



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Ralph E. Hicks
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: February 2, 2018
Person Contacted: Martha Wong (Wife of Daniel Bernath) and Nicole Bernath
(Daughter of Daniel Bernath)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA064 – Bonita Springs, FL

This investigator interviewed Mrs. Wong and Ms. Bernath by telephone. They reported the following:

About 4 years ago, she and her husband moved to Florida from Oregon. Before the move, Mr. Bernath purchased N262Ws in Washington State and flew the airplane to Ft. Myers (N262WS was hangered at Page Field).

Mr. Bernath was a licensed sport pilot. He went through all the training to obtain his certificates.

Ms. Wong was not in the US at the time of the accident, she was in Bangkok for a reunion.

Mr. Bernath kept the airplane in a locked hangar at FMY. He previously kept it in an open hanger but was suspicious that someone had been trying to do things to his airplane. He had some fuel system problems and they were recorded by his mechanic.

Mr. Bernath was released from jail in Virginia a few days prior to the accident. He had been in jail for a few months for violating a restraining order. He was in a dispute with someone over a "stolen valor" claim. The person he had the dispute with was Don Shipley and his wife. They claimed that Mr. Bernath portrayed himself as a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy. Mrs. Wong stated that it was an honorary rank given to him by a photography club he was in. The details of the dispute were on Mr. Shipley's website.

Ms. Wong stated that Mr. Bernath was under medical care at the VA. He was under treatment for neuropathy and high blood pressure. She agreed to forward a list of his prescribed medications by email.

Mr. Bernath did not have any mental health issues that she was aware of. He lost some weight while in jail.

Mr. Bernath used an independent mechanic to maintain his airplane. His name was Shayne Morris out of Sebring, Florida. Shayne performed the last inspection on the airplane at FMY but did not finish it. She was not aware of the remaining items but stated that it was recorded in the airplane logbooks.

Mr. Bernath reported to Nicole that he flew the airplane on the day before the accident and there were no problems with the airplane as it ran well.