



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 4, 2018
Person Contacted: Bradley L. Bane
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA135

Narrative:

Mr. Bradley L. Bane was contacted by phone on April 30, 2018, at 0940 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED] and left a voice mail message. He returned the call the same day at 1048 EDT. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

At the beginning of the phone call he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He indicated that he has a hangar/house at the Gaines Valley Aviation Airport (NY06), Albion, New York. His house is located on the south side of NY06, and is the western most hangar. He is a private pilot, and owns a Piper PA-11 (N4981M). He knows the accident pilot, and reported he retired from flying due to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) age limitation in the fall of 2017. He was not sure how many hours the accident pilot had, and reported the club has 20 members. The accident pilot's hangar is on the northern side of NY06, and is the western most hangar.

He indicated that the Orleans Hub (on-line paper) quoted Mark Bennett who reported seeing a part separate from the helicopter, heard a noise, and then saw another part separate from the helicopter.

On the date of the accident, he and his wife were at NY06 about 1200, and while there, he was talking with a gentleman at the last hangar on the south side. He looked around, and decided to leave. As he went by the accident pilot's hangar, he noted the door was up and he was outside. He waved to the accident pilot and he waved back. He was not at NY06 when the helicopter

departed or the accident occurred. Later that evening, he received a call from Earl Luce (manager of NY06), and was informed of the accident.

He reported that a few days before the accident, he noted the pilot flying the helicopter in hovering flight about 10 to 15 ft above ground level. During the time that he saw the helicopter flying he reported, "everything seemed normal."

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 4, 2018. He did not reply.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 3, 2018
Person Contacted: Dick Meinhardt
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA135

Narrative:

Mr. Dick Meinhardt was contacted by phone on May 1, 2018, at 1513 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED] He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

He indicated that he lives next door to the accident pilot, and is an Airframe and Powerplant mechanic with Inspection Authorization (A&P/IA). He is also a flight instructor. He had assisted the accident pilot with a portion of building the helicopter, and reported the accident pilot had retired from UPS as a pilot a couple months ago. The day before the accident, on April 23rd, he noticed the accident pilot flying the helicopter. He reported the pilot was always working on it, and if there was something he did not know, he would talk with the person who would know the subject.

On the date and time of the accident, he was on the roof of his house, which is located on the south border of the airport property at the Gaines Valley Aviation Airport (NY06), Albion, New York. He noticed the helicopter departing to the west, and after pulling up to fly over powerlines, when the flight was just passing the road between 150 and 200 feet above ground level, he heard a loud "boom" sound and immediately noticed flames directly behind the engine centerline. He acquainted the sound to be similar to the sound made when turning off and then on the ignition switch while an engine is running, with the sound being made from explosion of unburnt fuel in the exhaust. He also indicated that the sound he heard might be similar to that of an engine running a rich fuel to air ratio. The fire or flames continued and the helicopter began descending. While descending he could tell there was a vibration. The helicopter descended below the height of the powerlines and he lost sight of the helicopter. He heard the impact, got down from the roof and went to the accident site. Once he was on-scene the pilot kept trying to get up. While he was there, the pilot did not mention anything to him about what occurred.

He was asked if he could tell if the main rotor was rotating during the descent, and he indicated he was pretty sure it was.

He indicated that several years ago when the accident pilot was performing practice autorotative landings when he already had his helicopter rating, during one practice he landed hard.

He indicated that witness Mark Bennett also saw flames from the engine. He did not know who Mark Bennett is, but suggested NTSB contact him.

After the accident, he helped recover the wreckage and placed it besides the accident pilot's hangar. In preparation of the investigation on May 17th, he moved the engine to his hangar and looked it over. During his visual inspection he noted the main drive belt was charred but not broken.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 3, 2018. He replied on May 4, 2018, at 0927 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on May 4, 2018.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 4, 2018
Person Contacted: Mark H. Bennett
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18LA135

Narrative:

Mr. Mark Harold Bennett was contacted by phone on May 3, 2018, at 1113 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED]. At the beginning of the call he suggested we talk later that afternoon, and he would call me. He called from the same phone number at 1329 EDT. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the second phone call he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He provided an address of [REDACTED] Albion, NY [REDACTED]. He was advised that I had mailed a letter to that address asking him to call me so I could interview him. He indicated that he was in the Marine Corps as a diesel mechanic from 1976 to 1980. He has flown in a 2-seat general aviation airplane, and flew once in a helicopter in the military. He did not previously know the pilot. He is not a pilot.

On the date and time of the accident, he was driving north on Gaines Waterport Road, and was near the Gaines Valley Aviation Airport (NY06), Albion, New York. He noticed the helicopter hovering about 6 to 8 ft above ground level (agl) at NY06, and decided to turn around and pull over. He was looking to his east out his open window and watched for about 15 minutes. He then pulled onto a road that borders the south side of the airstrip and parked his car facing east. Using Google Earth during the phone call he was located at 43°17'45.11" north and -78°13'15.82" west. While looking to the north, he watched the helicopter fly slow about 8 ft agl to the east end of the airstrip. The helicopter turned around and began flying west over the runway. When the helicopter was near the pilot's hangar, he noted the helicopter paused, then began climbing.

When the helicopter was abeam his position, it was about 8 ft agl, and he had a view of the left side and back end of the helicopter. The helicopter then began climbing and flew over powerlines located on the east side of the road that he estimated were 25 ft agl. While flying about two times the height of the powerline poles, he heard a pop sound, then while almost hovering, he saw something that was black in color, and about the size of a softball separate from the helicopter. He then immediately heard a grinding sound, and noted the "aircraft wiggled in the tail", but the pilot kept the helicopter pointed straight. He described the wiggle was, "like a shimmy" and was the result of the pop sound he had heard. About 3 to 4 seconds after the start of hearing the grinding sound, he saw something else (carburetor breather) separate. The helicopter then began descending steeply, and upon touchdown in a westerly direction, the helicopter caught fire immediately and there was black smoke. He called 911 to report the accident, then jumped a fence and ran 125 to 150 yards to the wreckage. He indicated that he did not think anybody could have survived the impact following the vertical descent, nor could someone have survived the fire. When he arrived the helicopter was engulfed in fire. He saw the pilot on the ground near the backside of the fire and reported he too was on fire. The pilot yelled for him to put the fire out, and he started to roll him to extinguish the fire. At that time the pilot's neck and shoulders were burnt. The pilot told him he had a pocket knife and provided it so he could cut the shirt off, which removed the fire. He rolled the pilot 15 to 20 ft away, and about that time, a person arrived whom he thought was a farmer based on his clothes, and began communicating with the pilot. It was clear from the conversation that they knew each other. The pilot asked the person who arrived last to call his wife and inform her of the accident but that he was OK. About that time paramedics arrived, and the pilot was put onto a 4-wheeler and taken to a road for transportation to a hospital. He then gave a written statement to the sheriff's department. While he was with the pilot, the pilot did not mention anything to him concerning the accident flight.

He reported that he had been interviewed by the FAA the day before.

He was asked to describe the flight profile when the helicopter was flying over the powerlines. He indicated there were forward and upward components. He was asked if there was evidence that the helicopter impact the power lines and he indicated it did not. He did not see any smoke or fire trailing the helicopter. He indicated that he did not have a sense that the main rotor had stopped in-flight. And if it had, he would have remembered that. He also indicated that he thought the engine was still running on impact.

He reported there was a report from witness Dirk Climenhaga who reported watching the helicopter from his house. He relayed that Dirk reported seeing fire while airborne, and he responded to the site.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 4, 2018. He replied the same day at 2231 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on May 7, 2018.