



MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

Doug Brazy
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

May 6, 2015

Subject: Telephone Interview with witness Ruben Alconero, located at Penn Yan airport (KPEO), Penn Yan, New York.

Mr. Alconero was interviewed as witness to the airplane accident. He was located in the northwest corner of the airport property at the Penn Yan Flying Club ramp area when he observed the accident airplane. He was asked to describe what he could recall of the events surrounding the accident.

He stated that he was on the ramp preflighting an airplane at about 11:20 am when he noticed an unrelated Cessna 182 on final for runway 19. He said it appeared that the airplane was landing with a tailwind. He could not see the airplane touchdown, and surmised that it performed either a touch and go or a go-around because he observed the airplane soon after he lost sight of it, flying 'kinda low' and departing the pattern to the right, which he noted was odd because the published traffic pattern for runway 19 is left turns.

Shortly after the Cessna 182 departed, Mr. Alconero observed the accident airplane on a [left] downwind leg for runway 19. He said that as the airplane made the turn to the base leg, it was in what he described as a "very aggressive slip". As the airplane turned to final, he noticed the windsock in the foreground was indicating about 320 to 330 degrees. Based on how filled the windsock was, he estimated the windspeed to be greater than 10 knots. While on final approach, the airplane appeared to be "high and fast" and the slip continued until about the time the airplane was over the runway numbers. As it crossed over the numbers, Mr. Alconero estimated the altitude to be about 100 to 150 feet above the ground. He said the airplane then appeared to "float float float" as it continued to fly down the runway, until it went out of his view. He waited expecting to see the airplane either taxiing towards the ramp or continuing to fly in the pattern, but he did not.

Mr. Alconero added that while he was watching the airplane, the engine sounded like it was at idle, and was not sputtering or making any unusual noises, although it was difficult to hear in general due to the wind. He saw the propeller turning. He did not see any smoke coming from the airplane, nor did he see anything fall from or dangling from the airplane. He added that the flaps appeared to be fully down.

He further stated that often times the windsock does not agree with other indicators such as flags at various locations around the airport property. He said that runway 19 was not the appropriate runway to use at the time, based on his observation of the wind direction.

Mr. Alconero was thanked for his time.



RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Dennis J. Diaz
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: May 5, 2015 at 1315 EDT
Person(s) Interviewed: Jim Carey - Witness
NTSB Case Number: ERA15FA203

Narrative:

Mr. Carry was playing golf at the Lakeside Country Club when the accident occurred (position logged with GPS). When he first saw the airplane he was not sure if it was attempting to take off, or perform a touch and go. The airplane appeared to be ascending, and was in a steep pitch up attitude, which he estimated to be about 45 degrees. He could not recall if he heard any engine noise, nor did he hear any impact sounds. He noted that the airplane appeared to be in a "stall" and that it was "barely making headway." The airplane then veered to the left as the nose began to fall toward the ground. He last saw the airplane's tail as it disappeared from his view behind terrain. He then drove his golf cart to the airport perimeter fence to see if the airplane had crashed. Upon reaching the fence, an activity which he estimated took several minutes, he called 911. The timestamp in his phone's call log said that the call was placed at 1135. When asked he stated that he did not observe any smoke, fire, or other anomalies of the airplane before the accident.



RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Dennis J. Diaz
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: May 5, 2015 at 0900 EDT
Person(s) Interviewed: John Fennell - Witness
NTSB Case Number: ERA15FA203

Narrative:

Mr. Fenell was playing golf at the Lakeside Country Club when the accident occurred. He stated that it was his custom to watch airplanes whenever they were taking off or landing. He observed another three or four airplanes as they used the runway that morning, and said the traffic was typical for a Sunday. He first noticed the airplane when it was at about the mid field position as it proceeded south along the runway, into the wind. He further described the wind as "light" at the airplane's 130 to 2'oclock position. When he first saw the airplane it look like it was taking off. The engine sounded "normal" and the airplane's ascent was "very quick." When compared to other airplanes that might be taking off and their relative height at the same point down the runway, the accident airplane seemed to climb higher and faster than others. Once the airplane's wheels left the ground, the first 50 feet of its climb appeared to be normal. It then climbed fast, and banked in a continuous left arc until it impacted the ground. The arc the airplane made as it climbed and descended in the left roll appeared as if the left wing was "tied to the ground with a string."



RECORD OF INTERVIEW

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Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: May 5, 2015 at 0930 EDT
Person(s) Interviewed: Patrick J. D'Abbracci - Witness
NTSB Case Number: ERA15FA203

Narrative:

Mr. D'Abbracci was playing golf at the Lakeside Country Club when the accident occurred (position logged with GPS). Around 1130, he first saw the airplane it was pitched steeply upward, at an estimated angle of about 35 degrees, and held that attitude for several moments. He remarked to his golfing partner, "He's going to stall that plane." The airplane appeared to be below the height of the trees adjacent to the runway. The airplane then began a left roll, and he lost sight of it behind terrain. He could not recall if he could hear any engine noise. He did not see any fire, smoke, or other abnormalities with the airplane, and could not recall seeing any other airplanes operating from the runway.



RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Dennis J. Diaz
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: May 4, 2015 at 1400 EDT
Person(s) Interviewed: Patrick Manahan - Witness
NTSB Case Number: ERA15FA203

Narrative:

Mr. Manahan was playing golf at the Lakeside Country Club and was standing near the 12th hole when the accident occurred (position logged with GPS). He stated that it was his custom to watch airplanes whenever they were taking off or landing. He observed a similar-looking airplane as it took off from the runway about 5 minutes prior to the accident. When he first saw the accident airplane, it was pitched steeply upward, at an estimated pitch angle of at least 45 degrees. The airplane was tracking down the runway to the south, at an estimated altitude of about 50 feet above the ground. He could not recall whether or not he was able to hear any engine sounds. The airplane briefly leveled its pitch attitude, then again pitched steeply upward while rolling to the left. He lost sight of the airplane below the terrain, and then shortly thereafter heard the sounds of impact. He reported that there was no smoke, fire, or other abnormalities that he could see prior to the impact.



MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

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Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

May 4, 2015

Subject: Interview with Bill Middlebrook, President and CEO of Penn Yan Aero, and Nate Grifia Maintenance Technician at Penn Yan Aero.

Mr. Middlebrook

Mr. Middlebrook stated that he believed the accident pilot had some concerns about N3969L, and believed the pilot may have been performing some troubleshooting. He indicated that he had previously spoken with the pilot a number of times, and the pilot had indicated he was concerned about his ability to land the airplane, and he had a difficult time learning how to land it. Later, the pilot had said he thought something may be wrong with the airplane, because it would "hop and shimmy" during landings when everything else "seemed right".

Mr. Grifia

Mr. Grifia, a student pilot since age 13, had an opportunity to fly N3969L with a flight instructor (Mr. Matt Stevens, who was also the accident pilot's flight instructor), four days before the accident occurred. He said the airplane "flew great" and tracked straight while in the air. He said that during landing, the airplane stalled just as the main landing gear touched down, with the nosewheel still in the air, the airplane then "hopped and skipped" to the right and the heading changed toward the right. He said they subsequently performed a "soft field approach" on the next landing, and the airplane immediately "jolted to the right" on touchdown. Mr. Grifia said that he had talked about this issue with the flight instructor, and the instructor had said that it "took a lot of footwork" to keep the airplane straight. Mr. Grifia said that the flight instructor had suggested that the airplane "get looked at".

On the day of the accident, Mr. Grifia drove to Seneca Falls airport, to meet the accident pilot who had flown the airplane there for an appointment with a mechanic. Mr. Grifia said that he explained the circumstances of his landings in the airplane to the mechanic, and the mechanic had then checked the brakes, and had greased one of the axles. Mr. Grifia added that airplane looked to him as though its right wing was lower to the ground than the left wing, as it sat on the ramp.

Mr. Grifia added that the mechanic found "a lot" of water "in the nose drain", and noted that the pilot had fueled the airplane using his own supply of automotive fuel that he kept in a tank in his truck.

Mr. Middlebrook and Mr. Grifia were thanked for their time.

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