



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: October 12, 2017
Person Contacted: Joe Worthy
NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA131

Narrative:

Mr. Joe Worthy was interviewed near the accident site on March 21, 2017, at 1456 CDT. Also present was Kyle Schroeder of Air Tractor, Inc. Mr. Worthy provided a cellular phone number of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. He has been a pilot for 33 years, and has over 12,000 hours flight hours in spray operations. He is the owner of Air-Worthy, Inc., in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

At the beginning of the interview, he 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. He 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; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He indicated that he has known the pilot for 4 years, since he came from Louisiana, where he was from. He and the pilot live in the same town of Granada, Mississippi. The pilot had never flown for this company, but he has 20,000+ hours. His first wife died of brain cancer, and after that he went to South Africa to get away. While there, he got sick, and met his current wife who is 38 years old (Terry), who cared for him and is a very strong woman. He then brought her and her 3 children (ages 6,8 and 2) to the U.S. Her contact is [REDACTED]

He and the accident pilot attended the Mississippi Agricultural Aviation Association (MAAA) convention between January 19 and 21, 2017, and the accident pilot had just attended a Safety Meeting in Cleveland, MS. He last spoke with the pilot 1 week ago.

He heard in 2016, that the pilot was in a hospital with heart trouble, but later learned he was hospitalized for another reason.

He offered that it was likely the pilot's first field of the day because of the wind condition earlier in the day. He only had on-board about 400 gallons, which is about 5 gallons per acre, for the estimated 80 acre field.

Because of the pilot's flying experience, and the circumstances of the accident, he thought it likely the pilot was dead before ground impact.

He reported it was his last year flying

Follow-up Questions by Air Tractor –

Would he perform a survey pass of the intended spray field? – Mr. Worthy indicated he was an experienced pilot, but he was not sure if he would have performed a survey pass.

What altitude would he have been at in that location? – Mr. Worthy indicated that based on the impact location and proximity to the field, the pilot should be about 200 ft above ground level in that location if he was making a turn to reverse course.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 31, 2017, at 1423 EDT. He did not reply.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: June 16, 2017
Person Contacted: Jan Forman and James M. Forman
NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA131

Narrative:

Mr. and Mrs. Forman were met on-scene on March 21, 2017, at 1542 EDT. She provided a cellular phone number of [REDACTED] a work phone of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

She indicated that the pilot was her brother, and there were 2 other brothers (Lloyd and Wayne). Lloyd who is 72 years old, his cellular phone is [REDACTED] and Wayne who is 65 years old, his cellular phone is [REDACTED].

She indicated that she spoke to her brother Owen the day before when he briefly called their mother. During that call Owen briefly talked with her (Jan) and told him that he had a cold but nothing unusual. She indicated that he had 29,943 hours total flight time. He was a hard worker and in their early years when the 3 brothers were self-employed, he would fly from day until dark. She indicated she never got the impression from his wife that he was not happy.

He flew for Unite de traitements agricoles par voie aerienne (UTAVA), a French company in Cameroon, Africa, where he was the chief pilot spraying fungicide to banana trees. He returned to Mississippi, in 2011, and has been there since.

Jan indicated that her brother was in excellent health, but had pneumonia about 2 years ago that required hospitalization. She also indicated that in March 2015, when Owen was in a store with his grandson Matt, Owen complained of chest pain (comparable to a heart attack). He went to the hospital the same day, and the next day, the doctor performed a catheterization and found no blockages. The pain was attributed to be indigestion from "old oil" used to cook shrimp he had just eaten. Subsequently, in January 2017, he underwent an aviation medical and was medically cleared to fly.

Finally, it was mentioned likely by James that the operator (Sturdivant Brothers Flying Service, Inc.) had a previous accident involving a different pilot in which the airplane crashed after encountering fog. She indicated that when her brother was flying in Africa, someone stole fuel from his airplane and put some water in it and he had to land in the banana trees.

The digest was e-mailed to her for review on May 31, 2017, at 1457 EDT. She replied on June 1, 2017, at 1056 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to her for review on June 15, 2017, at 1220 EDT. She phoned on June 15, 2017, at 1433 EDT, with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to her for review on June 15, 2017, at 1457 EDT. She replied the same day at 1537 EDT, with, "Hi Tim, This looks good. I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me. Thanks, Jan"



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: June 1, 2017
Person Contacted: Robert L. Harris
NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA131

Narrative:

Mr. Harris was interviewed at his house on March 21, 2017, the time was not recorded. Also present were Steve Flickner and Robert F. Mahaffey of the Federal Aviation Administration, and Kyle Schroeder of Air Tractor, Inc. His house was located at [REDACTED] Minter City, MS [REDACTED]. He provided a cellular phone number of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. His house location was +33°46'24.54" latitude and -090°22'58.04" longitude. That location when plotted was located about .14 nautical mile and 306 degrees from the accident site location.

He indicated that he is not a pilot, nor a mechanic, but he has rented farm land, previously farmed, and is accustomed to agricultural operations. By profession he is a Mississippi State Trooper. He has lived in the house for 21 years, and has about 18 acres of trees north of his house.

On the date of the accident, he was at his house with his friend Belinda, and he reported hearing an airplane flying all day flying over the field next to the trees on the north side of his place, and also flying over the field behind his house. About 1500, while inside his house at the kitchen countertop, he heard the airplane fly over his house, and reported it sounded normal. About 10-15 seconds later he heard a "pop" sound followed by an explosion. He then checked his television to see if the sound came from it, and thought to himself that the airplane he had heard must have crashed. He went into his garage, and saw the airplane. He called to his friend to call 911, and drove his four-wheeler to the site. He also reported a woman driving on the road at or after the crash. When he arrived, the airplane was fully engulfed. A Mr. John Smith was the first 1st responder that arrived, and both then walked to the area and waited for the fire truck to arrive. He noted a couple of airplane parts in the field were burning, and also the cockpit area was on fire. He walked to the east end of the debris trail where parts were located and trees were damaged looking for the pilot.

FAA Follow-Up Questions – Did you see any movement? There was dark smoke and fire but he did not detect any movement

Did Belinda go the Wreckage – No she remained at the driveway

Describe the Flames – They were about 8 feet tall, and smoke was rising above the trees.

Did you smell chemical when you first arrived on-scene – He was intentionally sniffing for chemicals and did not smell any. He did however smell fuel.

What does 240D do – Kills weeds

Did the woman who was driving see the airplane flying – No, the pilot was turning before her house.

He offered that he thought it likely the pilot had a heart attack. The pilot would not be descending at that location to spray the field near his house.

Air Tractor Follow-Up Questions – How long would it take the spray the nearby field. Not sure. He reported he heard an airplane spraying at 0800.

NTSB Follow-Up Questions – How long did it take for the fire department to arrive. He estimated about 20 minutes. By the time they arrived, the cockpit was really the only thing on fire.

Describe the weather conditions at the time – The sky was clear, the wind was from the northwest at 5-6 knots based on the direction the smoke from the fire was travelling.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 31, 2017, at 1545 EDT. He replied on June 1, 2017, at 0926 EDT with, “This statement appears to be accurate. No changes needed.”



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 31, 2017
Person Contacted: Larry Murry
NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA131

Narrative:

Mr. Murry was interviewed near the accident site on March 21, 2017, at 1915 EDT. He provided a cellular phone of [REDACTED].

He indicated that he was renting the land that the accident pilot was intending to spray which consisted of 75 acres using weed killer. He indicated that it was the 4th year that the pilot had sprayed his field, and Larry trusted him. The accident pilot was familiar with what chemicals to use, and helped Larry understand the chemicals usage.

On Saturday March 18th, it was windy and he tried to spray at 1200, but he couldn't. Michael Plez of the operator called him and told him his field would be sprayed on Sunday. In the morning of Sunday, March 19th, there was not too much wind. On Monday morning March 20th, Mr. Plez called him and said the pilot was involved in an accident and had not sprayed his field yet.

Mr. Murry was not present by the field on Sunday.

He indicated that the pilot did not have any health issues.

The digest was reviewed with him during the interview and he agreed to the content.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: June 15, 2017
Person Contacted: Messrs. Jamison, Hilson, Plez, and Sturdivant
NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA131

Narrative:

Interview of Benjamin Sykes Sturdivant, Johnny Everett Jamison and Oaubrey Hilson of Sturdivant Brothers Flying Service, Inc., located at [REDACTED] Glendale, Mississippi, on March 22, 2017, at 1620 EDT. Also present were FAA inspectors Robert F. Mahaffey and James S. "Steve" Flickner, and Kyle Schroeder of Air Tractor, Inc. Mr. Sturdivant, who is the President of Sturdivant Brothers Flying Service, Inc., provided an e-mail address of [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.

They were advised that the investigation was beginning, and I needed information about their operation and anybody that interacted with the pilot before departure.

Mr. Everett advised he is a loader and has been with the company for about 14 years, while Mr. Hilson also a loader has been with the company for about 2 years. Neither of them are pilots or mechanics.

Mr. Everett reported that he called the pilot at 1319 and was informed he would spray that day. Both left their houses about 1400 for the airstrip, and Mr. Jamison arrived at the airstrip about 1446. He was told the pilot intended to spray the Murry field first and then would spray another field. The pilot adjusted the spray nozzles on each wing. Mr. Oaubrey Hilson reported arriving at 1455, and at that time the pilot was already in the airplane. The pilot checked the fuel tanks, and then both fuel tanks were fueled to the 3/4 tab. Chemicals consisting of 18.75 gallons of

Roundup Powermax, 20 gallons of 2,4-D, 150 ounces of Valent Valor SX, 6 gallons 2 pints DuPont Avatar Select, 1 gallon Sanders Seed Company Surfactant, and 15 ounces of PointBlank WM Deposition Aid/Drift Retardant, were mixed and then loaded into the hopper by the loaders including water bringing the total hopper load to 375 gallons. The pilot thanked Mr. Hilson, and they reported seeing the pilot wearing his shoulder harness before departing, and the airplane taxiing for takeoff, but diverted their attention to other duties and did not observe the takeoff. Both were later informed of the accident.

Follow-Up Questions Air Tractor – Was the pilot wearing the shoulder harness – Yes

Follow-Up Question Mr. Sturdivant (he was not present on the day of the accident, did not see the pilot on the accident day, and did not witness the airplane fueling) –

Was the pilot wearing a helmet – Yes, “told so did not know for sure.”

Did you notice anything unusual from the pilot – No “-did not see him Sunday”

Where was the airplane fueled from – Side Load “-told – did not actually see the fuel being loaded.”

Follow-Up Questions by NTSB –

Did either of you see the takeoff – They observed the airplane taxi out, and begin a normal takeoff to the south (later determined to be southeast), but they did not watch the airplane fly away.

Did the pilot make any comment about the airplane, weather, or himself – No

Mr. Hilson indicated that he did not notice anything wrong with the airplane, and that it would take 15 to 20 minutes to get and mix the chemicals.

Follow-Up Question FAA –

How long would it take to fly to the intended field – 5 to 10 minutes.

Mr. Sturdivant indicated they did not spray that field in 2016, but the pilot had surveyed the field the Friday before at 1800 and said the airplane was tied down. He also indicated that he had known the pilot about 7 years, and hired him in March 2011. His title was Chief Supervisor-Pilot, and was the only pilot on their Part 137 certificate.

Mr. Michael Plez arrived during the interview about 1709 EDT. He 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. He 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; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He indicated that his title is manager, and has worked at Sturdivant Brothers Flying Service, Inc., since 1982. He has known the pilot since March 15, 2011, when he began with the company. He indicated that he talked with the pilot on Saturday morning, but they could not spray that day because of weather. The consensus was to try for Sunday morning. He called the pilot Sunday morning and both checked the weather noting the wind was at 9 with gusts to 12. It was decided to try to spray after 1500 hours that day. Mr. Plez did not talk with the pilot anymore that day. Mr. Plez last told the pilot to let him know if he could not spray because of the weather. The pilot always texted him when he was done for the day, unless he (Mr. Plez) was at their facility.

He indicated that the accident flight was his first flight that day. The next property to be sprayed was Beaver Dam, and there would have been no issues doing that. He was slated to spray 4 fields that day. All 4 would have been separate loads. The pilot would have needed 2 to 3 hours to spray all 4 fields. With respect to the phone calls on Sunday, he did not detect any issue with the pilot during the phone calls.

Follow-Up Questions Air Tractor –

Any issues with the GPS – No

Follow-Up Questions NTSB –

How was the pilot paid – By commission of net profits at 20 percent.

Does the airstrip have a designator – No

Is there any video that depicted the takeoff – Yes. The video was checked and by the time stamp on the video the flight departed to the southeast at 1539:46. Using NTSB phone time and time stamp time (1803:07 and 1812:11, respectively), the time stamp was noted to be 9 minutes 4 seconds fast; therefore the corrected takeoff time was 1530:42

What type of fuel filters are used at the fuel farm? Do you use water absorbing filters? – They use Velcon water absorbing filters, and he changes them twice a year. Once at the beginning of the season and once mid-season.

The digest was e-mailed to Mr. Sykes Sturdivant for review on June 1, 2017, at 1527 EDT. He replied on June 8, 2017, at 1049 EDT, with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. In his handwritten reply, he indicated, “I am replying on June 6, 2017, at 10:27 CST, with the fact that Michael Plez got with Johnny Everett Jamison and Oabrey Hilson to go over the sent narrative and they all agreed with the narrative from their perspectives. On page 2, I wanted to clarify my comments as I was not there on the day of the accident. I was told that he was wearing a [helmet], I did not see the pilot on the accident day, and I did not witness the fueling of the plane.” The corrected digest was e-mailed to them for review., “....” These comments were incorporated into the narrative.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 8, 2018
Person Contacted: Michael Plez
NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA131

Narrative:

Mr. Michael Plez was contacted by phone on March 23, 2017; the time was not recorded. He returned the call the same day at 1911 EDT, from [REDACTED]

He indicated that the hopper was loaded with 375 gallons total solution, which consisted of water mixed with the following chemicals:

- 18.75 gallons Roundup Powermax
- 20.0 gallons 2,4-D
- 150 ounces of Valent Valor SX
- 6 gallons 2 pints DuPont Avatar Select
- 1 gallon Sanders Seed Company Surfactant
- 15 ounces of PointBlank WM Deposition Aid/Drift Retardant

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 30, 2017, at 1410 EDT. He did not reply.