



Federal Aviation Administration

Inspector Statement

Date: January 24, 2017

Prepared by: Matthew M. Laseter, Aviation Safety Inspector

Subject: Accident N696FT, interview of witness Dawson Wooley

Statement

On January 20, 2017 at approximately 17:15 I helped conduct an interview with Dawson Wooley, who stated he was a witness to certain events in the crash of N676FT. Also present at this interview was Aviation safety Inspector Jesse Lacy of the Tampa, FL FSDO and Damon Wooley. To note that Dawson Wooley is a minor child approximately 8 years old, there the interview was conducted with his father present.

Mr. Damon Wooley took us via boat to the point where his son Dawson was standing when he witnessed the aircraft accident. Dawson Wooley was upriver by my estimation at a distance exceeding .5 miles. Dawson stated that he observed the aircraft take off towards him (upriver, northbound), climb above the trees then execute a 180 degree turn away from him. He stated that after the aircraft turned, he came down close to the river. I asked Dawson how low the aircraft descended and he did not immediately answer. I pointed to a tree and asked him about how high was he in relation of the tree. He indicated the top of a branch and told me he thought about that height. The height of that branch was approximately 30-40' above the surface of the river.

Dawson then stated that as he observed the aircraft proceed southbound, he saw the aircraft pitch up sharply, before falling to the river. I asked if saw the top of the wings or the boat hull as he fell, and he told me that he saw the top of the wings. Dawson made a hand gesture indicating that the aircraft pulled up sharply, then fell backward, through horizontal and into the river on its back.



Federal Aviation Administration

Inspector Statement

Date: January 15, 2017

Prepared by: Matthew M. Laseter, Aviation Safety Inspector

Subject: Accident N696FT, interview of witness Jeremie Hill

Statement

On January 15, 2017 at approximately 14:07 I was present to conduct an interview with Jeremie Hill, who states he was a witness to certain events in the crash of N676FT. Also present at the interview were Aviation safety Inspector Jesse Lacy of the Tampa, FL FSDO and Inspector Millicent Hill of the National Transportation Safety Board.

Mr. Hill stated that he was a friend of the Pilot in Command of N676FT (Neal Harris) through facebook and the hang-gliding community. He stated that he thought that Mr. Harris owned N676FT, a Buccaneer II for the last 9 months, and that the design was by the same person who designed the Dragonfly. He further stated that Mr. Harris was very experienced and had over 9000 hours total time.

Mr. Hill stated that Mr. Harris and he had coordinated to meet in North Florida in the vicinity of Blue Springs State Park in Lafayette County while he was conducting a multi-day river paddle and camping trip. They had preplanned earlier that day to camp there that night. He said that they both arrived at approximately 15:00, that Mr. Harris had previously told him it was his first visit to the area and first time landing on the Suwannee River. According to Mr. Harris, he flew up from the Orlando area directly to the river, and spent about an hour flying the river looking for him before landing on the river in front of the State Park. He stated that Mr. Harris was aware of the power lines. The Buccaneer II was tied up at the boat ramp at Blue Springs State Park while Mr. Harris unloaded his camping gear. I asked Mr. Hill if Mr. Harris had mentioned whether he was able to make the trip non-stop or made a fuel stop, he stated that there was no discussion of this but he was under the impression that Mr. Harris had made the flight non-stop. I asked Mr. Hill if he had noticed the amount of fuel in the aircraft while he was in the vicinity during unloading and he indicated he did not. Mr. Hill was asked if the pilot mentioned any issues on the flight up to the area and he said there was none that they spoke of. Mr. Hill stated that the aircraft was packed with camping gear, but that he thought it was still under weight.

Mr. Hill had lost a life preserver on the river earlier in the day that he was going to go look for and departed on his paddleboard. He stated that Mr. Harris told him that he would help him look for it when he finished unloading the camping gear from his aircraft. Mr. Hill states that shortly afterward, he hear the aircraft engine start and Mr. Harris proceeded to take off upstream (away from the power-lines to the north), get above treetop level before executing a 180 degree turn and proceeding southbound down the river. Mr. Hill states he was paddling back from the bend to the south when he heard the aircraft, heard a decrease in RPM then he thought he heard the aircraft hit something and looked upstream to see pieces of the aircraft falling into the river and the aircraft hit the water. He states that his view was partially obstructed by trees. At this point, Mr. Hill stated that he was 200 yards from the aircraft and went to the closest person to get in a boat and attempt to rescue Mr. Harris. He stated they arrived to the aircraft wreckage in about 3-4 minutes.

Mr. Hill stated that he thought the initial call to 911 was approximately 17:20 local time.



Federal Aviation Administration

Inspector Statement

Date: January 23, 2017

Prepared by: Jesse M. Lacy II, Aviation Safety Inspector

Subject: Accident N696FT, interview of witness Jeremie Hill

On Sunday January 15, 2017 I was part of an interview of Jeremie Hill, who witnessed the accident of N696FT on January 14, 2017, that was piloted by Neil Harris. Leading the interview was National Transportation Safety Board investigator Millicent Hill and Tampa Flight Standards District office Inspector Matthew Laseter.

Mr. Hill Stated he was an acquaintance of Neil Harris. This relationship stemmed from the hang gliding community and Facebook. After coordinating on Facebook, Mr. Harris and Mr. Hill agreed to meet at Blue Springs State Park for a river camping trip. While elaborating on their relationship, Mr. Hill stated that Mr. Harris was very experienced and an icon in the community having over 9000 hours in light sport aircraft and had owned the Buccaneer for about 9 months.

According to Mr. Hill, Neil Harris arrived at the park at about 3 pm local and anchored himself on the dock. At some point a dog's life vest had gone into the water and was floating downstream. Mr. Hill said he was going to paddle downstream and look for it. Mr. Harris said "Ill unload my gear and help you look". At this point Mr. Hill heard the engine start up and takeoff upstream into the wind. He witnessed Mr. Harris just about tree level execute a 180 degree turn around was heading down river. Shortly after Mr. Hill stated he heard the engine stop suddenly, unlike a throttle reduction. He also heard a noise that sounded like clanking and metal noises. All he could see were some aircraft pieces falling into the water. Later in the interview, Mr. Hill stated he was an estimated he was 200 yards away.

Mr. Hill then started paddling upstream and summoned help by someone who had a pontoon boat. Once at the scene he got into the water and tried to free Mr. Harris by reaching into the aircraft and attempting to cut what he thought could have been his seatbelt. Mr. Hill also stated that another gentleman, Aron Moore also helped him about one minute later. Once the first responders arrived on the scene Mr. Hill stated that once



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Inspector Statement

Date: January 24, 2017

Prepared by: Jesse M. Lacy II, Aviation Safety Inspector

Subject: Accident N696FT, interview of witness Dawson Wooley

On January 20, 2017 at approximately 1730 I, along with Inspector Matthew Laseter conducted an interview of Dawson Wooley, age 8, in the presence of his father, Damon Wooley. Dawson stated that he was a witness to the events on January 14, 2017 involving N696FT.

The father took us by boat to where Dawson was standing when he witnessed the events. The general consensus of the father and the inspectors were that the location of the accident was one half to one mile down the river. At this point GPS coordinates were logged of the location for mapping and a more complete measurement of the distance. Dawson stated that he saw the plane take off towards him and then turn around over the trees. He stated that the plane went down over river and flew away from him. Inspector Laseter asked about how high he was, and the relation to a tree branch about 30-40 feet above the river was eventually referenced.

At this point Dawson said he watched the plane go up again (shown with hand gestures) then it looked like it suddenly flipped backwards and then hit the water (flipping was also gestured with his hands).

After comparison of the distance between the accident and Dawson's location, it was determined to be about .87 miles.