



RECORD OF INTERVIEW

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Date: May 5, 2015 at 1000 EDT
Person(s) Interviewed: Matt Stevens – Flight Instructor
NTSB Case Number: ERA15FA203

Narrative:

Mr. Stevens was the flight instructor of the accident pilot, Steven Seely. He had known Mr. Seely for about a year and a half, and had been a longtime friend of his family. Mr. Stevens is not a career flight instructor, and had initially obtained his certificate in order to teach his father how to fly. Mr. Seely subsequently approached him with an interest to learn, and given their relationship, he took him on as a student. They started Mr. Seely's flight training about 1 year ago, and he soloed last October. Mr. Seely had done some initial flight lessons with Dave Shaw in a Penn Yan Flying Club Airplane.

All of Mr. Steven's flights with Mr. Seely were done in the accident airplane. Following Mr. Seely's first solo flight, they had flown several additional dual flights, and Mr. Seely had also flown solo. After somewhat of a respite from flying during the winter, they picked up with their training in March. Mr. Seely needed another 90-day solo endorsement, so they performed a "proficiency flight." At the conclusion of the flight, he noted how well Mr. Seely was flying and increased the crosswind limitation on the solo endorsement. Mr. Stevens stated that he would have provided Mr. Seely with an initial solo endorsement in his logbook and on his medical certificate, the 90-day additional solo endorsement, and an endorsement to take the private pilot written examination. Mr. Seely did not have an endorsement to fly to any airports other than their home airport solo. Mr. Stevens had heard rumors after the accident that Mr. Seely had flown to other airports solo, and was surprised at that information.

After his first solo, Mr. Seely would check in with Mr. Stevens prior to every solo flight. By the time that he needed the additional 90-day solo endorsement, he generally would not check in prior to every flight, and sometimes would notify him after he had completed a solo flight via text message. Mr. Stevens was not concerned with this, as Mr. Seely was generally conservative with his decision making, was "quick to do a go-around," and would not try to force a landing. As to their recent contact, they had been in touch socially, and had not specifically discussed flying. They had most recently spoken the night before. Mr. Seely stated that he was going to breakfast with another pilot of a Cessna 170 (Don Adams). Mr. Stevens assumed that Mr. Seely would be riding as a passenger with Mr. Adams in the Cessna 170. He

subsequently received a text message from Mr. Seely stating that he was using VORs and that their previous training had worked great. He was not aware that Mr. Seely had flown his airplane solo to Oswego, NY or Seneca Falls, NY.

Recently, they had been working on dual cross country instruction, and Mr. Stevens was considering Mr. Seely take a solo cross country flight. They had both flown a cross country flight to Zelienople, Pennsylvania on the Wednesday preceding the accident (April 29). The flight went well, and he was impressed with Mr. Seely's performance. Specifically he remarked he flew better than during their last dual flight and that he was verbally walking through each of the required steps during the flight. They had not flown dual, and he was not sure if Mr. Seely had flown solo since that cross country flight.

Of all maneuvers performed, Mr. Seely generally excelled when flying "on the back side of the power curve," and was generally good with stall maneuvers, and stalls with the flaps fully extended. In general, the accident airplane flew fine, and he had "a lot" of time in it, and there were no mechanical issues he was aware of. After their cross country flight the preceding Wednesday, another student pilot asked if he could fly the accident airplane with Mr. Stevens. The other student was struggling with a fear of flying and had a negative attitude. In an effort to try and help, Mr. Stevens agreed to fly with him. The landing at the conclusion of the flight was, "not pretty," and following the landing, the student's demeanor about flying changed, to the point that he was ready to give up on flying. He stated that he had no problem landing a Cessna 150. Mr. Stevens tried to explain that older Cessna 172's had a different shaped cowling, and thus, a different sight picture. Mr. Steven's reiterated that there were no mechanical problems he had observed with the airplane or its landing gear.

Mr. Seely generally did very well landing the accident airplane, but landings were his weakest area. They practiced performing go-arounds with full flaps, and he excelled at it. Mr. Stevens thought it was important to fly with Mr. Seely in strong cross winds, and as such, the additional challenge of these conditions delayed his initial solo. By the time he did solo, Mr. Stevens had confidence in his ability to handle them, and recently, his landings had greatly improved. He estimated that Mr. Seely had accumulated about 20 hours of flight time prior to being endorsed to fly solo, and that he had accumulated an additional 20 hours of flight time flying solo since that time.