

Record of Telephone Conversation

Name: Michael Shepard, cert# [REDACTED]
Address: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]
Date: 1/30/18; 9:00 am CST
Description: Interview regarding aircraft accident , AC-680F, N900L on 1/27/2018

After identifying myself, I asked Mr. Shepard if he had been pilot-in-command of N900L when it crashed during takeoff from the private airstrip in Lapine, AL. Mr. Shepard stated that he had been PIC and was sole occupant of the airplane when he crashed. Mr. Shepard was unable to say what time the accident occurred, only that he thought it was around 10:30 am on Saturday, January 27th. He confirmed his pilot certificate number and stated that he holds a 3rd class medical certificate issued January 2017.

Mr. Shepard stated that he had just purchased the airplane from the owner Art Persky. He stated this was his "third flight" that day and that he was doing his 5 takeoffs and landings so that he could carry passengers. When asked when that day had the two previous flights taken place, he stated that he had taken off and landed twice before he began the takeoff roll that ended in the crash. I asked Mr. Shepard to clarify what he meant and had he flown the airplane that day on a different flight before he crashed. He said no, he had done two takeoffs and two landings, both to a full stop. He was taking off for the third time. When he was beginning to rotate, it felt like he lost power on the left engine and the airplane veered left. He then hit a few small trees and the airplane spin around to the right and came to a stop facing 180 degrees from takeoff roll and in the swamp by the runway edge. He then stated that the left engine was not running. He shut down the right engine. He got out of the airplane.

Mr. Shepard stated that he is a former CFI and has been flying for 50 years. He has approximately 15-20 hours in an Aero Commander 680 but that was 25 years ago. He said the aircraft was purchased by his LLC. It is called Arkansas Round Engines, LLC in Mena, AR. Mr. Shepard stated that he lives in Mena, AR. His mechanic, David Brainerd, an IA from Mena, AR [REDACTED] had come down here the week prior and been working on the airplane to get it ready to fly back to Arkansas.

Mr. Shepard stated Mr. Persky had given him a familiarization flight in the airplane the day before. They had flown locally for about 30 minutes to familiarize Mr. Shepard with the airplane. He said that he had paid Mr. Persky for the airplane the day before. Mr. Shepard then stated that the runway was very narrow and there was not a lot of room. Mr. Shepard stated that the weather was a high overcast with a light drizzle, not particularly windy. He said he used a weather report from Montgomery, AL and thought he remembered that it was about 5000 feet overcast.

He stated again that on the previous day he had flown around for about 30 minutes with Mr. Persky to get a feel for the aircraft. He has time in other high performance twin engine airplanes such as P-Navajos and Navajos.

When asked to describe the takeoff, Mr. Shepard stated that he was holding the brakes and began to "walk the power up". At about 47" and 3500 RPM, he released the brakes. He had his left hand on the yoke and his right hand on the throttles. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down the runway, just as he was starting to rotate, the left engine lost power. Within seconds, he was heading 180 degrees and was in the swamp.

Mr. Shepard stated that he has flown about 40-50 hours in the last 12 months, about 10 – 15 hrs in the last 90 days, and about 7 -8 hrs in the last 30 days. He also owns a DC-3, a Beech 18, and a Skymaster. He owns some assisted living facilities and uses the airplanes to fly to the facilities to visit them. He just got his DC-3 type rating in January of 2017 in the Arkansas area. He stated that he began logging his flight time electronically around January 2017 except for the flight training he received for his DC-3 type rating. That is in his paper logbook. He does not have all his paper pilot logbooks but has at least the last three.

Mr. Shepard then stated that he believes his IA mechanic went into the airplane after the accident to retrieve his headset and some papers related to an engine purchase. At that time, the IA heard a humming noise and was concerned about an electric spark igniting fuel so he removed the aircraft battery.

Mr. Shepard stated that they had fueled the airplane with about 100 gallons of fuel, most of it in the center tank. They had put some fuel in the aux tanks to make sure they were not leaking. Probably only 5 gallons aside. David Brainerd had brought fuel with him on the truck. There was no fuel at the private strip. Mr. Shepard thought he had brought at least one or possibly two drums of fuel. He stated that the airplane had been sitting for 6 or 7 years. The IA had been there all week before the flight and did a lot of work to get it ready. He had put new tires on it, new battery, oil and filters on both engines. He completed an annual inspection. Mr. Shepard understood that David Brainerd had run the aircraft engines and done a high speed taxi to make sure everything was working properly. He had done this the day before.

Mr. Shepard stated that the aircraft was insured by Berkley Insurance, Agentname: Mr. Malek;

[REDACTED]

2/1/2018 at 8:58 am CST

I contacted Mr. Shepard again and asked him some additional questions. I asked Mr. Shepard what flap setting he used for takeoff and he stated $\frac{1}{4}$ flaps. I asked him to describe what he did after the second landing. He said he taxied back to takeoff again and turned around for another takeoff to the northeast. The airplane has a very tight turning radius which is good because the runway is narrow. He set up for another takeoff. I asked him if he used a check list and he said no, he did not have one. He said he had looked over a check list when preparing to come to Alabama to pick up the plane but did not have one with him. Mr. Persky did not give him one with the airplane.

I asked Mr. Shepard if he was familiar with how to taxi the airplane and to control direction on the ground. Mr. Shepard said that he used the rudder pedals. He stated that the top of the pedal is the brakes and the bottom is the rudder control. I asked Him if he was familiar with using the power steering in the top of the pedal and he said he was not familiar with that.

He stated that he had gotten the weather from the AWOS in Montgomery and then had called Greenville Airport to get their weather. He stated that the Greenville airport told them that there were dark clouds to the north. He was not the one who actually called...someone else did. He doesn't remember who.

I asked him if Leslie Perryman was there that morning on Saturday. Mr. Shepard said Perryman had been there on Friday but not on Saturday. He did not remember seeing him on Saturday but he would check with him. Mr. Perryman is traveling now and cannot be reached. Mr. Shepard will try to get him to call me later.

2/1/2018 14:45 CST

I contacted Mr. Shepard to try and confirm a time line of the events Saturday. I told him that I had determined that Art Persky had called the Greenville FBO to get them to tell him the weather at Greenville and that this occurred around 11:07 am according to the call record at the FBO. I also said that this phone call was made on a phone number that went to Leslie Perryman's phone. I asked again if Mr. Perryman was there that day. Mr. Shepard said no. He did not remember him being there. I asked him if he was aware that Mr. Persky had called the Greenville airport. Mr. Shepard stated that he himself was checking the weather on his iPad and was using the weather from Montgomery.

I then asked Mr. Shepard where he was planning to go with a passenger once he had completed his takeoffs and landings. He stated that he was planning to fly to Greenville and leave the airplane there and that the mechanic David Brainerd was going to fly there with him. They could not take the plane to Arkansas that day because they had a few parts on order but wanted to leave it at a bigger airport until they could come back to pick it up.

I asked Mr. Shepard why Mr. Persky had called the Greenville airport and had someone asked him to do that? Mr. Shepard said he did not know because he was getting the weather from his iPad. He then said that he heard that Greenville airport had said that the weather to the northwest was getting bad and there were some dark clouds in that direction.

I explained again that I was trying to get a time line of when the crash occurred. Mr. Shepard then said that he remembered he had looked at his watch when they were driving away from the airport after the crash and it was about 12:30 pm. I asked him how long after they had checked the weather did he get in the airplane to go flying and he said he did not remember.

I then asked who had reported the crash. Mr. Shepard said that he did. I asked why he waited until Sunday to report the crash. He said that his insurance agent who he talked to right after the crash and before he left Lapine said that he had 5 -10 days to report it and could wait until Monday. Mr. Shepard then said that when he got to Mena, AR he looked on the NTSB website. He saw the number there and decided to report it then. He was told that someone named Todd would call him but the next person he talked to was Jennifer from the FAA. I reminded Mr. Shepard that the NTSB rule requires you to make immediate notification whenever there is an accident and that even though no one was hurt, the amount of damage (substantial) means it required immediate notification. Mr. Shepard said he was going by what his insurance agent said.

2/1/2018 15:45 pmCST

I called Mr. Shepard to confirm what runway he was using for takeoff and landing. He stated that he was using the northeast runway and landing and taking off in the same direction. He thought it was runway 04.

Nina A. McBride
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS
AL/NW Florida FSDO, SO-09