



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: Wayne Luginbuhl

When: April 17, 2017

RE: ERA17FA135

In a telephone conversation, Mr. Luginbuhl stated he had over 23,000+ hours of flight time and held numerous FAA certificates/ratings, in addition to several type-ratings and an airframe and powerplant mechanic with inspector authorization. He knew the pilot/owner of N8DX, Mr. Robert Westlake, for about 17 years and had flown with him on several occasions. He performed maintenance on Mr. Westlake's airplanes and conducted post-maintenance test flights. Mr. Luginbuhl said that he had last flown with Mr. Westlake about 8 months before the accident, but had never given him a check ride or biennial flight review (BFR). However, he did give instruction to Mr. Westlake in the airplane, including how to operate the Garmin 750, which had been installed about 3 years before the accident. He described Mr. Westlake as a "brilliant" and "prideful" man. Mr. Luginbuhl said you could never tell him what to do or that he was wrong. Mr. Luginbuhl said it was hard to train Mr. Westlake because he would "never listen" to him. At the time of the accident, Mr. Luginbuhl said that Mr. Westlake was upset with him over a required maintenance issue that needed to be done on one of his other airplanes. They had not spoken in several months. So if there were any recent issues with the airplane, he was not aware of them.

Mr. Luginbuhl said that he repeatedly told Mr. Westlake over a period of 8-10 years before the accident that he needed to fly with a co-pilot, but Mr. Westlake preferred to fly alone. The two had had conversations in the past about the need for Mr. Westlake to have a single-pilot exemption to fly N8DX; however, Mr. Westlake said he "didn't need that" because the airplane had been given a single-pilot exemption with the Sierra Industries modification.

Mr. Luginbuhl said that Mr. Westlake had told him that he did his initial CE-500 training at Flight Safety International in Atlanta, Georgia. When he asked Mr. Westlake about his training (BFR, currency, checkrides, etc), Mr. Westlake would give him a "ho-hum"

response. Mr. Luginbuhl said anytime he flew with Mr. Westlake, he would act as PIC because he was unsure of Mr. Westlake's authority as PIC.

Mr. Luginbuhl described Mr. Westlake as an "adequate" pilot, but would always be "behind the airplane." He would fly "too fast," which exacerbated him getting behind, and resulting in him not having a "good handle on the airplane." After the avionics were upgraded in N8DX, Mr. Luginbuhl gave Mr. Westlake instruction on how to use the Garmin 750, which was an upgrade from the KLN-90 that Mr. Westlake had been using for years. Mr. Luginbuhl said that Mr. Westlake would get very confused at how the Garmin operated and would struggle "pulling up pages" and "correlating all the data." Mr. Westlake only flew to four places, which were pre-loaded before each flight into the Garmin 750: Savannah, Georgia, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Opa Locka, Florida, and Cincinnati, Ohio. He used FlightPlan.com to file his flight plans. Mr. Luginbuhl said that if air traffic control amended any of the flight plans while en route, Mr. Westlake would get confused and not know how to amend the flight plan. When it came to executing an approach, Mr. Westlake would "always forget to activate the approach each time."

Regarding the autopilot, which was original to the airplane, Mr. Luginbuhl said that Mr. Westlake was very dependent on the autopilot and would activate it immediately after takeoff and then turn it off on short final. He would also "never" trim the airplane before turning on the autopilot. This resulted in the airplane "fighting" the autopilot. As a result, Mr. Westlake was "constantly" complaining that the airplane was "uncontrollable." He always "assumed" the autopilot would trim the airplane automatically. Mr. Luginbuhl said that he had to fly to Savannah one time to "fix" the airplane because Mr. Westlake insisted it was uncontrollable. When Mr. Luginbuhl arrived, he flew the airplane and quickly learned that the airplane was not trimmed properly and there was nothing wrong with the autopilot.

Mr. Luginbuhl said that he would be "surprised" if there was a mechanical problem with the autopilot on the day of the accident and that it was most likely Mr. Westlake's inability to properly use the autopilot and Garmin 750, which led to a loss of control.

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