



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Aaron McCarter
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: August 27, 2019
Person Contacted: Jeff Bell (CFI)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA235

Narrative:

They flew for about 1.5 hours in windier conditions on the previous day and he (pilot) did well. The pilot had 30 hours in the aircraft. He hasn't flown until recently, but he was impressed how well he did because he had taken off a long time, about a year. They did the preflight. His wife was with him during the preflight.

It was a good day to fly. They did some ground reference maneuvers, stalls, steep turns, slow flight and some low passes over the water. All the maneuvers were normal, and the pilot handled them very well. The airframe and engine was good. Nothing out of the ordinary during preflight. The aircraft just came out of annual, so they did an extra thorough preflight. Everything was good. The mags and preflight checks were good.

During dual instruction, they took off east southeast in winds of about 10 knots. There were no problems. They performed some normal maneuvers, like climbs, descents and steep turns. The aircraft was a good shape. They did some skimming towards the beach into the wind. There was a sandbar near Santa Rosa Sound, an inland waterway that's perfect for this kind of flying. They did over 20 touch and go landings and take offs in order to get the pilot ready for his solo flight.

The pilot was flying perfectly and was prepared for his solo flight. They landed near the shore, and he got out of the aircraft and reviewed some final items before the pilot took off. He was to fly several rectangular patterns and subsequent water landings and takeoffs. He was a little nervous, but not unusually so; completely normal for a first solo.

He watched the pilot depart westbound, perpendicular to the shore and stated the takeoff and climb. Everything appeared normal and the engine power settings sounded normal.

As the airplane reached about 400 to 500 ft on downwind, the left wing dropped rapidly, maybe to about 35 degrees followed by a quick snap roll back to the right to about 60 degrees. Then it turned back to the left and spiraled down in a left descent. It looked like the left wing was

starting to lift again as it got close to the water, but he is not sure if the pilot was causing it or if it was the aerodynamics as the aircraft sped up. The aircraft struck the water.

The pilot weighted at least 250 lbs and the CFI was about 200 pounds. The pilot sits in the front and the instructor sits in the back. He is unsure if the removal of the 200 pounds in the back seat may have affected the pilots ability to fly.

He is completely shocked that the airplane went out of control while in straight and level flight.

[END]



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Aaron McCarter
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: August 28, 2019
Person Contacted: Dylan Olive (Eyewitness)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA235

Narrative:

While in their boat, they witnessed the aircraft performing numerous flights in the same directional pattern. Several minutes later, as they anchored off the beach and were walking along the shore, they saw the aircraft flying straight and level when he saw the left and right-wings drop, followed by a corkscrew left turn descent straight down; it made 3 revolutions, then briefly looked like it was starting to level off before impacting the water. They got back in their boat and rushed to the location of the aircraft and attempted to save the pilot.

[END]



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Nina McBride
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: August 28, 2019
Person Contacted: Jeff Bell (CFI)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA235
RE: Recorded Interview Summary

Narrative:

Pilot had not been flying for about a year. They flew together in the instructors plane because the pilots plane was in maintenance getting an annual. They flew for about 1.5 hours in windier conditions than today (accident day) They did solo training. He had not flown in about a year; told the pilot that he had to pass his written test first before he would consider soloing him. They did some ground reference maneuvers, stalls, steep turns and slow flight. He did really well and thought he did great for being off a year.

The pilot and his wife showed up at 0900 in the morning. The pilot performed a preflight. His wife was with him and followed along with the checklist. The CFI performed an extra preflight because it just came out of annual.

Everything was good. The mags and preflight checks were good.

A year ago, he (CFI) told him (pilot) that he needed to pass his written test before he could solo. The student passed his test mid-July and he called and asked to fly with him for instruction.

They took off east southeast in winds of about 8 to 10 knots. There were no problems. They got up to altitude and turned west towards Pensacola, Florida. They performed some normal climbs, stalls and steep turns. The airplane was trimming nice. There was no wing drop. The airplane was tuned right and flying very nicely.

He demonstrated distractions, which occur when a pilot becomes fixated while looking down at something below; this included spiral training and recovery. They did some skimming towards the beach near the sound, into the wind and low in ground effect.

They flew towards Protofino [sic] condos. There was a sandbar there that was sheltered from the waves. They did about 5 or 6 touch and goes in preparation for getting him ready for his solo. He

gave the pilot specific directions for the solo flight. "I'm sitting behind him the whole time and not touching the controls." The pilot did really well.

They flew together and performed three touch and goes. The pilot appeared comfortable and was dealing with the wind with no problems. They performed about 15 additional landings in the same location repeatedly; "I was liking the way he was flying." He said he was ready, so the CFI instructed him to do the same landing, using the same power settings and gave him a speech and reminded him that "Remember you've got 200 pounds less in the backseat." Told him to stay below 500 feet.

During the solo, the aircraft was coming towards him on takeoff, then the pilot turned crosswind and started his climb; He was level and stable. Over the next few seconds, things "happened in the blink of an eye." He saw the left wing drop very quickly. The left wing dropped 30 to 40 degrees, then it rolled right past 60 degrees. "I could see the whole side of the plane from my angle."

It literally just did a 180 degree turn into what "I call it a half a turn spiral." It went left, then it rolled right then back left. It went steep, and as it went steep, he started coming towards the water at 300 to 400 feet. It looked like he was coming straight down, like a 180 degree hook straight down at the water. At about 100 feet, the nose appeared to come up slightly, but it hit the water hard and it rested upside down. "I can't process how he lost control straight and level." He had flown with him for close to 3 1/2 hours over the past 2 days. He never had a question about his ability to fly the aircraft.

The pilot was in the front seat during the past 2 days. He (CFI) was always in the aft seat. He was a big guy and wasn't in peak physical health. He weighted about 260 pounds. As you burn fuel, there's no calculation for weight and balance.

There was no change in engine noise. No parts came off the aircraft that he could see, but he was pretty far away, and he doesn't think he would see anything depart the aircraft.

The pilot (student) stated he had about 30 hours. He (CFI) signed his logbook, but he didn't add up his time or check his previous flight instructors signature. The pilot (student) informed him he had 30 hours of time.

He was flying on his drivers license. (Basic Med) the CFI did not put an endorsement in his logbook, he was waiting to do that after his solo flight. He (pilot) bought the aircraft it back in 2016. He's had it for a couple years.

The pilot procrastinated on his test. He (CFI) didn't see his test results or his score. The pilot told the CFI he printed off the sections of the test that he missed and wanted to review the incorrect answers.

There's a 20 knot wind limitation and a zero crosswind limitation for takeoff.

[END]