard and have been able to get through and actually

1 confidently say they could pass the check ride. I've not had a
2 guy that in my experience has done that.

3 Q. No, no, that's great. That says a lot about how you train,
4 too, so I appreciate that. Have you ever had the FAA come out and
5 fly along with you on a training flight?

6 A. I had an FAA person in the jump seat of a Lear one time. I
7 don't think I've had anybody in the seat with us in the Baron, no.

8 Q. Is there a seat for them in the Baron?

9 A. Possibly.

10 Q. Possibly.

11 A. So it depends on which Baron basically.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So --

14 Q. All right. I know you said you, you know, let's talk
15 specifics if you will on abilities, the accident, one of the
16 accident pilots. George. I understand you had trained him.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. How was he when he came through? Was he I don't want to say
19 easy to train. That's such a wrong way to say it, but was there
20 challenges training him?

21 A. No. George had a fair amount of experience before coming
22 here. He was very open to training.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. He wasn't one of those guys that I've seen where -- and not
25 necessarily I've seen at AirNet, but just in past instructing and

1 all, you get guys that are not open to critiques and things like
2 that. That wasn't George.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. He was more along the lines of absolutely wanted the
5 knowledge and to progress and so on, so he was kind of, as you
6 said, more of an easy guy to train with regard to that.

7 Q. Okay. All right. How did he handle the IMC? Can you recall
8 when you went flight training with -- in flight with him? Was
9 it --

10 A. Again as I would imagine you probably appreciate, it's been a
11 number of months, and it's hard to kind of go back, you know. You
12 kind of maybe vaguely remember some flights and stuff, but --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- specifics are sometimes a little tough.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. So as I remember, he was -- again, I mean, he was a pretty
17 experienced guy so he was pretty good.

18 Q. Okay. And, I mean, it says a lot when you -- it says a lot
19 when people didn't remember me because you always remember either
20 the really, really good ones or the really, really not so good.

21 A. Yeah, and that's kind of the point. I just -- you know, I
22 think I flew with George a couple three times or something in the
23 Baron.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And I don't really remember absolute specifics of, you know,

1 one approach or another --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- maneuvers or anything thereof. Nothing really stands out
4 in my mind.

5 Q. Okay. I understand you did Amanda's training also. Similar
6 questions, probably similar answers?

7 A. Truthfully, yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Again, I think I want to say I flew with Amanda twice, and
10 again nothing really stands out in my mind too much in the
11 flights, so --

12 Q. And when you say you flew with Amanda twice and you flew with
13 George you thought maybe three times, what happens with them after
14 you fly with them? You know, you flew with them twice. Do they
15 fly with somebody else then also in training or are they --

16 A. It's a bit of a scheduling day to day, week to week kind of a
17 situation, so I believe they flew -- I cannot tell you who with,
18 but, yes, they've flown I believe with a number of other times
19 with somebody else or another couple people. I'm not sure.

20 Q. So would they -- if you -- you flew with Amanda let's say
21 twice. Would two times be enough to sign her off to go fly the
22 line with somebody or would you sometimes pair her up with another
23 instructor?

24 A. I don't know of anybody that's been signed off to take a
25 check ride here two times in the Baron.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So generally it's several times.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Whatever that is.

5 Q. I'm sure that that's probably a moving target of times or is
6 it a pretty consistent after X number of times, after 5 times
7 you're signed off for a check ride or is it --

8 A. Yeah, I mean, I'd say that again it's varied a bit, but again
9 it's, you know, we've got a syllabus that we, you know, take all
10 the things on it and so on. Again, we're just looking for that
11 kind of standard --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- and making sure we've actually hit all the things, the
14 maneuvers, and failures and so on, so --

15 Q. No, that helps. I just wanted to make sure that two times
16 isn't the abnormal perfect, but I just wanted to make sure when
17 you fly with them two times that they might be flying with
18 somebody else also as part of training.

19 A. Yes, and so -- yes.

20 Q. Okay. That's -- I just wanted to make sure I had that in my
21 head clear, so I appreciate that. During training do you guys
22 teach anything on unusual attitudes in the airplane? I know you
23 mentioned the Frasca. Do you do unusual attitudes in the
24 airplane?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Is there any training on spatial disorientation, whether
2 recurrent -- whether in ground school portion, in simulator?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. How is that trained?

5 A. You know, with -- I'm sorry, in the airplane, in the Frasca
6 with unusual attitudes and things like that it's, you know,
7 focusing on the instruments and a good scan, and just trying to
8 stay situationally aware, so --

9 Q. Okay. In the Frasca, do you have the ability to fail certain
10 instruments?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Can you fail the attitude indicator?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Do you guys do that?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And from your perception doing that, how do pilots handle
17 that? Do they pick up on it pretty quickly? Does it take them
18 time? Kind of help me understand what you see. I want to be that
19 fly on your shoulder, if you will. I want to see what you see.

20 A. Again, it's a varied thing, you know. No one's -- no two
21 people are identical, right? So a lot of times when I'll fail,
22 you know, a vacuum pump or something in a Frasca, or it just kind
23 of the attitude or what not, just kind of slowly goes away, you
24 know, give that person that catches it, you know, real quick, and
25 then you might get a person that just kind of has the -- it goes a

1 little bit longer --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- so --

4 Q. Okay. Have you ever had anybody in the sim not catch it?

5 A. No one that I can think of within my head.

6 Q. Okay. And that's okay. I mean, like I said, I know you've

7 trained a lot, you know, you've had a lot of people come through

8 training, so I, you know, everybody starts to merge together,

9 but --

10 A. Yeah, it's -- yeah.

11 Q. Okay. In the example of the vacuum failure, if the vacuum

12 failed in the Baron, does it tell you?

13 A. Yes, so the vacuum gauge on the Baron has two I guess you'd

14 call them buttons that if one of the pumps fails it has a red

15 indicator that shows you that pump has failed.

16 Q. Okay. Okay. Perfect. I only ask because it's one thing you

17 fail. I just want to make sure if it fails in the airplane that

18 they would understand. All right. Let's talk a little bit about

19 the Baron's autopilot.

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Is there any specific procedures or guidance when crews

22 cannot turn it on or, you know, can turn it on? Is there any --

23 or should, any guidance or procedures?

24 A. Well, I believe there is some guidance in the ground slides

25 as well. You know, it's -- in the airplane, you know, we'll teach

1 it. I think for the most part people are getting, you know, kind
2 of takeoff, get everything cleaned up, 1,000 feet sort of thing is
3 kind of when it's available.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So --

6 Q. How do you train it?

7 A. I typically -- that's kind of about what I train is just, you
8 know, get to a decent, safe altitude, airplane cleaned up, and
9 then --

10 Q. Okay. If they're on an approach, can they take it all the
11 way -- how low can they go using it? Can they go all the way to
12 200 feet on an ILS or --

13 A. I generally teach it where, you know, if they're using it on
14 approach to just kind of be ready to kick it off if need be for
15 one reason or another and just actually sit there and watch things
16 and make sure it's doing what it should be doing, so I personally
17 like to kind of not necessarily take it down too low.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Just -- so --

20 Q. Okay. No, that's all right. Is it equipped with a flight
21 director?

22 A. It is.

23 Q. Do you teach having a flight director on, but not the
24 autopilot or do you teach, for lack of a better phrase, raw data
25 and then turn the flight director on and then the autopilot

1 shortly thereafter?

2 A. So when I'm out doing again the INDOC training and so on, I
3 kind of do a mixture of both. Really all three, I guess, just so
4 they've got an understanding of how that system actually works as
5 far as flight director versus having it on autopilot versus
6 obviously raw data and all, so --

7 Q. So the company doesn't have a procedure or policy in place
8 that you can't have the flight director on without the autopilot?
9 You can hand fly with the flight director?

10 A. Yeah, both correct.

11 Q. Okay. During your training or when you're giving training I
12 should say, do you typically see crews turn the flight director on
13 and using that while they hand fly or do they typically -- what do
14 you see normally? Do they hand fly raw data and then turn the
15 flight director and autopilot on at the same time?

16 A. Typically I would say flight director is generally up.
17 Certainly when I'm flying with people in the Lear, that's pretty
18 well what we're doing, so --

19 Q. Okay. So, and I know it's been a while ago, but George or
20 Amanda, when you flew with them, did they -- some pilots love to
21 hand fly and some are very quick to kick on the autopilot, some
22 are kind of whatever, in the middle somewhere. Do you recall with
23 either one of those two either extremes?

24 A. No, I don't. I don't recall the specifics on it, no.

25 Q. Okay. All right. Has there ever been -- have you ever heard

1 of any complaints -- I hate that phrase, but for lack of a better
2 one, about any pilots' abilities here? Not just -- you know,
3 we're not talking just the accident pilots, just any pilots, like
4 two pilots just were not getting along or, you know, one pilot
5 saying, you know, this pilot needs more training?

6 A. I can't think of an instance --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- off the top of my head, no.

9 Q. And that's good because usually those -- sadly sometimes
10 those come to mind a little too quick. Makes you ask more
11 questions, but, no, that's all right. How would you classify the
12 Baron's autopilot? Is it -- I know you fly the Lear mostly, but
13 is it a great autopilot? Is it a work load reliever autopilot?
14 In other words, you've still got a work load because you've got to
15 do a lot of things, but it at least holds your altitude and air
16 speed or altitude and heading?

17 A. In my experience I've never had a problem with one.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. You know, it'll hold altitude and heading or nav is just
20 fine.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It'll shoot an ILS. I've not really had an issue with them.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. In my experience.

25 Q. Have you ever heard of anybody having issues with the

1 autopilot?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. Great. Headset usage, is that a -- do you guys have
4 to wear a headset when you fly?

5 A. Everybody does.

6 Q. So it's not a requirement, it's just everybody does?

7 A. I'm trying to even think of -- I mean, it's almost something
8 I haven't even really thought about frankly because it's just --
9 everybody does, and it's almost -- I've never even heard of
10 anybody trying not to frankly.

11 Q. Okay. All right. No, that's all right. So I know in this
12 case George and Amanda, neither one of them had a lot of time in
13 the Barons. Both of them I think were under 100 hours if I
14 remember correctly. Does that happen a lot where you pair two low
15 in the Baron people together or in your case two low in the Lear
16 together?

17 A. So from what -- I don't make up the schedule or not really
18 involved with it, so as far as the aspects of that I can't
19 really --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- tell you too much.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I know they, I believe, take pairing into consideration, but
24 again I can't tell you too much on that.

25 Q. No, and that's okay. I'm just trying to see what you can

1 recall because I'll ask it with others, too, but I just --

2 A. Sure.

3 Q. -- it's always nice to get understanding. Is there any
4 requirements that you're aware of here that a pilot has to have so
5 many hours? I know there's total time requirements for 135, but
6 is there any requirements for IMC, you know, actual IMC, not just
7 simulated? Is there any requirements here for hours of that?

8 A. I think it's just typically the -- at least making the mins
9 for -- of course, the 135 mins.

10 Q. Right. Have you ever in the Lear do they do it where you
11 have somebody -- do you guys do 91 flights at all in the Lear or
12 is all 135s?

13 A. The empty legs, maybe 91, empty legs.

14 Q. So do they ever have it where seat swaps, you know, on a 91
15 leg, the right seater --

16 A. No.

17 Q. No. Okay. All right. Let's go back just a little bit if we
18 can back to the training. I know everybody's similar. When
19 people go through training, basic and -- or go through INDOC
20 training, do they ever come back to you and say, hey, you know,
21 you taught me great, thanks, it made me feel comfortable with
22 flying, or, you know, hey, it would help if you could teach new
23 hires this as well, have you ever had that or has the training
24 department ever had that? So I should say have you ever had
25 people solicit feedback from people that have just went through to

1 see were they ready, did it make them feel confident?

2 A. I always put it out to I think everybody, whether it's INDOC
3 or not to, you know, if they need help with something, opinion on
4 weather, or whatever the case may be that I'm always available.
5 I'm trying to think of a specific instance where I can give you an
6 example. Yes, I'm trying to think of that specific instance where
7 I can give you that example, but I can't pull it out of my hat.

8 Q. But you've had it.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. Great. Well, at least it's nice to know that you've
11 had it.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. I appreciate that. How about for recurrent? Do you do
14 recurrent training?

15 A. A little bit yes.

16 Q. Do you ever have pilots come back and say, hey, I didn't know
17 that about recurrent, you know, that you taught me in recurrent,
18 or it would be nice to teach others this also.

19 A. Again, yes, but I'm trying to think of that instance. I know
20 it has happened, but I just can't pull that out of my --

21 Q. It always happens, you know, it's on the --

22 A. It's, you know --

23 Q. -- tip of your tongue.

24 A. -- it's in that interview kind of --

25 Q. Right.

1 A. -- you know, so --

2 Q. And it's okay, it just helps me understand, though, that they
3 have so that's a good thing. For recurrent, how long -- how long
4 is ground and flight training in recurrent that you've done? Is
5 -- in the Baron, of course? Is it several days long?

6 A. In total, yes. Several days.

7 Q. Is it mostly -- is it like a day in ground and a day in
8 flight or is it two days in ground, two days in flight?

9 A. Typically a day in ground and kind of a day in flight.

10 Q. Okay. And neither George nor Amanda had to go through
11 recurrent yet, correct? Do you know -- do you recall doing their
12 recurrent or was INDOC?

13 A. No, I believe their -- no, I believe it was just the INDOC.

14 Q. I'm just going right through my list here real quick just to
15 see if I missed something. If you were flying a flight, and I
16 know it's been a while since you flew the Baron, so it's in the
17 Lear I guess we're talking about here, just not a training flight,
18 just you flying the line, can you, for lack of a better term,
19 refuse a crew member?

20 A. I've never had to --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- but, yeah, I'm sure I could.

23 Q. Okay. You never had to though.

24 A. No.

25 Q. Okay. Great. That helps just kind of get an understanding.

1 Sometimes, you know, you can be surprised what we hear, so --

2 A. I believe that, so --

3 Q. In your training opinion and mindset, is there anything that
4 really could be expanded in training? I mean, I know it always
5 feels like most pilots say training is drinking from multiple fire
6 hoses, and you always hate adding more, but in your opinion is
7 there other things that could be added to training that would be
8 beneficial or you try to incorporate somehow?

9 A. I'm just trying to think of the training in its entirety to
10 think of any examples thereof. Right off the top of my head, no.

11 Q. Okay. Did you guys write your own syllabus in ground
12 training program or did you guys -- is it a commercial package, do
13 you know?

14 A. No, I don't have that.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I don't know.

17 Q. That's all right. I don't know works just fine. I know you
18 said the Barons you guys fly in training were dual yoked.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Do you know if the single yoked Barons, did they have a push
21 to talk switch on the right side?

22 A. Yes, there's -- so there's a push to talk down by the mic
23 jacks usually on the right side, yes.

24 Q. Okay. Is there one on the left side besides the one on the
25 yoke?

1 A. No, I think it's just on the left seat it's just the one on
2 the yoke I believe, and then on the right seat --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- it's -- there is one down by the jack, so you just reach
5 down and --

6 Q. And I know you don't fly the Baron, but -- and forgive me for
7 asking this, but I know you're in the training, can you throw the
8 yoke over in the Barons that are single or is that a prohibition?

9 A. It's not something that we're supposed to do.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So I -- but the airplane, yes, you can throw it over. Per
12 AirNet you're not supposed to.

13 Q. Not supposed to.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. It's not expressly prohibited, or it is prohibited, you
16 cannot.

17 A. Yeah, I believe the wording is more prohibited.

18 Q. Okay. Have you ever tried to throw the yoke over just to see
19 how it does it? I know you do training and it's mostly dual yoke
20 I think, but --

21 A. Right. I may have at one point or another. I couldn't tell
22 you offhand.

23 Q. Do you do any of that in training? Do you teach people how
24 to actually throw the yoke or because it's --

25 A. I think it is -- I believe it is in the slides and so on, so,

1 yes, but --

2 Q. It's not in detail, I guess. It's more topical?

3 A. Yeah, I would say so.

4 Q. Here's how you need to do it if you had to type of thing?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Okay. All right. I know I've asked you a ton of questions
7 and you've given me a lot of answers, but every time I do it, I'm
8 always afraid that I'm not going to ask just the right question,
9 and is there anything you can think of that I didn't ask that I --
10 you wish I would have because that would have expanded my
11 knowledge even more? Because you don't know what you don't know,
12 right?

13 A. No, not off the top of my head. The only thing I can -- I
14 didn't know Amanda very well at all. It was just those few days
15 that I was with her. Again, George I've known for a while, not
16 well. The only thing I would say is knowing him, being around him
17 a bit over the years here and there, he was a very conscientious,
18 safe pilot is how I always kind of took him. He's not going to be
19 somebody that would be -- do anything risky if you want to say
20 that about it.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And he's not going to be -- I don't want this to sound
23 misconstrued or what not, sounding like somebody would push him
24 because that is not something that I would see from this company,
25 but he's not the type of guy that I would take as to be a pushover

1 if that makes sense.

2 Q. Okay. Yeah.

3 A. So --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So having him in that airplane, and I'm not saying Amanda
6 would be the opposite from what I just described George. I don't
7 see even if she was, which I'm not saying she was, I don't see him
8 getting into an airplane where he didn't feel good.

9 Q. He's not afraid to say no.

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And, again, I'm not saying that he would have to --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- but just as kind of an overall feel for him, I don't see
15 him --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- getting into something that he's not comfortable with, and
18 again, yeah, it's all the way around.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. That's about the only thing I can think of to end.

21 Q. No, and that -- I'm glad you added that because that's
22 important to know.

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. So I appreciate that. I always like to end the interview,
25 the discussion with, you know, the king for the day question. If

1 you were king for a day and you could make any change you wanted,
2 whether it's in the air space system, here at AirNet, we can't do
3 pilot pay because, you know, the pilots always say pay, but is
4 there anything you can think of that, man, if I was king for a day
5 I would want to do this?

6 A. Again, I could probably come up with some things. Yeah.

7 Q. I always deflate people when I say you can't do pay because
8 that's, you know, everybody's like that's what I want to do.

9 A. Bring them right up and bring them right down. Yeah, I'm
10 sure there's whatever things. I just don't have off the top of my
11 head I guess.

12 Q. Okay. And it's okay. I just -- it always helps me
13 understand because people come up with some ideas that --

14 A. Sure.

15 Q. -- we didn't even think of, and it's like, oh, I never
16 thought of that.

17 A. Yeah.

18 MR. ETCHER: So with that, we can call this interview
19 concluded at 1323 Eastern.

20 (Whereupon, at 1:23 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)
21
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK ACCIDENT
 NEAR DEFIANCE, MISSOURI
 ON JANUARY 8, 2022
 Interview of Ethan Putsch

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN22FA096

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lois D. Rush
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK *

ACCIDENT NEAR DEFIANCE, *

Accident No.: CEN22FA096

MISSOURI ON JANUARY 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: AARON SOTO, Pilot
AirNet

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:06 a.m. EST)

MR. ETCHER: Good morning. My name is Shawn Etcher. I'm Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB and I'm investigating the accident that occurred in Defiance, Missouri. For reference it's NTSB No. CEN22FA096.

Today we're going to be using a digital recorder. After the interview is complete, we're going to send that recording off to a transcriptionist to be transcribed. Once we get that transcript back, I will only read through it to correct any misspelled words. We will not change anything you've said, and the purpose of our investigation is to determine a cause, and, you know, we're not going to assign fault or anything like that. We just want to understand what happened. That's why you're here talking with us. Is it okay if we use the recording?

MR. SOTO: Yes, sir, it is.

MR. ETCHER: All right. Now the recording itself will not be part of any public docket, but the transcript will become part of a public docket --

MR. SOTO: Okay.

MR. ETCHER: -- once this -- once we get towards the end of this investigation. I have just a few ground rules if you will. I ask if you can, answer the questions to the best of your ability.

MR. SOTO: Okay.

1 MR. ETCHER: If you don't know an answer, I don't know is
2 just fine. This is not a checkride--

3 MR. SOTO: Yeah.

4 MR. ETCHER: -- so, you know, please feel free just to -- if
5 you don't know it or if you need clarification, it's okay to, feel
6 free to ask.

7 MR. SOTO: Okay.

8 MR. ETCHER: As -- I guarantee if you give me an answer that
9 I don't completely understand, I'm going to ask for a little bit
10 more clarification, so it's a two way street.

11 MR. SOTO: Okay.

12 MR. ETCHER: However, during all of our investigations and
13 interviews, you're entitled to a legal representative --

14 MR. SOTO: Okay.

15 MR. ETCHER: -- or representative of your choosing. Do you
16 wish to have one in here at this time?

17 MR. SOTO: No, that's okay.

18 MR. ETCHER: All right.

19 INTERVIEW OF AARON SOTO

20 BY MR. ETCHER:

21 Q. I always like to start with the toughest questions first, get
22 the worst ones out of the way.

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. Can you please state and -- state your full name and spell
25 your last for us.

- 1 A. My first name is Aaron, last name is Soto, S-o-t-o.
- 2 Q. Okay. Is it okay if I call you Aaron?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. All right.
- 5 A. Please.
- 6 Q. And how old are you?
- 7 A. I'm 26.
- 8 Q. And what is your job title?
- 9 A. Pilot at AirNet Two (ph.).
- 10 Q. And what do you pilot?
- 11 A. I'm a pilot of a Lear SIC at the moment and Baron 58.
- 12 Q. Okay. All right. Do you guys have -- are you considered a
- 13 line pilot or reserve pilot or do you -- how's that work for
- 14 AirNet?
- 15 A. There's not really reserve, so I would just say I guess a
- 16 line pilot.
- 17 Q. And how long have you worked for AirNet?
- 18 A. Since February of 2019, so just three years, over three
- 19 years.
- 20 Q. All right. And what airmen certificate and ratings do you
- 21 have?
- 22 A. I have my single commercial, single multi, single -- or
- 23 single commercial, single multi -- multi commercial, there we go,
- 24 instrument and Lear SIC.
- 25 Q. And the Lear SIC, is that a type rating then?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Okay. Excellent. And are you a check airman or instructor
3 here at AirNet?
- 4 A. Not here, no.
- 5 Q. Okay. Have you ever been?
- 6 A. I have before.
- 7 Q. Where?
- 8 A. A company in Star Marianas.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. It's out of the Pacific Island over by Guam.
- 11 Q. And what were you a check airman or --
- 12 A. As a Cherokee, Piper Cherokee.
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. And we used to -- I was the line check.
- 15 Q. Okay. Excellent. And we'll ask for your history here in
16 just a minute.
- 17 A. Okay.
- 18 Q. Thank you for that. Now this is always, as I say the
19 toughest question for most pilots. Got an idea of your total
20 flight time?
- 21 A. Right around 3,000 hours.
- 22 Q. And how many of that is in the Baron?
- 23 A. I think it's somewhere upwards of 250 or so. Probably more.
24 It has to be more. I can't say exactly.
- 25 Q. See, I told you, these are the toughest questions. You said

1 approximately 250 hours?

2 A. That's just a -- that's a real guess --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- at the moment. I could probably do some quick math, but I

5 don't really know of the top of my head.

6 Q. That's a close enough ball park.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. That's good. I appreciate that. Has all that been is PIC?

9 A. Some sitting in the right seat with the other person flying

10 in the left seat --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- so I'd probably say like 80 percent of it.

13 Q. Okay. All right. And medical certificate?

14 A. First class.

15 Q. First class? Any limitations?

16 A. Just sight. Can't see.

17 Q. We all have that moment or that lifetime now. So those are

18 the toughest questions --

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. -- for most people, is just -- you never think about your

21 hours.

22 A. You did stump me once.

23 Q. Yeah, exactly. See, I did. Now we're going to kind of start

24 easing in, kind of help me understand if you will a little bit of

25 the AirNet structure.

1 A. Sure.

2 Q. Who would be like in your chain of command?

3 A. Well, I guess my first person that anybody really calls would
4 be Tom, our chief pilot, and then you have Brandon, the Director
5 of Operations. Then you have other operational control figures
6 involved with Mike Ott (ph.). He's the dispatcher, but those
7 would pretty much be the first people you'd give anybody a call
8 for any reason, so -- but mainly just Tom and Brandon as far as
9 flight purposes go.

10 Q. Okay. Have you ever had to reach out to the chief pilot for
11 any issues?

12 A. Just general concerns, maybe something like boxes. More
13 along the lines with our cargo operations you can call them.
14 You'd call Mike and them about those kind of questions. You'd
15 call Tom about maybe you're seeing something I would say maybe
16 something interesting with the plane that you noticed, that's
17 giving you a weird indication that may be something that we call
18 him for and he's usually pretty helpful on those lines.

19 Q. Okay. All right. From your perspective, how would you
20 categorize staffing, pilot staffing at AirNet? Do you guys feel
21 staffed enough? Do you feel like you're flying a lot because
22 there's not enough staff? Kind of help me understand.

23 A. I think we had a bit of a patch where we lost I think seven
24 pilots in like six months or something like that. All of them
25 captains I believe, so we were -- for a little bit we were a

1 little bit short staffed, and it was all hands on deck, but even
2 still it was never any crazy -- I never felt overworked --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- to say the least. It's been -- we've been very steady the
5 whole time I've been here for the most part. It grew in the first
6 half year or so, maybe a little bit longer that I was here, and
7 we've pretty much reached our peak. We've picked up more
8 business, but it's still the same job, Sunday through Wednesday at
9 the latest. We've been doing a little bit more Sunday through
10 Wednesday flights recently, but I think there's nothing -- that's
11 pretty much the longest you're going to get, so --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- it's pretty doable, I'd say.

14 Q. Okay. Great. About how long ago was it when you had those
15 -- you lost about seven captains in a short period of time?

16 A. That was last summer.

17 Q. So --

18 A. 2021 during the summer.

19 Q. -- 2021?

20 A. That was because of the pandemic we didn't have anybody
21 moving anywhere, and so it was a good time for us to -- everybody
22 kind of stayed put and we built up a lot and then once the job
23 market kind of opened, it was kind of the flood gates were open
24 and it was -- it started probably around early summer, and that
25 six month period or so about seven people --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- so --

3 Q. All right. So what brought you to AirNet?

4 A. It's just a good job. It seemed like a good job with a lot
5 of growth.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. They just recently had a pay increase, but it's my good
8 friend who used to fly here. He works at Kalitta now, and he's
9 the person who actually put me onto them. He told me about them,
10 gave me a recommendation, and that was pretty much it.

11 Q. Okay. So before this job I think you said you were a check
12 airman or a line check pilot.

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. Kind of give us a little bit of your background if you will.

15 A. Well, just going all the way back to flight school, I went to
16 ATP Flight School in Atlanta.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. I did my training here. Started in 2015 of October, finished
19 2016, June or so. Then I went out to the Marionis, like I said,
20 by Guam, flew out there for a company called Star Marionis, did
21 91, Part 91 stuff flying tourists around the island. A lot of
22 circles were flown, and then I switched into the 135 side of the
23 operation flying passengers back and forth from island to island
24 and also cargo to the different islands, Guam included, and so
25 there was -- it was actually called Saipan. We flew to Guam

1 sometimes for the cargo, but, yeah, I did that out there, spent
2 about a year-and-a-half out there. Spent a year flying 135 and
3 then about eight months or so doing the check airman work there,
4 so --

5 Q. Okay. Great. I know a little bit ago you talked about, you
6 know, if you had a problem or concern you could reach out to your
7 chief pilot --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- things like that. Do you do that via phone call? Email?
10 Is there a form that they have? Kind of help me understand how
11 you communicate any concerns you have.

12 A. Depending on the concern, I think there surely is a few forms
13 you could fill out, whether it's like a fatigue report or
14 something like that. ASAP, obviously we have that program, but
15 for the most part I would say it's just phone calls, just a direct
16 -- you basically have a direct line to him whenever, and he's very
17 open about taking those phone calls as well, and he's open about
18 letting everybody know that he wants you to call him if you have
19 any questions, and no matter the time of day or anything like
20 that, so I'd say he's pretty -- his phone's always on it seems
21 like. He's always there for us, so --

22 Q. Okay. All right. Has there ever been a time you reached
23 out, called him, and he didn't have an answer and he needed to get
24 back to you?

25 A. You're saying that he didn't have an answer to the question?

1 Q. Correct. Yes. Thank you.

2 A. Yes, I'd say yes.

3 Q. Did he follow up with that? Okay.

4 A. Yeah, he usually -- if it's a, you know, maintenance question
5 that he has and he needs to dig a little bit more, he'll, you
6 know, get in contact with them and call you right back usually,
7 so --

8 Q. Okay. All right. Excellent. You said AirNet has an ASAP
9 program.

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. How do you like it?

12 A. I think it's a good program. It's a -- we don't see too
13 many. I think that -- like we don't see too many ASAP reports.
14 I'm on the committee.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. We don't see too many reports. It's not -- I talked to our
17 FAA representative there, and he works with NetJets, and he said
18 they have a whole team at the FSDO here. They're devoted just for
19 NetJets. We're not quite like that, so we'll get --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- maybe one or two every few months.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I think it's mainly because our, you know, our flying is very
24 -- like we do the same routes all the time so a lot of guys are
25 pretty well prepared. They know what's going to come that day,

1 and a lot of guys come prepared, you know. They come very
2 prepared, but as far as the program goes, I think that, you know,
3 it's just very -- it's a good program for our pilots. It helps
4 keep them safe and protected and all the things that it's supposed
5 to do. It does a good job with that, so --

6 Q. Okay. Just in very general terms if you could, kind of give
7 me an idea of what some of the ASAP reports you might get. If you
8 can give me just an example?

9 A. Something like -- what's the one -- like just an altitude
10 deviation --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- for -- that's a pretty common one. That's probably --
13 I've only been -- like I said, I've been on the committee for
14 four, five months now at least, maybe a little bit longer, and
15 we've only had one meeting.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And so there was something -- they're all declassified now so
18 I guess I can talk about them. One was an IFR landed into an
19 airport. The airport was IFR. They could see the airport so they
20 cancelled the IFR, but it was still reporting IFR, so that's --
21 they're like, oh, you know, we should just cover it. Another one,
22 they were on the wrong frequency, you know, for a little bit too
23 long, I guess and then like a lot of altitude deviations and, you
24 know, I filled out one, one time for we turned right on a taxi way
25 for a second. We didn't even fully turn on it, and we turned back

1 around and the pilot wanted to just make sure to cover himself and
2 he got ASAP in.

3 Q. Okay. Have there been any reports of pilots saying, you
4 know, this airplane's unsafe or that airplane's unsafe?

5 A. No, I've never seen anything like that.

6 Q. Or maintenance did not clear this item or --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- nothing like that?

9 A. Nothing like that.

10 Q. So just --

11 A. Usually --

12 Q. -- deviation type?

13 A. Yeah, it's mainly --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- yeah, exactly. It's all been flying at this point. I've
16 never had any -- I've never heard anything come, you know, someone
17 reporting an ASAP or anything for that matter about the planes or,
18 you know, not feeling comfortable with this or that or anything
19 like that, so --

20 Q. Okay. All right. Have there been any pressures to complete
21 a flight put on you guys or -- I mean, I know pilots, we all put
22 -- have self-induced pressures --

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. -- you know, that's just kind of our nature, but has there
25 ever been external pressures put on you guys to, man, you really

1 need to get this flight?

2 A. I would say no. I know that there's that part of aviation,
3 you know, the dark paths essentially. You know, I've heard some
4 interesting stories from people about, you know, those kind of
5 pressures, and I know that that's something that aviation as a
6 whole we need to get away from, as far away as possible, but at
7 AirNet I think that that's a priority as well, you know, just
8 knowing if you don't feel safe, if you feel like you don't have
9 the whatever, like you don't, you know, you're not awake enough,
10 you're too tired, you're whatever it might be, it's up to you. It
11 really is. It's -- and I think that that's something that's
12 stressed there a lot, and, like I said, whether it's, you know --
13 I've called Tom a few times at 2:00, 3:00 in the morning and -- to
14 ask him questions about, hey, like how's this look, like what are
15 you seeing here, and that's something that he encourages indoc
16 training and everything. If you see something that you don't
17 like, please like call me and let me know, and we'll figure out a
18 plan or, you know, we'll get you on the ground, wherever you need
19 to be, and you can stick it out during the night before, you know,
20 and let the weather pass, so --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- it's definitely something that is important here.

23 Q. All right. Have you ever refused a flight or an airplane or
24 anything like that?

25 A. After saying all that, no, I have not.

1 Q. Okay. No, that's why --

2 A. No, I understand.

3 Q. -- I wanted to make sure I just understood was that a
4 personal --

5 A. I -- yeah, exactly. I feel as though I have the option. I
6 have to really think now. I can't think of a time where I have
7 for weather aircraft at all, nothing like that.

8 Q. All right. Is there any kind of -- I'm trying to think of a
9 good way to word this. Is it -- what is your personal minimums
10 for flying, like IFR type? Is your personal minimums down to the
11 minimums? Do you have a higher minimums? Kind of help me
12 understand your viewpoint or maybe the company has a minimum
13 standard.

14 A. Yeah. I think that they -- like I said before, they will
15 allow any personal minimums that you do have, but for the most
16 part I think to myself that there's no way you can know your
17 personal minimums if you don't go to the ones that are prescribed
18 by the FAA and, you know, those minimums are there for a reason.
19 That being said, though, you have to have discretion, I guess. I
20 don't have a set hard number myself, but depending on the day,
21 depending on that airport, what it's looking like around that
22 airport, are the other airports around there equally bad and I'm
23 not going to have enough fuel to get to one that's, you know, 70
24 miles away, like those kind of things are going to what set my
25 minimums, I'd say.

1 Q. Okay. No, that -- and that helps me get a good --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- perception here of what -- how it's handled here.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. All right. In a roundabout way I guess we've already kind of
6 talked about the work environment here --

7 A. Sure.

8 Q. -- but how would you classify the work environment? Is it
9 hostile? Open door? Family oriented? Kind of help me
10 understand --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- how you feel it is.

13 A. I think that when I was in the islands in Star Marionis over
14 there, it was as family as it gets because you're all stuck on an
15 island. You have nowhere to go. I remember thinking that, like I
16 could look out to my left and see the ocean, I could look out to
17 my right and see the ocean. It was 40 square miles, and --

18 Q. Oh, wow.

19 A. -- so those people you work with are everything you have, you
20 know. And I get that -- we're on the step, like we're very close
21 to that. The fact that we all live a little bit farther away here
22 is kind of keeping us from getting to that level of family
23 orientated, but I've always felt there's that, you know, I always
24 look forward to flying with the person I get to fly with. I
25 always like knowing that when I'm going to work that there's two

1 other crews going to be flying out, too, so I get to go see all
2 those guys and then every time I go into the office, I'm happy to
3 see the guys in the office because I don't get to see them as
4 often, you know, whether it's Tom or Brandon, or Mike and them.
5 You know, I -- it's good to be able to run into those guys and
6 talk to everybody, so I feel as though it's a good environment to
7 work in. It's a very open door. You can -- very open door
8 because it's the office, so you can just kind of reach your head
9 over, but I've always enjoyed working here and I've always felt
10 very comfortable here.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Good, safe learning environment.

13 Q. Okay. Perfect. And just for the record, I guess your base
14 is here at Rickenbacker --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- is that correct? All right.

17 A. Just up the street.

18 Q. All right. Now you got called in to talk with me because I
19 understand you have -- you had flown with one or both of the crew
20 members?

21 A. George.

22 Q. George? With one of them then?

23 A. Just one of them.

24 Q. Can you kind of -- do you recall when the last time you flew
25 with him was?

1 A. Yeah, it was the 15th I believe of December.
2 Q. Okay.
3 A. Yeah, that's when.
4 Q. Okay. And December 2021, correct?
5 A. Yes.
6 Q. Okay. Kind of walk me through how that -- where was your
7 flight to? How many flights?
8 A. It was --
9 Q. Help me understand. Put me -- let me be that fly on your
10 shoulder so I can see --
11 A. Yeah.
12 Q. -- and know everything you're seeing.
13 A. Baron, I think at the moment we only have two routes, so I
14 guess that's after -- out of Rickenbacker at least, but the route
15 that we did was the 108 where we flew from Columbus to St. Louis
16 and St. Louis back. I believe that day we left around 10:00 p.m.
17 I could check.
18 Q. Just kind of give me an --
19 A. Okay.
20 Q. -- easy --
21 A. Yeah, we -- I mean, we -- I got there probably about five
22 minutes early for our flight, and I showed up and George has had
23 his whole -- everything laid out, like he had flight plans, he had
24 all of our paperwork done, he had everything under the sun. His
25 iPad was out looking at the flight, you know. Everything was --

1 he did everything, and he wasn't even -- and I was five minutes
2 early and he had already done all that paperwork, and I didn't
3 even know where he was. He was out pre-flighting the plane before
4 we were even supposed to be there, so when I showed up, he was as
5 prepared as he possibly could have been. And it was very -- I've
6 told that before, that it was impressive, you know, like showing
7 up and seeing like, oh, this guy's going to be good, you know,
8 he's going to be a good pilot for us. He just -- yeah, he covered
9 all his bases, but as far as the flight goes, it was -- I think it
10 was a clear day, so it was pretty straightforward. It was just
11 good to be able to talk to him and, you know, get to know him. It
12 was my first time meeting him, first time ever meeting him. Even
13 during all his training I never saw him, and so it was nice to fly
14 with him. You know, he had a good attitude about him, you know.
15 He was a little tired I could say, but he was getting used to it a
16 little bit more, but, yeah, we, you know, just talked the whole
17 way over, flew over there, waited for our boxes, picked them up,
18 threw them in and flew back. It was a clear day, so --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- nice, easy, straightforward day.

21 Q. Do you recall if it was a 135 flight both ways? 91?

22 A. It was 91 out there to pick up the boxes, and that's when he
23 flew, and then the 135 back.

24 Q. Okay. How'd you guys decide who flew?

25 A. He did not have his captain, 135 minimums yet, so he had to

1 fly the 91 leg.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. That's the only one that he could fly, and that's kind of how
4 we do it, where most of the Baron flights are out and backs, and
5 so the 91 -- they'll put somebody on there who does not have the
6 hours yet. They'll fly the 91 leg to get time in the plane, and
7 I'll fly back usually or whoever is flying with them.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Sometimes if I say there's not a 91 pilot around or whatever
10 the case may be, like I would do just both legs myself, something
11 like that.

12 Q. Okay. Do you normally fly two pilots or is it one pilot or
13 does it vary on the Baron?

14 A. It varies. I can't say -- I don't fly it too, too often. At
15 this point I haven't flown -- I think that was the last time I did
16 fly it. Maybe one time in between then, but either way it's -- I
17 would say it's a little bit more reserved for the newer people.
18 Not even like, you know, obviously, you know, in George's
19 situation he was pretty -- very new at the time of the event, and
20 so a lot of the times it's just the less senior guys than myself.
21 Most people haven't been here three years, so --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- I kind of -- I wouldn't say I'm the big, you know, big guy
24 around town or anything like that, but I would even say it's like
25 an unspoken agreement that I don't fly, it's nothing like that.

1 It's just, you know, we want to get these guys more experience on
2 the plane -

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. --and so it's usually handed off to the newer guys.

5 Q. Okay. Excellent. So you flew a 91 leg over -- 91 over, 135
6 flight back --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- right?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. When George was flying the 91 leg, was he in the left seat or
11 the right seat?

12 A. The left.

13 Q. Is that how it always is? You always fly from the left?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. Now the Baron has -- is it a single yoke or a dual
16 yoke airplane?

17 A. It depends on the model I guess that we have. We -- some of
18 them have the -- well, some of them have the center column and
19 then they have two yokes that come off of it, and some of them
20 just have the center column that goes to the left side and it can
21 swing over, I guess.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. But I'm not sure in the case of 585 if it just had the
24 single. I think it did.

25 Q. Okay. The plane when you and George flew, was it a single or

- 1 dual yoke?
- 2 A. I don't know.
- 3 Q. I know, it's been a couple of months ago --
- 4 A. Yeah.
- 5 Q. -- so I don't know works just fine. If you're flying the 91
- 6 leg and you said George was in the left seat, so the yoke was in
- 7 the left seat --
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. -- do you do the radios?
- 10 A. Uh-uh.
- 11 Q. Is there a push to talk switch on your side?
- 12 A. Yeah, it's like in the audio panel below where your jacks --
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. -- plug in. It's just a button right there if you don't have
- 15 a yoke that is.
- 16 Q. All right.
- 17 A. Some of them that do have yokes obviously it's just on the
- 18 yoke.
- 19 Q. Okay. Is there a push to talk switch on the left side if the
- 20 yoke is over on the right side? Like if somebody --
- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. -- threw the yoke over?
- 23 A. No.
- 24 Q. There is not on the left?
- 25 A. No, not that I'm aware of. I haven't looked.

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. I wouldn't say that there is though on the single yoke
3 planes, that is.
- 4 Q. Okay. Right.
- 5 A. I would doubt it just because of the design I guess.
- 6 Q. Okay. How is it -- is there any concerns or -- concerns is
7 probably the very bad word to use -- to throw over a yoke? Does
8 that add any challenges when you're flying with a new guy? I
9 mean, like you flew with George.
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. First time you flew with him.
- 12 A. Um-hum.
- 13 Q. He had the yoke in his hand. You didn't have anything in
14 front of you, right?
- 15 A. I can't say for sure. I don't know the plane that we flew.
- 16 Q. Okay.
- 17 A. I can't even say that. I'm not sure, but I can see what
18 you're getting at, and I've never had it be a problem before. I
19 -- we don't really use the throw over system. That's why, like I
20 said, we sit in the left seat always because we just leave it over
21 there.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. We kind of don't want to mess with it, I guess, but I can't
24 say I've ever had any concerns, but I can see why one might.
- 25 Q. Okay. That helps. Have you ever -- do recall flying in the

1 accident airplane at all?

2 A. Not particularly for any particular reason that would stand
3 out in my head.

4 Q. Well, that's good in itself, right?

5 A. It is, and that's what I'm getting at. It's -- I'm sure that
6 I have flown it, though.

7 Q. Okay. All right. Do you guys do most of your flying at
8 night? Daytime? 50/50? Kind of help me understand typical
9 flying.

10 A. We get a lot of nighttime. A lot of our customers like to be
11 late and so a day that could be a day/day -- a day flight day
12 turns into a night/day, you know, obviously a flight in the winter
13 and everything like that, so in the Baron specifically the
14 majority of our routes right now I think are just all at night.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Like I said, there's the 108 that we flew where we left at
17 10:00 p.m., and that's pretty usual. There's another one that
18 leaves at like midnight or something. May be many more, but
19 either way, yeah, it's a pretty late night.

20 Q. Okay. And you referenced the 108. Is that just like a
21 line --

22 A. That's our call sign.

23 Q. A call sign. Okay.

24 A. USC 108.

25 Q. Okay. I just wanted to make sure I understood --

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. -- what the 108 was.
- 3 A. I get you.
- 4 Q. How often do you fly in instrument conditions, you know, into
5 the soup if you will?
- 6 A. As much as I guess mother nature allows for me. If it's
7 soup, I'm in -- whether it's soup or not, I'm pretty much flying
8 -- we talked about my minimums earlier.
- 9 Q. Um-hum.
- 10 A. There's like -- it's gotten to the point I feel like at this
11 point it doesn't really -- it's not something I'm like super,
12 super conscience of in like the way that it's like, oh, like I'm
13 flying into the, you know, the clouds today. It's got to the
14 point where -- because we do do a lot of IFR flying here, and
15 that's just, you know, we fly into the east a lot. I live in
16 Ohio.
- 17 Q. Right.
- 18 A. So it's pretty -- it gets pretty soupy around here, but, I
19 mean, the -- we -- frequently I would say I guess.
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. I at least touch a cloud on a flight for the most part.
- 22 Q. Do you feel when you, like for instance George, it was a 91
23 flight you said because he didn't have enough time for 135
24 operations, right?
- 25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Or to act as a PIC on a 135.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Do you recall was that because of instrument, IMC conditions?
4 Was it just total time?

5 A. I never -- I do not believe it was total time, and I would
6 imagine it was nighttime, but I'm not really sure.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. I didn't -- we didn't talk about that.

9 Q. I wasn't sure, you know. Sometimes pilots when they're
10 flying --

11 A. I don't --

12 Q. -- they --

13 A. I talk about other stuff.

14 Q. There you go.

15 A. I learned a lot about him that day. You know, six hours
16 together basically so it was, you know -- I like to talk, you
17 know, who are you, you know --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. -- who is the pilot next to me as opposed to where do you
20 want to work.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. Like do you want to just -- so it's not my main -- we talked
23 about him, you know, and his family and everything, so --

24 Q. It kind of helps me understand what you guys -- what you
25 learned about him.

1 A. He was a really, really good dude. He was a family man,
2 seemed like. That's what he talked to me about a lot, you know,
3 just about the different things he enjoyed doing with his sons.
4 He had three sons. He flew previously at the State Highway
5 Patrol, so, yeah, he had upwards of -- I think he had more hours
6 than me, which is like crazy, right? But, no, he flew, you know,
7 quite a bit for the State Highway Patrol. He flew pretty much in
8 every airport in Ohio he said. And I think the State Highway
9 Patrol, you know, left him very organized. Whether he was that
10 way or not before, I think he was also in the military, so he was
11 a very, you know, organized man. He was, you know, very ready for
12 the flight, very ready for all flights I'm sure that he'd ever
13 taken, but he was just a really, you know, really nice guy.

14 Q. Okay. I believe you said that flight you thought was a VFR
15 day or --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- VFR night flight --

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. -- so he didn't get any instrument time I assume.

20 A. Yeah, I don't think we did any approaches or anything like
21 that, yeah.

22 Q. How was his piloting abilities?

23 A. He was pretty -- he seemed like he was on top of everything.
24 You know, most of the flight I'd have to say is straight, you
25 know, we fly direct. It's at night time, we're at 5,000 feet so

1 there's nobody around to make us do a route, you know, so we
2 literally just, we fly direct, autopilot, and I -- he was, you
3 know, monitoring and started making sure everything -- I remember
4 him actually like checking the gauges and, you know, the engine
5 gauges and everything like that repeatedly through the flight, so,
6 you know, he was I would say -- it's hard to judge his piloting
7 ability by one takeoff and landing specifically -- like limited to
8 that amount, you know, it's hard to say, but I know that, you
9 know, what I saw, his one takeoff and one landing, you know, were
10 pretty good.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And as good as I would expect, and so from a man who's as
13 serious as he was, and it was good. He was as focused, you know,
14 so --

15 Q. Okay. Okay. Great. Well, that helps. Did you ever -- have
16 you ever flown that route from St. Louis to Denver?

17 A. Yes, I have.

18 Q. How long ago was it since you've flown that one? And, I
19 mean, you don't have to give me exact date.

20 A. Yeah. Probably like two -- it was during my earlier days.

21 Q. Oh, okay.

22 A. Like I remember -- I think I did it two weeks in a row within
23 my first eight months or something like that of working here, so
24 2020.

25 Q. Okay. So it's been a little while.

1 A. It's been a while, yeah.

2 Q. All right. Can you recall anything about that route?

3 A. It's long. It's a long one. Yeah, it's just -- it's, you
4 know, four hours out there fighting head winds, and then, you
5 know, four hours back. Usually it gets you to pretty much eight
6 hours in two legs, so it's a pretty long one, but like I said,
7 it's all at night so it can -- a lot of wind farms out there. If
8 you didn't know that, I can tell you from experience. Yeah, it's
9 just a long, long flight.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But nothing, you know, obviously you get a little bumpy from
12 the mountains out there once you get a little closer, but there's
13 nothing too crazy about it that I can remember at least.

14 Q. Okay. Does the Baron have an autopilot?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. How's that work? Well, let me rephrase that.

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. I assume you have used it?

19 A. Yes, I have used it. How well does it work you mean?

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. I gotcha. I'd say it works, you know, I can only think of --
22 I think of one experience that I've had where it held the altitude
23 and we started just, you know, turning without any input from me
24 or any change in anything, just a slight turn, but that's the one
25 time out of, you know, X amount of hours, but every other time,

1 you know, I've had it shoot me down to minimums. I'm like 50 feet
2 above minimums, more like -- and I was on autopilot for probably,
3 you know, 80 percent of the approach, and so I, you know, I trust
4 it pretty much, pretty -- with a lot of my trust. I give it a lot
5 of my trust, and it does a pretty good job I think.

6 Q. Okay. Is it a slave to you like a GPS or do you have to
7 adjust the heading?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. You need to --

10 A. You have to adjust the heading, HSI needle --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- and stuff like that, so --

13 Q. Okay. All right. Is there a policy on when you can turn the
14 autopilot on or when you have to have it turned off?

15 A. I can't think of a number in my head right now, so, no, I
16 can't say for sure.

17 Q. And that's okay. Remember, it's not a checkride, it's all
18 good.

19 A. That --

20 Q. Don't sweat it.

21 A. You'd be digging if it was.

22 Q. No, no problem. Did -- you recall if George used the
23 autopilot?

24 A. Yes, he did.

25 Q. And his familiarity with it in your mind from what you can

1 recall?

2 A. He seemed -- I don't remember him fumbling with it or
3 anything like that, yeah.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So I think he was familiar for sure.

6 Q. Okay. Great. Let's talk just a little bit if we can about
7 training.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. Do you -- do they provide you with recurrent training here to
10 keep you -- how often is that done? Is it once a year? Once
11 every six months?

12 A. It's once a year.

13 Q. Okay. Does that include ground and flight training?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Let's talk about your flight training part.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Even if it's recurrent.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Is that a day or night?

20 A. This is at day.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. All of mine at least have been at day. I feel as though I
23 remember them doing a few night flights with people before.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I'm not sure that they continuously do that. I thought it

1 was a good idea when I heard about that, but I'm not sure that
2 they still do.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. They just, you know, not logistically the best thing to do,
5 you know. I don't know.

6 Q. But yours were during the day, correct?

7 A. Yes. All of mine have been during the day.

8 Q. The last one, when was that? When was your last recurrent
9 flight?

10 A. September, six months ago.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That's if I remember right.

13 Q. It was about six months -- five, six months. Don't make me
14 do math this early in the morning.

15 A. Backwards month math, no thank you.

16 Q. Do you recall on that flight, what'd you do? Was it just
17 maneuvers, approaches?

18 A. Yeah, we have to do a few approaches, VOR approach. I did a
19 single engine ILS, multiple maneuvers.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. All your standard stuff.

22 Q. Did you have to do that day VFR or was it done IFR? Was it
23 simulated?

24 A. It was simulated, but there was IFR conditions. I remember
25 we flew into a rain cloud and he was like happy for it because,

1 you know what I'm saying, it's helpful, you know, it's bouncing
2 you around. I didn't really know it was coming because I was
3 already under foggles (ph.), and so it was a good simulated or a
4 good training environment, you know, so if it is an IFR day, we'll
5 still go just to -- no, I wouldn't say a full IFR day, but either
6 way I've never had a day where I'm in the soup the whole time
7 doing maneuvers I guess I could say.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. But it is a -- they would do it, I guess.

10 Q. Okay. You said they used foggles or a hood or what do they
11 use to --

12 A. We'll use --

13 Q. -- limit your vision?

14 A. I usually wear a hat and tuck it down, I guess --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- but, yeah, I'm simulating my IFR. We have a, you know, a
17 sunshade as well that we'll bring down and kind of just promise
18 that I won't look.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Keep my eyes down.

21 Q. Okay. All right. That's easy enough.

22 A. It works. I can't see.

23 Q. Yeah. As part of your flight training do they give you any
24 unusual altitudes under simulated or actual instrument conditions?

25 A. I don't know. I'm going to say I don't know --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- because I can't recall. I know that I have done that
3 before through Lear training, but that doesn't, you know, that's
4 obviously not what you're asking so I'm not sure if -- I can't
5 recall I guess --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- if we did that training or not. I'm not sure.

8 Q. And you did it in Lear training?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Did you do Lear training in the Lear or do you do it in a
11 simulator?

12 A. In a simulator.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then we go to Tucson --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- Flight Safety down there.

17 Q. All right. Let's talk a little bit about the ground school
18 portion of your recurrent. How long is that?

19 A. Of recurrent it could be two days of class if you'd like it
20 to be. It kind of ends up to the pilot. I'd say that most people
21 don't want to fly the Baron as much as possible once they get that
22 taste of the jet fuel, yeah, they don't want to switch back, so I
23 think that's kind of part of it. But the training portion of it,
24 though -- yeah, it can be two days of it if you need it, if you
25 feel as though you don't, you know, aren't as comfortable or if

1 you have questions that you want to ask, you can definitely make
2 it happen.

3 Q. Okay. Is the recurrent training just you with one of your
4 instructors or is it like a -- several of you?

5 A. It's just probably two at the most of you there. I know my
6 recurrents were done with -- I had one other pilot with me. He
7 since moved on so it's pretty much -- it was just me at the last
8 one, so --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- you know, we just did our ground together, and you get
11 that one-on-one, so it's pretty good.

12 Q. Okay. Was there any CRM training in your recurrent ground
13 that you can remember?

14 A. Not that I can remember.

15 Q. That's all right. Since you guys fly a lot at night and
16 sometimes IFR, sometimes VFR --

17 A. Yeah, sure.

18 Q. -- but, you know, you could always fly IFR, do they give you
19 any like spatial disorientation training or is there any
20 discussion about that kind of stuff?

21 A. Not that I can think of, no.

22 Q. All right. I know you said that when you flew with George,
23 he was very well versed in the autopilot.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Or at least he used it --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- well.

3 A. He pulled out the manual and he's -- yeah, I read this
4 chapter. Not quite that, but he was -- yeah, he knew what he was
5 doing --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- yes.

8 Q. Do you -- how often do you fly with other pilots versus
9 single pilot?

10 A. It's about 50/50 at this time.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. You know, it's -- yeah, I'll just say that, it's 50/50.

13 Q. Do you see most pilots using the autopilot or --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- do pilots like to hand fly it more?

16 A. I see most using the -- I'd probably say another 50/50 are
17 using hand flying to altitude depending on the altitude, I guess.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. I know that's kind of a standard practice. There's nothing
20 that's, you know, pushed on people or anything. It's, you know,
21 to your comfort really. If you want to use the autopilot you can,
22 you know, use it. It's very convenient and helpful and it does a
23 good job, but it depends on how I'm feeling, I guess. Even myself
24 I'm 50/50, if I want to fly up to, you know, if I'm feeling like I
25 want to fly, I'll fly it up to, you know, 5,000 feet.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Real exciting stuff, and then hit the autopilot, you know,
3 turn it on, altitude, nav mode and we're good.

4 Q. Okay. How does the Baron fly? You know, how's it feel to
5 you, your opinion on -- it's handling characteristics when it's --
6 when you're hand flying it?

7 A. It is not quite like the Lear which is a fighter pilot wing,
8 or a fighter, you know, jet wing, so it definitely has a little
9 bit slower response time in that regard. I can't compare it at
10 this time to any other piston, you know, multiengine planes
11 really, but I could say it feels heavy sometimes, you know. It
12 doesn't feel like you have the quickest, you know, the most agile
13 plane in the world. More like a semi-truck of sorts, you know.
14 It doesn't really feel too nimble or anything like that, you know.
15 It's a little sluggish. It's very powerful. It seems, you know,
16 like it has more than enough power to get anything done, but it's
17 just kind of the brut in that sense where it's very strong, but
18 it's like, you know, kind of rolls a little slow and everything
19 like that.

20 Q. Okay. When it's empty versus full, is there any -- I mean,
21 how does it feel to you? I assume you've flown it --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- both full and empty.

24 A. It still seems a little bit -- whether it's full or empty, I
25 know you can definitely -- you know, you get some performance

1 because, like I said, there's power, so whatever -- especially
2 when you're lighter obviously you're going to have more
3 performance, and so it can feel fast in that way, but if to my
4 immediate, you know, recollection I would say still it just feels
5 a little slow, a little sluggish in the control fashion at least,
6 in that regard.

7 Q. Does the CG moment, I mean, can you feel the difference like
8 when you're empty, I assume your CGs more forward where when you
9 have lots of packages, maybe your --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- CGs more aft. How does that feel for you if you can
12 recall? I know you fly between both the Lear and the --

13 A. It definitely will get tail heavy and it seems more visual
14 than it actually feels if that makes sense.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. When you -- if you load it up with a lot of weight, it's
17 going to start tilting back on you, and it -- like I said, it just
18 looks like that, but once you get, you know, rolling and flying,
19 the nose comes down, it falls down. Once the engine starts, then
20 it brings your nose down and obviously that's not really changing
21 the CG, but it feels as though -- it feels fine. It doesn't feel
22 the way it like appears, you know. It seems like, wow, you're
23 just going to fall right on your tail, do a, you know, do a
24 wheelie, but it actually ends up it still flies, you know, fine.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It feels good flying at all CGs really.

2 Q. Okay. Have you flown this, you know, the Baron, have you
3 flown it in icing conditions?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. How's it feel for that? Do you notice? Maybe I should ask
6 it that way.

7 A. Yeah, there's definitely, you know, a performance drop off.
8 I wouldn't say it's anything out of the ordinary for, you know,
9 when you have an inch of ice or whatever you have on your plane.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. There's nothing -- I think it handles ice pretty well. I
12 think that that's what most people would say. It's -- at least
13 that's the reputation I have heard from other pilots, that it does
14 pretty well in ice, and I've had my fair share of ice, but like I
15 said, it does a pretty good job shedding it and being able to take
16 on the weight, but it has, you know, it has its limits.

17 Q. You're right. Does it feel heavy to you when it's building
18 ice? I mean the controllability, is it more sluggish I think to
19 use one of your --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- phrases?

22 A. I think -- I can't -- the last time I had icing it was like,
23 yeah, it's been a little bit of a -- this last like February like
24 in the winter.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. At least like notable, but it was -- it seemed to -- it gets
2 rid of the ice, you know, pretty quickly if you, you know, do the
3 right procedures to do that, but it doesn't really -- I can't say
4 that I've gotten to the point where I felt it was like a really
5 mushy -- control is really sluggish --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- on the reaction time. I've never felt that way when I
8 felt ice on the plane, so I was -- I've always felt, you know,
9 like it can take it --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- for the most part.

12 Q. All right. Have you ever stalled the airplane? I assume
13 from your phrasing -- in training have you stalled the airplane?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Is it to a full stall? Is it just to the onset of it?

16 A. Just the recovery, the first sign.

17 Q. And what's the first sign in the Baron?

18 A. The horn comes on pretty quick, but it does have a little bit
19 of a buff --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- on either wing.

22 Q. Is it noticeable or is it just kind of like, oh, I kind of
23 felt something?

24 A. Yeah, I guess if you're -- it's hard to say because in that
25 training environment, I'm waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. -- for the staff, so I would say it's -- there's been
3 noticeable in training at least, you know, to that -- to this
4 extent or to this, you know, point in time. I'm not sure if I can
5 speak for that, you know, on the actual line or just in a normal
6 condition when I'm not thinking about it, it's hard to say exactly
7 how it feels, so --

8 Q. Okay. All right. You said the horn comes on pretty quickly.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Is that something you guys test in pre-flight, too?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Okay. And is it just -- help me understand, is it a micro
13 switch on the wing?

14 A. Yeah, it just has a little micro switch over there and --

15 Q. Okay.

16 (Background noise)

17 Q. How's that again? No, just kidding.

18 A. For the record.

19 Q. All right. Let's go back to that time you were flying with
20 George.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. Do you guys use headsets at all?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Is that required or just is it preference?

25 A. I actually just learned the other day that -- not at this

1 company that I'm aware of at least that -- I didn't even know that
2 other people don't use headsets.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So I've always used headsets. I've always used the intercom
5 system without my knowledge of even being -- that there was
6 another option, just yelling, I guess. Especially in a Baron it's
7 pretty loud in there.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. It's not the quietest of airplanes, so --

10 Q. See you already went through a couple of my questions there
11 because I was going to try and get into --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- how loud is it.

14 A. It's not quiet. If you're at altitude and you've got wind,
15 you know, working against you as well, it's just going to be even
16 that much louder.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So --

19 Q. Did George use his headset or --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- did you have to request him?

22 A. No, he used his headset.

23 Q. Okay. Have you ever had pilots not use a headset here?

24 A. No.

25 Q. No. Okay. Is there any -- I know you said George didn't

1 have quite enough time to do 135 for whatever reason, to act as
2 PIC under 135 flight.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And then he got it obviously because he was flying that
5 flight.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Is there any guidance if a new pilot -- when you were a new
8 pilot here, was there any guidance for you as a new pilot flying
9 with other new pilots? Did they give you any guidance on how to
10 deal with low time pilots?

11 A. I would say that -- I wouldn't say there's any direct like
12 coaching or anything like that. Like I said, like I stated
13 before, that if you did feel nervous about it, I wouldn't have
14 hesitated to make a call, you know, and just go, hey, like how is
15 this guy. And I know that there is a lot of phone calls that are
16 made between pilots as well because maybe, you know, maybe one of
17 -- say I'm the new pilot, you know, and I just got my minimums for
18 135, and then I'm flying with, you know, Bill over here, and he's
19 a brand new guy, too, it's a very common thing where I could call
20 him, like, hey, like, you know, Josh, you flew with Bill, like how
21 was he, like -- that's -- I think that's a very common thing that
22 happens around here. You're just trying to, you know, like you
23 said, prepare for your flight, be ready for, you know, flying with
24 the new person, and I guess that's -- you'd have to take it onto
25 your own. There's nothing -- I guess they assume that if they're

1 teaching you well enough on the plane, and they're teaching you
2 everything about the plane and how to fly and this and that, they
3 shouldn't really have to teach you how to fly with somebody else
4 who's also been taught about it, but, you know, CRM is a thing and
5 it's an important thing, and, you know, it could have been -- it
6 seems a little bit -- I could see why you're asking. It could be
7 a better way to do that, I guess, than just relying on the pilots
8 to call people and, you know, this and that, so --

9 Q. Okay. And I know the time you flew with George it was VFR --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- but have you ever had a time flying with somebody that's
12 new --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- they don't have the requirements to meet 135 so they're
15 doing a 91 leg, and you're flying in IMC conditions? Has there
16 ever been any time where you've had concern about doing that?

17 A. Not that I can -- nothing stands out, you know, it's -- and
18 it might just be that I've had good fortune. I always think I'm a
19 lucky person, you know, because there's like a lot of situations
20 that, you know, I find -- not a luck out, but like, you know,
21 whether it's a bad weather day and like I don't have to fly that
22 day, you know. It's like when the weather's perfect, I'll fly the
23 whole week, you know.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. It's just that kind of -- my odds always seem to be good, so

1 maybe that's just -- I can't speak for other people's experiences,
2 but from my own I've never felt really -- you know, I was never
3 shooting, you know, the low IFR approaches with a new person, so I
4 can't say that that would -- that might be something that concerns
5 me I guess I could say.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. But it's never happened, you know --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- to me.

10 Q. And that's okay. I'm glad it hasn't.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Not that it's been a concern anyway, so free to think about.

13 A. I would probably not -- if I did not feel comfortable, I
14 wouldn't really hesitate to say I'm going to probably fly this
15 leg, you know, something like that, and as the sitting -- like
16 captain next me on that flight I think that it's something that
17 might be, you know, that that would be -- we would at least
18 discuss it, you know, are you comfortable with this, if, you know
19 -- I would make sure I think first before, you know, just finding
20 out, you know, as opposed to just finding out, yeah.

21 Q. Even if it's a 91 flight you would -- if you didn't -- you
22 would take the flight --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- if necessary?

25 A. I mean, I could see that happening, yes.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I would say yes.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. If, like I said, if it's -- there's not -- and even if there
5 has been a time where we have gone into IFR, you know, and shot an
6 approach, there's never been anybody here that I've flown with
7 that I did not feel comfortable with, but if there was, I guess
8 that'd be more of a time that I would do that and go, hey, look,
9 I'm going to probably fly this leg, but like I said, that's never
10 had happened because everybody I've flown with has been, you know,
11 a good pilot, competent and everything, so --

12 Q. Okay. Have you ever had the yoke thrown over to you if
13 you're in the right seat?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. I just wanted to -- I was going through my list here.
16 I just wanted to make sure. The time you flew with George I think
17 you said you got there five minutes early.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. Was that five minutes before your report time or five minutes
20 before your flight report time?

21 A. Report time, so it's an hour before our departure time.

22 Q. And you said he already had the paperwork done.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Do you guys have dispatchers or flight followers or --

25 A. Yeah. Mike is one of our dispatchers. We have Rick, he's a

1 dispatcher, and then we have Steve as well --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- and so they all dispatch, and Steve leaves -- he's our,
4 you know, third shift kind of guy. He does midnight to 1:00 a.m.
5 or so. He leaves around then, and then we have flight following
6 done by Kalitta, and they'll take over from then.

7 Q. Okay. Do they prepare your flight plan and weather or is
8 that something you as the pilots did?

9 A. That's something that we do.

10 Q. How do you guys do that?

11 A. We use Foreflight.

12 Q. Okay. How's that work for you guys, in your opinion, of
13 course?

14 A. I'd like -- it's a really good app --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- or program I guess you could say. It really presents
17 everything in front of you, right there, and if you are filing
18 then it's going to give you every, you know, every piece of data
19 it can about that flight at every airport between here and -- you
20 know, here and St. Louis it's going to tell you how it's reporting
21 and this and that, so it's a pretty good system, I think. And
22 I've never had somebody file for me other than like on the Lear,
23 the captains, they file, so --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- but it's just very nice to be able to see it there. I'm

1 not sure how they would get the information otherwise just, you
2 know, briefing the flight plan I guess. I'm not sure, but the way
3 that -- when you file it, it presents you the briefing, and it
4 just gives you -- say, hey, okay, check here, check here, check
5 here, have you done all this, have you seen all this information,
6 you know, yes and --

7 Q. And is that a subscription that the company pays for you
8 guys?

9 A. Yes, they pay for it.

10 Q. On a Part 91 flight when you flew with George --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- did he file it before you got there? Did you file it?

13 A. I can't remember, but it wouldn't be out of the ordinary for
14 him to do it himself.

15 Q. Who normally files for a 91? Is it the now pilot in command?

16 A. Yeah. I think it kind of depends on who's flying.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Some -- I want to say that he filed it there and I filed it
19 back.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And that wouldn't be something that would be uncommon
22 because, you know, that's my leg, that's his leg kind of thing,
23 and it's good practice, you know, but I can't say for sure whether
24 he did or not.

25 Q. There's no company guidance that you're aware of or policy

1 that the pilot in command has to file or anything? And it's okay
2 if you can't recall.

3 A. Yeah, I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

4 Q. All right. Did you know the other pilot at all?

5 A. I think I met her twice, yes.

6 Q. Never flew with her? Not that you can recall anyway?

7 A. No, definitely not. I recall that we had not. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. No, I met her one time while she was doing training. I
10 mistook her for somebody else, but that's how I met her then, and
11 then I saw her one night before she was going to do the 108, the
12 flight to St. Louis with your next interviewee, Rob.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Do you know about how many pilots AirNet
14 has in the Bonanza -- I'm sorry, the Baron?

15 A. Zero in the Bonanza.

16 Q. Yeah, zero. Good answer. That was a trick question.

17 A. Checkride. I mean, everybody technically is. They're all
18 qualified and, you know, trained in it so I don't know, we have
19 like 20 pilots or something, maybe a little bit more. Do you
20 know? I don't know.

21 Q. I don't know off the top of my head. I'm just trying to
22 gauge.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. I know you said it's kind of a family feel. Not like it was
25 when you were out in the Pacific, but, you know, it's --

1 A. I think that we had some -- probably something like 20-
2 something people who are qualified to do it. I know, you know,
3 for the most part once you become captain you kind of don't fly
4 it, the captain of the Lear that is. You don't fly it as much,
5 but if they need you to, you know, that's why you get recurrent
6 training, you know.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And Tom has done it himself, so he's not above, you know,
9 anybody. He's done it himself, you know, recently. You know, I
10 think another -- everybody can, but -- so everybody, however many
11 people you have, 20 and change maybe.

12 Q. Okay. Is -- I know you guys -- I don't want to call you
13 small, but you're not --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- like a --

16 A. Huge.

17 Q. You know, you're not thousands of pilots, right?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Is there a list that people that don't want to fly with each
20 other or have you ever had -- have you ever heard of such a --

21 A. I've heard of like I would say there's no list for sure that
22 anybody holds in one location that, you know, in a black book
23 somewhere, but I think that there's nobody that -- if you don't
24 want to fly with somebody, you could say it, I guess. I wouldn't
25 -- I wouldn't know anything about that. That's not how I operate

1 really. I don't -- it's hard for me to fathom that, but, you
2 know, people have their ways, I guess. I don't know.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. People get weird, and so, you know, it could be something
5 that happens and I don't think that, you know -- maybe if there's
6 some event or something like that that happened and you had a good
7 reason, like, hey, I really, really don't want to fly with Shawn,
8 like we -- last time we flew we butted heads, I don't think it's a
9 safe thing. Like if you come up with good reasons, you know, then
10 that's, you know, that's one thing, but I don't know how long they
11 can make that work because like I said, we have 20-something
12 pilots, so that combination is just going to come up eventually.
13 It's just the luck of the draw really.

14 Q. Well, like they understand if you said you didn't want to fly
15 with me. They'd be like, yeah, we don't blame you.

16 A. I met him.

17 Q. All right. You've helped me a ton trying to get an idea of
18 everything.

19 A. Sure.

20 Q. You really have. I know you may not -- maybe, I don't know,
21 you don't think you did, but you did.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. You helped me kind of get the AirNet side, kind of understand
24 George a little bit.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. So I appreciate that, but I always -- whenever I do
2 interviews I'm always afraid, you know, I could have pages and
3 pages of questions --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- but I'm afraid I'm going to miss one question that would
6 be -- would open the door of --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- understanding to me better. Is there something that you
9 can think of that I didn't ask, but it might -- it would help me
10 understand George, the company, the airplane --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- whatever, better --

13 A. I think that -- I can't think of anything really like, you
14 know, like you said that's going to open it wide open or anything,
15 but all I can really say is that I know George was a good pilot,
16 you know. I didn't he was, you know, right -- wrong place -- I
17 don't know. Like you said, this is all in efforts to try to
18 figure out what exactly happened, and, you know, it could happen
19 to anyone really for the most part, so who knows what we will find
20 here soon, but I've given you everything that I've got.

21 Q. No, and I appreciate it. You have my card so --

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. -- if you think of something, you know, call me, email me.

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. Whatever's easiest because it -- you know, sometimes after

1 you think about it for a week it's like, oh, wait, he -- if he
2 would have asked this, it might have helped. Please, feel free to
3 reach out. I always like to end, though with one question, and I
4 call it the king for the day question. If you were king for a
5 day, is there any changes you could see that you wish could be
6 done, whether while at AirNet or --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- in the air space system or something like that? Yeah, I
9 know pilots always say, you know, more money, but, you know --

10 A. Just get like, you know, brand new planes and stuff like
11 that. That's I think an unfortunate, you know, reality is that
12 the planes are older, they're not the most equipped, you know, to
13 be fighting off icing or they're not the best, you know, if we had
14 glass panels, we have this, we have that in the -- you know, all
15 these instruments in the plane and maybe that would have helped
16 that day, but I guess if I was king for a day that's something I
17 would do.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Just try to help the pilots if they don't feel comfortable,
20 you know, make sure that they do feel like the most -- they should
21 be like as most prepared as they can be, and I think they do as
22 best they can with what they were given here at AirNet, you know,
23 so --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- I don't think that there's any, you know, shortcomings or

1 anything like that from any of the guys in charge up there, so I
2 think, like I said, I just think that they do everything that they
3 can and just give me a PC 12 or something maybe.

4 Q. Okay. No, and, again, I appreciate that. Again, you have my
5 card --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. -- so feel free.

8 MR. ETCHER: But we can call this interview over at 10:10
9 Eastern.

10 (Whereupon, at 10:10 a.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL BEECH B58, N585CK ACCIDENT
 NEAR DEFIANCE, MISSOURI
 ON JANUARY 8, 2022
 Interview of Aaron Soto

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN22FA096

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lois D. Rush
Transcriber