

Reichert, Michael (FAA)

From: Bill Schwartz [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, November 04, 2017 9:53 AM
To: Reichert, Michael (FAA)
Subject: Re: FAA Statement Request

Michael,

My wife and I entered the airport traveling east on the roadway that runs parallel and to the north of the landing strip. On the south side of the landing strip the ground slopes down rather sharply.

As we approached the parking area, the end of an airplane wing appeared in the area to the south of the runway (in line with the parking area). The wing appeared to tip up and spin around. I thought that a plane must have tipped over--although the plane's body and engine were never in sight (and we heard no engine noise). It looked almost as if the wing had done a sort of pirouette.

When we were able to cross the landing strip we saw the plane several hundred yards farther to the east and slightly south--as if it had spun about where we saw it and then run basically downhill until it hit a row of trees at the end of field.

My guess would be that the plane was traveling west but off the runway on the sloping ground to the south and therefore out of sight of anyone standing at the airport office. It then made a sharp turn and ran back in the opposite direction until it hit the trees.

Hope this helps,
Bill

From: Michael.Reichert@faa.gov [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, November 3, 2017 7:49 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FAA Statement Request

Hello Mr. Schwartz,

Thank you for your time on the phone today. As I mentioned, I would like to ask for you to email me a statement as to what you saw transpire with the aircraft incident today at Vansant Airport. I understand you were looking towards the East as the aircraft would have been approaching you. You are welcome to reference the sides of the aircraft, left and right, and direction the aircraft is moving from your vantage point.

Again, thank you for your time and please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Michael J. Reichert

Reichert, Michael (FAA)

From: Bill Jacobs [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2017 12:25 AM
To: Reichert, Michael (FAA)
Subject: Van Sant — November 3, 2017

Dear Inspector Reichert:

Please find my statement below regarding the recent plane crash at Van Sant Airport.

Would you please be so kind as to send back a quick email acknowledging your receipt of this communication? We are having problems with our mail and web server, and I want to make sure that this (finally) gets to you.

Many Thanks,
Bill Jacobs
[REDACTED]

On Friday, November 3, 2017, I was filming overhead aircraft at Van Sant Airport in Bucks County, PA, when I witnessed a smaller-sized biplane cartwheel off the main grass runway and disappear (from my vantage point) into the woods south of the runway.

I was positioned at the far west end of the runway, facing east, with my camera set up about six feet off of Cafferty Road, on the side opposite the end of the runway.

I was only filming aircraft as they passed directly overhead that day — on takeoffs or flybys — and so, no footage was captured of the actual plane crash.

I also witnessed the plane when it originally took off from Van Sant that day, flying overhead, going east to west. At that time I was not aware of any strange sounds being emitted by the plane, or anything that (to my untrained aviation eye) seemed out of place.

Though I can not be certain of the exact time frame, I believe it was most likely within a thirty-minute window of take off that I then saw the same plane approach Van Sant from the east. I was keeping my eye out for planes that might actually be performing flybys that I could film, and so I did intently watch the plane as it came in and disappeared (from my point of view) behind the rolling runway. As I continued to watch, waiting to see if it was indeed landing or possibly would be rising back upward in a flyby, I witnessed one of the plane's wings rise up from behind the hill in a somewhat "bouncy" motion. I believe it was the plane's port-side wing. The wing quickly dipped back out of view behind the runway hill, and the other wing "bounced" up into view, followed by the tail section, in a motion that I can only describe as a "cartwheeling" action that the plane performed as it flipped southward out of my view, back down behind the runway hill, and directly toward the lower ground filled with trees south of the runway.

During the plane's approach and eventual crash, I did not hear any specific sounds being emitted by the plane. There was a lightly-gusting occasional wind blowing from the west, as well as farm machinery at work in a nearby field that caused limited hearing that afternoon.

During the plane's approach and eventual crash, I did not witness any smoke or objects coming from the aircraft.

These were my only observances of this plane on Friday, November 3, 2017 at Van Sant Airport.

Most Sincerely Submitted,
William T. Jacobs

[REDACTED]