



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: November 27, 2017
Person Contacted: Jeffrey C. Irwin and Thomas W. Deppmeyer
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA161

Narrative:

Messrs. Irwin and Deppmeyer were interviewed in person at the accident airstrip on April 20, 2016, at 1213 EDT.

At the beginning of the interview, both were advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. They were also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; they agreed to the interview without representation.

Mr. Irwin provided an address of [REDACTED] Poland, New York [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. His cell phone number is [REDACTED]. He has been flying since 1986, and holds a private pilot certificate with airplane single engine land rating. He has about 2,000 hours total flight time, and are friends with all involved, but had just met "Jim": (James Kasperski) that day. He indicated that he has known the accident pilot for about 2.5 years.

Mr. Deppmeyer provided an address [REDACTED] Oriskany, New York, [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. His cell phone number is [REDACTED]. He has been flying since 1977, and holds a commercial pilot certificate with airplane single engine land, and instrument airplane ratings. He also holds a flight instructor certificate, with airplane single engine and instrument airplane ratings. He was a front line manager at the FAA NY Air Route Traffic Control Center. He has known the accident pilot for about 10 years. He reported the accident pilot did medical sales for Patterson Dental. The accident pilot was also a skydiver, in good health before the accident, and he did not use alcohol or take prescription drugs. Amanda Udell was 32 years old, and in good health. She was also a pilot and had been in a relationship

with the pilot for about 1 year. Her contact is [REDACTED] Mr. James Kasperski was about 75 years old but was fit.

Mr. Deppmeyer provided the following information regarding the airplane and airplane insurance:

John Balio bought the accident airplane on e-bay about 3 to 4 years ago (FAA records indicated he purchased the airplane on September 21, 2009). The accident airplane was kept in hangar 42 at RME. It had a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) to use autogas, and the accident pilot used non-ethanol auto fuel (FAA Records were later researched and there was no FAA 337 form on file for autofuel usage). The airplane was insured; Mr. Deppmeyer contacted the insurance company on the morning of April 20, 2016. The airplane was equipped with a radio that on power-up, tunes to 121.5 MHz. The maintenance records were in a large envelope in the airplane. They were not in the pilot's hangar at RME. On April 4, 2016 (maintenance record copies show April 5, 2016) new Slick magnetos were installed. The tachometer time at the last annual inspection was 3302.55.

Mr. Balio had flown with an instructor named Lorenz for a while then flew with another pilot in Schenectady, New York. Mr. Deppmeyer was not a flight instructor at the time. He was a good friend to the pilot and got his CFI and finished him off. The pilot was divorced from his previous wife Amy, and had a daughter (Megan) who was nearly 16 years old.

Insurance Adjuster:

Patrick Dolan

Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

Work: [REDACTED]

The following timeline was provided for April 18, 2016 –

Mr. Deppmeyer indicated that earlier in the day, the accident pilot had his 2nd flight lesson in Rochester, NY, and sometime after 1400 to 1430, he (Mr. Balio) called Mr. Deppmeyer and said we are flying and to meet at Jeff's house (Jeffrey Irwin) who would be there between 1530 and 1540.

Mr. Deppmeyer departed his private airstrip in Oriskany, New York, about 1500 hours, flying N70480, and landed about 20 minutes later at the private airstrip at Jeffrey Irwin's house.

The accident pilot, Amanda Udell, and James Kasperski departed RME at 1611:58, and flew to the private airstrip at Jeffrey Irwin's house (the flight duration was about 15 minutes).

While at the airstrip near Mr. Irwin's house, it was decided to fly to Bronville, NY. Before the flight departed, Mr. Deppmeyer conducted a safety briefing. During that briefing it was discussed that when landing at Sophie's Choice Airstrip, the landing airplane would have to be pulled completely off the runway before the next airplane was to land.

Before departure from Mr. Irwin's private airstrip, Amanda Udell got into Jeff's airplane (N82398). The three airplanes N1863Y, N70480 and N82398 departed Mr. Irwin's private airstrip about 1700, and flew towards Boonville Inc Airport (1NK7), doing some sightseeing along the way. They all landed uneventfully at 1NK7 about 30 minutes later, and secure their airplanes. While there, they discussed fuel loads. The pilot was excited about meeting Sophie's Choice airstrip owner, and he did not express any concern about flying into or out of there. There was no discussion about takeoff distance at Sophie's Choice airstrip.

On the flight from 1NK7 to Sophie's Choice, Amanda Udell was in N82398. All three airplanes departed 1NK7 about 1800 hours, and flew to Sophie's Choice Airstrip. During the flight, Mr. Deppmeyer picked up the RME automated terminal information service (ATIS). They were not flying in formation, but Mr. Deppmeyer was flying the lead airplane. They landed eventfully at Sophie's Choice airstrip about 1840, and secured their airplanes, then walked to the airstrip owner's house.

Before the accident flight departed, Mr. Deppmeyer told the accident pilot to look at the soft field checklist. He also told him that the runway was OK on the upper or west end, but was soft on the left side. Mr. Deppmeyer departed to the east, and was not wearing a headset or using the aircraft's radio. He then turned onto left downwind and base, and saw Jeff Irwin depart. At that time the accident pilot had not moved. Mr. Deppmeyer performed a low approach over the runway and flew to his airstrip in Oriskany, New York. When he was flying between 1,200 and 1,400 ft mean sea level about 2 miles away, he saw the accident pilot near the tree-line, perpendicular to the runway, and knew he did not go to the west end of the runway. He assumed he was performing an engine run-up. He thought the accident pilot would attempt to depart from that point, and said to himself "no way he would try that." He flew to his airstrip, and saw Jeff Irwin who was moments behind him, land.

Mr. Irwin reported that he departed to the west, climbed out, and made a low pass to the south. He turned around and saw the accident pilot parked on the side of the runway. He (Jeff) yelled to the accident pilot on 122.7 MHz telling him to stop, and also yelled to Mr. Deppmeyer, but there was no response from either. He turned, and could not see Mr. Deppmeyer's airplane or the accident airplane. While flying in a westerly direction offset of the runway, he looked down and saw a flash like from Acetylene, then an explosion. At that time he was flying between 800 and 1,000 ft above ground level. He saw a red vehicle, and executed a 180° turn. He saw the wing melt off, and then flew to Mr. Deppmeyer's airstrip. While there, he told Mr. Deppmeyer about the airplane accident. They remained on the ground talking for about 10-15 minutes, and they could hear sirens.

According to Amanda, her right door was jammed shut. John got out of the airplane first, then she got out the left side. The rear seat passenger asked for help getting out of the airplane, and John went to assist. About that time, the airplane exploded.

Mr. Deppmeyer talked with Amanda the morning of April 20th, and she confirmed she did get my text message wanting to talk with her.

Postaccident, Mr. Deppmeyer performed weight and balance calculations. He knew that the airplane had about 30 gallons of automotive fuel on-board when the flight departed Griffiss International Airport (RME), Rome, New York. Based on the durations of the flights, he estimated the airplane had between 25 and 27 gallons of fuel on-board at the time of departure.

They provided the following estimated weights:

Amanda Udell (Right Front Seat Occupant) – 115 pounds

James Kasperski (Rear Seat Occupant) - 140 pounds

John Balio (PIC and Left Front Seat Occupant) – 155 pounds

The windsock was limp after they became airborne, but was slightly from the west.

The digest was reviewed with them during the interview.



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Date: November 27, 2017
Person Contacted: Amanda Udell and Thomas Deppmeyer
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA161

Narrative:

Ms. Amanda Udell was interviewed at Upstate Medical University Hospital on April 20, 2016, at 1757 EDT. Also present was Mr. Thomas Deppmeyer.

At the beginning of the interview she was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. She was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; she agreed to the interview and wanted Mr. Deppmeyer present.

She provided an address of [REDACTED] Berne, New York [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. She holds a private pilot certificate with airplane single engine land rating, and has between 100 and 300 hours total flight time. She weighs 138 pounds, and is 5'7" tall.

With respect to the accident flight, Mr. Balio was flying the airplane, while she was in the right front seat, and was wearing a lapbelt but there was no shoulder harness installed. Jim was in the middle of the back seat or behind her for weight and balance. They did weight and balance before flying into the airstrip. The pilot taxied out, and she reported the wind was calm. He performed a run-up while on the runway centerline before takeoff, but she could not recall the magneto drops.

Before takeoff there was no discussion about a takeoff point. She was not sure where the fuel selector was positioned, and she was not looking at the tachometer. She reported the pilot initiated takeoff on the downsloping runway with some flaps extended but she could not recall how much they were extended. She briefly heard the stall warning horn chirping when the flight was a little bit past a road, though she did not recall the airspeed. She did not think the engine

changed sound at any point during the takeoff or flight. On impact, her body went forward and she got whiplash. She may have hit the dash. She did not have any problem with releasing her restraint, but could not get her door open. She thinks it was jammed because of the nose-low impact, or because of her operation of it. She went out the pilot side of the airplane.

The digest was reviewed with her during the interview.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Eastern Region

Date: November 27, 2017
Person Contacted: Sophie and Moses "Moe" Acee
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA161

Narrative:

Mr. and Mrs. Acee were interviewed at their home on April 20, 2016; the time was not recorded. Also present was Henry Soderlund of Textron Aviation. Their address was [REDACTED] Westmoreland, New York [REDACTED]

At the beginning of the interview they were advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. They were also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; they agreed to the interview without representation.

He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. He moved there in 1983, and the runway has been in place since 1984. It was formerly identified as NY25, but is not de-commissioned. The runway was originally about 1,300 ft long, but he lengthened it adding about 700 ft to the western portion bringing the total length to about 2,000 ft. The western portion is fairly flat and retains water making it slightly softer. The runway is 60 to 80 ft wide. He does not encourage tricycle gear equipped airplanes to fly out of his airstrip. Since the airstrip has been in, excluding the accident airplane, there has been only 1 other tricycle gear airplane that had flown in and out of it. That airplane was a Beech Bonanza. Had the pilot of the Cessna 172 called him prior to landing, he would have told him not to fly into his airstrip. The Cessna 172 had never before been flown into his airstrip. The windsock which is about 20 ft above ground level (agl) pivots well and has a small tear on top.

He holds a commercial pilot certificate with glider rating and a private pilot certificate with airplane single engine land rating. He has been flying about 49 years and has about 1,800 hours in gliders, and about 1,900 hours in powered airplanes (mostly Cessna 180), which he used to fly out of the airstrip. She is not a pilot but has 50 years of aviation experience.

The airstrip owner reported that he rolled the downsloping portion of the runway on April 15, 2016, and he cut the downsloping portion of the grass, and field adjacent to the runway on April 17, 2016. He did not cut the approach end of runway 08.

He indicated that on April 18, 2016, he and his wife were inside their home watching television. Sometime after 1800 to 1830, his wife said she heard an airplane land. Mr. Deppmeyer (the only person he knows well) flying a Piper J3 Cub landed to the west, followed by a SuperCub in the same direction. The Cessna 172 also landed to the west, with him reporting all landings appeared good. All airplanes parked on the north portion of the field. After landing, all occupants came to their house, where introductions were made. They stayed about 10 to 15 minutes. The pilot of the Cessna 172 (John Balio) he had met 1 time previously. Mr. Deppmeyer was the flight instructor for Mr. Balio.

All occupants left their house about 1900, and went to their aircraft, including Moses. He (Moses) did tell the Cessna 172 pilot before departure to go to at least the “break” of the runway, but told him the back part of the runway, or the western portion was rough/wet and he was concerned about the nose landing gear equipped airplane. From the “break” portion of runway, which is located at 43° 06.753’ north latitude and 075° 25.737’ west longitude, about 1,300 ft of runway are available. The Piper Cub was the 1st to depart to the east, followed by the SuperCub which departed 2nd to the west. Both of those airplanes were off the ground in a short distance. Mr. Soderlund asked Mr. Acee if the Cessna 172 pilot walked the runway either after landing or before takeoff to survey the condition of the runway; Mr. Acee indicated he did not think Mr. Balio did.

Mr. Acee provided the following information regarding the occupants of the accident airplane:

John Balio – was 5’9” to 5’11” tall and weighed an estimated 160 pounds

Right Front Seat Occupant – 5’7” to 5’8” tall and weighed an estimated 110 pounds

Older Gentleman in Rear Seat – 5’8” to 5’9” and weighed an estimated 160 to 165 pounds

With respect to the accident flight, Mr. Balio was in the left seat, an older gentleman estimated to be 76 was in the back seat, and a female was in the right forward seat. The pilot of the Cessna 172 pulled onto the runway, then turned to an easterly heading, and straightened the airplane out, then performed an engine run-up on the runway centerline, but he was too far away to hear the engine rpm decrease associated with a check of the magnetos. The pilot “firewalled” the engine, and he estimated the takeoff began where the marks coming onto the runway were noted. During the takeoff roll it did not seem like the Cessna was accelerating. When the airplane went past his position, it was still on the ground and he estimated that the flaps were extended between 10 and 20°. He was located at 43° 06.811’ north latitude and 075° 25.539’ west longitude. He also reported that he could not discern a change in engine sound during the flight.

The airplane became airborne when it was just beyond the windsock. He reported the pilot was, “hanging on the [propeller]”, and was an incipient stall. The airplane went to the right, then the left wing dropped, and the airplane began descending. He put his camera down, and called 911 to report the accident. About 1 minute later, he reported an explosion. He reported there was very

little wind, but estimated the wind was from the west at 1 to 2 knots out of the west. He reported the engine sounded steady, with no unusual sounds.

He went to the site and spoke with the female passenger and he told her he thought they would be beginning the takeoff from farther west, to which she said that they should have gone farther west.

Mrs. Acee reported that she did not hear anything unusual as the airplane went past her position. At that time, she could tell that the airplane would not make it.

The digest was reviewed with them during the interview.



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Date: November 27, 2017
Person Contacted: Jeffrey C. Irwin
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA161

Narrative:

Mr. Irwin contacted NTSB by phone on April 21, 2016, at 1504 EDT. He called from [REDACTED]

Mr. Irwin indicated that when he was attempting to contact the accident pilot using the VHF transceiver, he did not want him to attempt to depart from where he was parked. At the time he saw the airplane, it was stopped to the west about the point where the runway gets narrow. I asked him to examine Google Earth in an attempt to locate the accident airplane's position. He used onX Hunt – GPS Hunting App and e-mailed NTSB the location where he last observed the airplane. That location was 43.112920° north latitude and -75.428543° west longitude.

The digest was reviewed with him during the interview.