



NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Adam Gerhardt
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region, Office of Aviation Safety (ERA)
National Transportation Safety Board

Date: 9/2/2018

Person Contacted: Robert Harris (Jet Guys Owner and Operator)

NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA240

Narrative:

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred at the Covington Municipal Airport (M04), Covington, Tennessee, with Robert Harris. Present at this interview was Adam Gerhardt (NTSB), Todd Gunther (NTSB), Dan Merrell (FAA), and Detective Sherri Wassel (Tipton County Sheriff's Office).

- He reported that the purpose of the local flight was to have both canard jets in the air at the same time.
- He reported that the takeoff was shortly after 5:00PM local, and the flight did not last over two minutes.
- He reported that he was on a taxiway at M04 airport, observing the accident airplane takeoff. The airplane departed to the south from runway 19, climbed to about 1,000 ft above ground level (agl), and then completed a 270° descending turn. He then observed the airplane cross over the airfield, in a level pitch and bank attitude, about 200 to 210 knots. After the airplane crossed over the airfield, and was flying east bound over a cotton field, he observed the left wing and winglet "oscillate 5 times" and then the wing "exploded." He immediately saw "blue styrofoam," which he said he knew was part of the internal wing structure. Next, the airplane pitched up about 90°, the right wing separated from the airplane and the airplane descended and disappeared into the cotton field. Refer to Figure 1 below.
- He reported that the engine "sounded fine."
- He reported that when the airplane overflew the airport, it was "whistling," which from observing past flights, he knew the airplane would make that sound normally around 200 knots.
- He reported that there was a little breeze from the east, and it was sunny, and the visibility was good.



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- He reported that the airplane's Vne was 231 knots. He was unsure if this was true airspeed or indicated airspeed. The pilot told him in some instances the speed was true, and at other times he said it was indicated.
- He explained that the airplane experienced a flutter event with the left wing at 6,000 ft at 261 knots. He explained that they were "looking for it [flutter]." He explained that, "we performed a conventional tap test" after the flutter event. This was the only flutter event that he was aware of, and the right wing and winglet did not flutter during the event, it was only the left wing.
- He reported that this flight was going to be the last flight before it was going to undergo maintenance over the fall and winter season. He reported that the purpose of the planned maintenance was to address a common problem many canard airplanes experience when flying in rain, where a pitch down pressure is felt on the flight controls.
- He reported that the airplane had been hangered at M04 airport and in Kissimmee, Florida, where the pilot lives.
- He reported the pilot always wore a helmet and parachute, and he was doing so on this flight.
- He reported that he "leaked checked" the engine prior to this flight.
- He reported the airplane had about 100 hours of total flight time.
- He reported the he believed the airplane's logbooks were in the backseat.
- He reported there was about 100 gallons of fuel on board, and little to no fuel was in the wing fuel pods. He reported the fuel valve was an off/on valve. He was unsure if the baggage pods had anything in them.
- He reported that the airplane had departed the 2018 Oshkosh Airshow at the end of the event, flew to M04, and had been hangered at the airport since then. He could not recall the exact date the airplane arrived at M04.
- He again repeated what he observed with the left wing in-flight. He reported that he saw about "5 oscillations" in the left wing, and then it "exploded."
- He reported that the winglets were "blended winglets" and were integral to the wing spar.
- He reported that he was unaware of any structural modification of structural damage event in the airplane's past.
- The airplane did not have trim tabs.
- He reported that he believed the pilot thought the height of the winglets "looked cool" and the pilot made them tall "because he could."
- He said the last time the wings were removed, was last winter.



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- He reported that this airplane was the pilot's original design, and he was unaware of any other airplane in production or flying today.
- He reported that he knew the airplane did not have insurance.

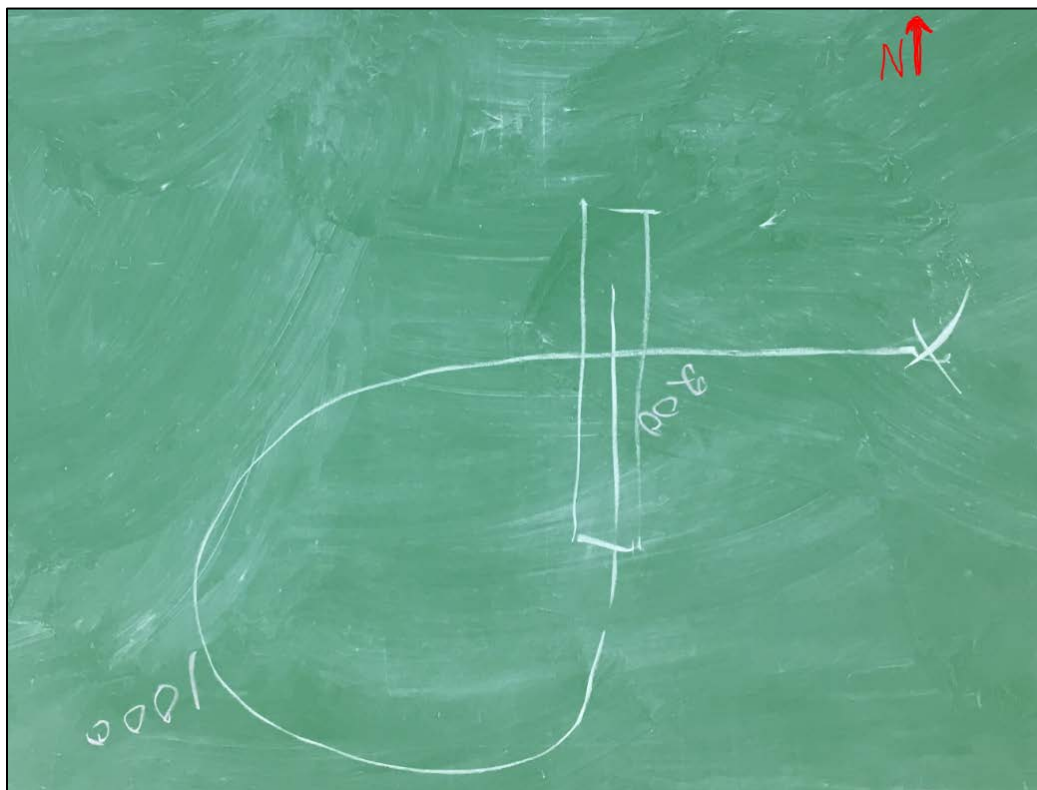


Figure 1: Depiction of the flight path, as drawn by Mr. Harris. The 1000 and 200 denotes the altitude above ground. The X denotes the estimated location of the accident site.



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Adam Gerhardt
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National Transportation Safety Board

Date: 9/4/2018
Person Contacted: Robert Harris (Jet Guys Owner and Operator)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA240

Narrative:

The following is a summary of a second conversation that occurred at the Covington Municipal Airport (M04), Covington, Tennessee, with Robert Harris. Present at this interview was Adam Gerhardt (NTSB), Todd Gunther (NTSB), Dan Merrell (FAA), and Robert Poiesz (Customer of Jet Guys)

- Mr. Harris reported that “there was no partnership with Lance [the pilot] and Jetguys.”
- He reported that he believed Lance was aware of the Cozy jet, and he contacted him many years ago about building a Long EZ.
- He reported that he believed Lance received design support from Jack Morrison. He said Mr. Morrison was deceased. He reported that a Marc Zeitlin supported the composite design.
- Mr. Harris reported that he “watched him [Lance] build the winglets and learned from him” in Kissimmee at his home, many years ago. He reported that it was a “challenge” to bend the wing spar up the winglet.
- Mr. Harris reported that over the many years this airplane was being built, he and Lance would have phone calls about “how would you go about doing this?”
- He reported that he believed Lance used the Long EZ layup schedule and EZ poxy and Lance “hot-wired” the wing.
- Mr. Harris reported that he supported the “Jet Install” and taught Lance how to weld.
- He reported that he did not believe any “build plans” exist.
- Mr. Harris stated that he was not a part of a “builders assist” for the accident airplane and that he would only explain ways to do things, and the accident pilot would perform the work. The accident pilot enjoyed doing the work and did not want others to work on his airplane.
- Mr. Harris reported; “I believe in the 51% builder rule.” He reported he may teach someone how to do the work, but he will not do the work for them.



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- He reported that he was not compensated by Lance for his time or advising. He stated, "I never took any money for the work."
- Mr. Harris asked if he was personally "under investigation." Mr. Gerhardt explained the NTSB was performing a safety investigation, and that the purpose was not to jail, fine, or suspend any certificates he may hold, because that is not in the power of the NTSB. Mr. Gerhardt stated that he was a federal investigator, and any intentional untruthful statements provided to the NTSB would be unlawful.
- Mr. Harris reported that the wings and winglets were "laid up" at the pilot's home in Kissimmee, Florida.
- Mr. Harris reported that he provided general guidance to the accident pilot, and then Lance would complete the build. He said there was a "line" DAR's could not cross, and he said he did not cross that line. He said, you can advise a builder, but ultimately, it's up to the builder.
- Mr. Harris reported that after the airworthiness certificate was issued in 2014, he became involved with the flight test program for the airplane.
- Mr. Harris was asked by Mr. Gerhardt if he built the wings or winglets in Tennessee, and then shipped them to Florida to Lance. Mr. Harris responded with "No."
- Mr. Harris reported that Lance in his past aircraft building experience had built other composite airplanes that would require lay ups.
- Mr. Harris reported that he checked the Jet Guys hangar and found no logs for the accident airplane.
- Mr. Harris explained that he had knowledge of how this airplane was designed, but Lance controlled the process and built the airplane.
- Mr. Harris reported that he was not involved with laying up the composite wings with Lance.
- Mr. Harris, when shown the left wing, said he could not recall if Lance told him the airplane had a C-channel wing spar. He reported that he normally uses box spars for his experimental airplanes. He reported that the pilot made the lay ups "thicker," as compared to the Long EZ.



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Adam Gerhardt
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region, Office of Aviation Safety (ERA)
National Transportation Safety Board

Date: 11/28/2018
Person Contacted: Robert Harris ((Jet Guys Owner and Operator))
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA240

Narrative:

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred via telephone with Mr. Harris and the NTSB investigator-in-charge:

Mr. Harris was asked to provide a written statement detailing what he recalled with regard to the previous flutter event with the JETEZ. He stated that he would not provide a written statement. He stated that he “had a business to run” and would not provide such a statement in writing. The following information was according to Mr. Harris, which was reported over the telephone:

- About 2 months after the first flight, there was a flutter event with the JETEZ on the left wing.
- Mr. Harris believed that he saw the flutter event on a recorded video, that the accident pilot (Mr. Lance Hooley) showed him. The camera was mounted on the left wing. The video showed the left winglet moving forward and aft in a back and forth motion, about 4 inches, about one revolution per second.
- Mr. Harris could not recall what airspeed the Mr. Hooley stated the flutter event occurred. Mr. Harris stated the pilot reported the event occurred at either 232 knots indicated airspeed, or 262 knots true airspeed. He believed the altitude was at 6,000 ft.
- Mr. Harris reported that Mr. Hooley lowered the Vne airspeed after the flutter event. Mr. Harris did not know what the lowered airspeed was.
- Mr. Harris reported that he believed the pilot performed a “tap test” on the left wing after the flutter event.
- When questioned on what actions the “Jet Guys Team” took, with regard to inspections or maintenance on the accident airplane after the flutter event, Mr. Harris reported that his team did not do anything. He reported that the accident pilot performed the tap test, and neither Mr. Hooley, nor “the Jet Guys” made any structural modifications to the airplane after this flutter event.



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- Mr. Harris had previously reported that he witnessed the accident flight. In this conversation, he reported that he believed the low pass the pilot performed, just prior to the left-wing failure, was “at least 200 knots, it could have been 230 knots.”