

Events leading to incident of N7108

Kurt Heitmeier hired Juliet Delta Aviation to perform a pre-purchase inspection on N7108, which had just come onto the market around May 20th.

We had discussed timing to bring the aircraft to N71 for the pre-purchase in the following days.

On May 22nd, 2017, Kurt sent me a text asking who I would recommend for his initial training at 6:29pm. I sent a text back, "Ron Cox" at 6:35pm. That was the last and only time we had discussed anything about the training or pilots I recommended.

On May 24th, Kurt and the current owner flew the aircraft from Goshin Indiana to N71 and arrived around 9:30am. During that day and into the next day, Juliet Delta Aviation performed a pre-purchase inspection on the aircraft, at which a discrepancy list was compiled. I believe roughly 70 items were on the list, and can be provided if requested.

Kurt elected to purchase the aircraft, and the owner flew home on the airlines, as did Kurt.

Over the next couple of months, Juliet Delta Aviation performed the repairs that were needed and recommended to Kurt. Due to the extent of the work performed, Kurt had decided for Juliet Delta Aviation to continue on with an annual inspection. The previous annual inspection was completed roughly 30 hours prior, but did not appear to be an appropriate inspection due to the log book entry and number of items that were not corrected at the time of the annual.

Kurt had also decided to have the interior of the aircraft refurbished by Advantage Interiors, also located at N71.

Juliet Delta Aviation completed most of the work by the first week of August, and started performing test runs on the aircraft. Due to the type of work completed, some tuning of the engines was required, requiring multiple test runs.

On August 18th, the aircraft was completely finished. I spoke to Kurt, he was hoping to be able to find an airline flight from where he was, I believe in North Carolina, but could not find anything into MDT for Saturday the 19th. He said that he would be sending his pilot up to pick up the plane, but could probably not be there in person. He said he would let me know when he heard from his pilot.

That was the last time I spoke to Kurt until after the accident.

August 19th, Accident Date.

On Saturday, the 19th, I received a call from an unknown number at 1:08pm. It was Kurt's pilot, Sam. He called me to let me know that he was at MDT, waiting for a cab to take him to N71. He asked if I was going to be at the airport, I told him I could meet him there, but that I had a birthday party to go to.

After about a half hour or so, I met him at the airport, he was standing to the side of the aircraft, the cabin door nor the inspection.

I walked up with my son, Jared, and introduced myself and my son. We walked up to the aircraft, and I opened the cabin door. This struck me as odd, as generally the pilot will open the door, or he would have opened it before I got there to let the interior cool down since it was the middle of August.

After looking at briefly at the plane, Sam asked "can you go over some things with me?" Thinking he meant, that he wanted to know what work was performed, I started to show him some of the maintenance items that were repaired or replaced. After a few items, he said to me "I didn't realize you were with your family today, I was hoping to fly it with you" I told him that I was not planning on that, and I wasn't even told that he was coming in that day for certain. I told him that I had to be at a birthday party, and that's why I had my son with me. He then said that he meant he would like me to go over some of the systems of the plane with him, not the repair items.

At this point, I believed he meant that since the aircraft was heavily modified with avionics and options, he wanted to familiarize himself with this particular plane. So I said okay, hop in the right seat and we'll start with the right panel and go over the options and avionics. This plane is loaded with avionics."

He slid the pilots seat back, sat on the pilots seat, and slid over to the right seat, and pulled his feet over. Now, this struck as odd. Most people who have a considerable amount of time in the plane, slide the pilots seat all the way forward, slide the co-pilots seat back, and enter from behind the pilots seat. It reduces the risk of hitting something on the instrument panel with your feet. I just thought to myself, "okay, that looked difficult."

I then proceeded to show him where the air conditioning, cabin fan, and aux hydraulic switches were, since, on this aircraft, they were not in the original locations as they were when the aircraft was built. He then asked me how the auxiliary hydraulic worked and the hydraulic valve. I said that the valve always stays open unless of an emergency, and told him that even though the switch was in a different location, it still worked the same. I then told him that the auxiliary hydraulic was powered by an electric motor and that it had a pressure switch on it that turned it on and off. I figured that maybe no-one ever explained to him how it worked and he was just curious. Then he asked some questions about how to work the fuel system. He stated that it was a hard system to manage and they were quirky. I told him that the Aerostar had one of the simplest fuel systems, that generally, you leave the switches to the "on" position, and don't touch them through the whole flight. I told him that the only time you would cross feed would be because of a fuel imbalance during normal flight. I said " but, this aircraft has aileron trim, so you don't even need to do that"

At this point I started to wonder about the pilots credentials.

He said okay, I just read a lot about the problems. I then explained to him how the older Aerostars only had one fuel gauge with a selector switch but they were all replaced to comply with an AD, and that people would fly them in double crossfeed. I explained that the low fuel light would not come on, because the fuel switch was in the fuselage tank and came on between 14-16 gallons left. If the plane was operated in double crossfeed, the fuselage tank would still be full, but the wings would run out of fuel.

He then focused to the center console of the airplane, which had also been modified sometime in the past, so it was not in standard configuration. He asked about the doorseal switch. I told him that this aircraft was equipped with the electric doorseal option, but that generally people fly with it in the "electric" position and showed him where the switch was. He then told me " I was planning on just flying it unpressurized down to North Carolina." I said "okay, but you probably still want to have the doorseal on because of the wind noise." I assumed that maybe he wanted to fly it unpressurized because of the heat. He then told me that he was not sure how to set the cabin controller.

I figured that he meant he could not read the numbers on the controller, because they can be hard to see. I asked him at what altitude he would be flying at, he said "6 to 8 thousand feet, I think." So I rotated the knob on the controller to the altitude and said that it was set. He said that he could see the numbers, he just didn't know how it worked.

At this point, I was really questioning his credentials. I asked him "How much time do you have in an Aerostar?" He said "I've never flown one." Kind of laughing, I said "No really, how much time?" he said "really, I've never sat in one before." Astonished, I asked him how much total time he had. He said "about 1300 hours, but I have over 200 multi engine. I am an instructor." I said to him that "I had never heard of anyone just getting into an Aerostar and flying without flying with someone who had time in them flying with them. Are you sure the insurance company knows this?" He said " yes, they required me to go through initial training at RCI, and get a checkout. That why I thought we could fly." I told him, "I don't feel comfortable with that, I am not an instructor at all." I told him this a few times, to which he kept explaining that he was an instructor in a seminal but also had a good bit of time in a Cessna 421 and 310.

At this point I realized that he was not asking about items that were specific to this aircraft, but to all Aerostars. At this point he started looking over everything, as I was leaning through the cabin door. I tried the elevator trim, but found that the control yoke trim only trimmed nose down. Also found the center console did the same. I then decided to pull the aircraft up to the hangar with the aircraft tug. I found the one plug had become partially disconnected in the nose

section on the trim adaptor. I plugged it back in, and tested the system. We both confirmed the system working properly. At this point he was ready to fuel the airplane. The airplane only had about 20 or so gallons of fuel in it.

I then asked him if he wanted to taxi it to the fuel farm, and he didn't really answer me. I told him I could hop in the right seat and help him start it or assist if needed. He then got in the pilots seat at this time. He wanted to start the left engine, but I told him normal practice in the Aerostar is to start the right engine first because it was easier to hear when it was starting without the left engine started due to the proximity of the cabin door to the pilot. He asked if I would start the right engine to show him the procedure, so I did. The right engine started normally. He then started the left engine, which started normally. After letting the engines warm up just a bit, I said it was okay to taxi if he wanted. I told him that he would have to lead the steering because it was delayed a little bit since it is hydraulically actuated. I explained to him that generally while taxing in a straight line, pilots use differential power and light braking to steer or keep the aircraft straight. I told him that it takes a little practice to not use the rudders, since they are not connected to the nose gear on this aircraft. So we started to taxi, I suggested to him to taxi to the runway and turn around to get a feel for the steering of the aircraft. While taxing out, I noticed he was using the rudders to try to steer the aircraft. I reminded him at this point that the rudder will not steer the nose wheel as it does on other light twin aircraft. We taxied back to the fuel farm.

I asked him how much fuel he was going to add, and he said 20 gallons. That would have given a total of 40 gallons to fly for over 1 hour. I told him that I didn't think that was enough fuel. He then said how about 15 in each wing? I said, "I would fill the fuselage and put 20 in each wing." He looked at me with confusion, I don't think he realized there was a fuselage tank, but I am not sure. "It is normal to always fill the fuselage first, then add fuel to the wings." I told him. This is due to the fact that both engines will feed from the fuselage tank, and the low fuel warning light is only in the fuselage tank. The fuselage tank holds 41.5 useable gallons, along with 20 gallons in each wing, there would have been at least 81.5 gallons in the aircraft.

At about this time, at 4:20 exactly, I text the owner of the plane "You do know that this guy had never flown an Aerostar?" At 4:29, the owner, Kurt Heitmeier texted back "Yeah"

Since he had not done a pre-flight, I offered to show him some specific items to check on the Aerostar for pre-flight, thinking that he was going to do one. I explained to him the importance of specifically checking the tailpipes for looseness and showed him a steering bolt that gets bent sometimes when a large tug tows the airplane and is turned past its limits. He acknowledged what I showed him. But, he did not do anymore of a preflight, nor did he check the oil or drain the fuel to check for contaminants after fueling.

He then got into the aircraft to leave. There was a jump plane waiting behind him to get fuel. I walked up to the pilot and a jump club member and told them that this guy, Sam, had never even sat in an Aerostar before. I told them that I couldn't believe he was going to fly it and that he had no business being in it. I also told them that I believed that something would happen, but I couldn't stop him because the owner knew he had no time in the plane. They commented on the amount of time it was taking him to start one of the engines. In a kind of joking manner, I told them not to rush him, just let him take his time. The jump club members have a tendency to rush around a little. I then told them that I didn't want to be here for the takeoff, and I was leaving.

As I walked away, he tried starting the right engine, I noticed him try a couple of times, then the engine started. This was not uncommon, as hot starts can be tricky.

At this time I believe, I texted the insurance broker, Lance VanWormer at 4:27PM and asked "Give me a call when you can"

My son and I left, drove to a convenience store a couple of miles away, and got some drinks. We were headed to a birthday party. I turned around about a half mile down the road. My son asked why I was turning around, I told him that something just didn't feel right. He asked what I meant. I told him that the pilot had no business being in that plane, I maybe I could stop him. We just turned onto airport road when Sam called me. It was 4:43PM at this point. It

was Sam. He said "Joel, I have a big problem." I said "whats wrong?" He said "I wrecked the airplane." I said "I will be there in 2 minutes." And hung up.

As I drove up to the runway, Lance called me at 4:45pm. I told Lance what had happened in a very upset manner. I walked passed Sam who was standing away from the airplane a little. I walked up to the fire fighter, introduced myself. He asked if I could help secure the aircraft, in which I said of course. First, I went to the open cabin door. I noticed the mag switches were both in the on positions. So I turned them off. I also noticed that hydraulic pressure was still at 1000 psi, the avionics master and all the Aspen power switches were in the "ON" positions. The main master switch was in the off position, so I did not touch the other switches. I noticed the flap lever in "Neutral" and the gear selector in the "down" position. Both throttles were close, both props were in high RPM, and both mixtures in closed position.

The fire fighter asked me to disconnect the battery, so I did. They then sprayed the right wing area with foam, basically soapy water. The fire fighter asked me to tell the pilot to make sure he called the FAA or Harrisburg Tower. As I walked up to Sam, he said "Please don't punch me, Im sorry, Im sorry." I said to him "at least you are okay, but yeah, Im not to happy. You need to call the FAA."

After a little while, while we were waiting for the NTSB to let us know what we could do with the plane, I spoke to Sam again. I asked him if he had called the owner to tell him what had happened. He said that he did. I asked him what happened. He said that the aircraft got away from him. I told him at least he wasn't hurt, and that I believed the aircraft could be repaired. He then asked me how long it would be until he could leave because he had to get home. I told him I was not in charge, nor did I know when he could leave, he had to ask the fire chief.

While I was down there, the jump club member that I spoke to before the accident, came down and said "you called it."

With the assistance of a tow truck, we lifted the right wing, pulled the right gear down, and secured it with tow straps. We then pulled the airplane out with a tug on the nose gear and pulled it up to the hangar. At that point, I put a yellow tape around the plane so people would not touch it.

Later that night, I spoke to the owner. I asked him what his thoughts were and talked for about 20 minutes. I asked him what Sam had told him, he said that it just got away from him. I asked him specifically if Sam said anything about it not running right, he said no, he didn't say too much. I asked the owner if he wanted to repair the plane, and he said yes. I told him I would do what I could to get things going, he said thanks, and that was about it.

I never spoke to Sam since that day, nor heard really anything about him.

A couple days or a week later, I spoke to a parachute who landed just before Sam attempted to takeoff. This parachuter, who had a lot of experience around the airport, landed just to the south side of the runway, roughly 100 feet from the edge. He said the as soon as he landed, the Aerostar pulled onto the runway. He heard the engines come up with power, he saw the airplane go to the right then immediately to the left and it was over. I asked him if he heard or saw anything out of the ordinary. He kind of looked at me funny, so I said "besides the wreck" he said no, it seemed normal to him.

I then asked if he and anyone else who witnessed anything could write a statement.

On September 5, I received a call from the FAA. It was Bill Halse, who asked if the log books were in the aircraft. I said that they were. He asked if Juliet Delta Aviation had performed any work, to which I said yes. He said the he needed to come down to take a look at the log books, to which I told him the best time would be after 2, when I got back from lunch. Bill Haase and Richard Harowicz came down that day and looked through the logs and looked at the aircraft briefly.

Later that night, I was talking with a customer, explaining how the FAA had come down, and that I suspected the pilot was trying to pass blame on anyone but himself. We were talking about how it would be nice if I could prove the plane was operating normally. While on the phone, I remembered the airplane was equipped with a JP Instruments EDM-960

primary engine monitor which stored and tracked all engine operations. I immediately drove back over to the airport that night, downloaded the data, and sent it to the FAA.

< **Lance Vanwormer**



Saturday, August 19, 2017

4:27 PM

Give me a call when you can



Joel,

We do have a sam smithhart as a Named Pilot on the policy, but he was supposed to go to an initial Aerostar ground and flight school first.

4:53 PM



Before solo and before providing dual instruction to Kurt

4:54 PM



He was supposed to be Kurts CFI and to get Aerostar training before flying and instructing in it.

4:55 PM



I have in my notes that he and Kurt were supposed to take initial training at Recurrent Training Center together.

5:05 PM



MMS



Enter message



SEND

< **Kurt Heitmeyer**
[Redacted]



Saturday, August 19, 2017

You do know that this guy had never flown an aerostar?

4:20 PM

K

Yeah

4:29 PM

K

Hey Joel I just touched down. Give me a shout whenever you're free

8:59 PM

Eating dinner, ill cal in 5 minutes

9:00 PM

MMS
11:25 PM



Enter message



SEND