

Record of Interview

Interviewee: Ben Alexander, passenger, N294AB

Contact info: [REDACTED]

Location: Hardee's, Grand Bay, AL

Date/Time: 7/8/2018 10:30 a.m.

Topic: Aircraft accident in N294AB on 7-7-2018 Gulf Shores, AL

Mr. Alexander is an attorney and works in the same law firm as Scott Higgins. Mr. Alexander was seated on the left side of the airplane, in the last row facing forward and next to the entry door. Ben Higgins was sitting in front of him.

Mr. Alexander has never flown in a plane that small. The smallest plane he has been in is a King Air maybe a few times. Ben does not really know David. Ben thought he might be a pilot but now realizes he is not. Ben was a last minute addition to the flight. He thinks someone else was supposed to go but couldn't so Scott asked him to go. He did not pay anyone any money for the flight. He was not asked for his weight or identification prior to the flight.

Mr. Alexander was motion sick most of the flight and did not look outside very much. He could tell when the pilot was flying instead of using the autopilot. He is very sensitive to motion.

Ben saw the airport when they were coming in for a landing and could see that the airplane straightened for the landing. He could see the ground but he quit looking outside and focused on the floor to keep from getting sick.

Ben felt the airplane touch down and bounce up about 5 -10 feet or so. The bounce was not startling or surprising. Then they started to go-around. He saw David's signal that we were going around and he was surprised they took off again. He quit looking up because he was afraid he was going to get sick. He felt the airplane rock and then saw David's face. David was intently focused on the pilot. A few seconds later he felt the airplane rock again and he was waiting for David's face to change but he was intently focused on the pilot. Pilot then told everyone to tighten their seat belts and that they were going down. Ben rolled into a tight ball and tried to brace for a landing. Ben did not want to get hurt if they were crashing.

Ben said they were talking during the go-around so he was not paying attention to any engine noise until David's face looked concerned. Then he realized that there was not as much engine noise and felt that they were drifting to the left. He does not remember much more after that because he was rolled into a ball but he does remember that he was able to get the door open after the landing and everyone got out.

Nina A. McBride
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS
AL/NW Florida FSDO, AFG-600-BHM-09
[REDACTED]

Record of Interview

Interviewee: Scott Higgins, passenger, N294AB

Contact info: [REDACTED]

Location: Hardee's, Grand Bay, AL

Date/Time: 7/8/2018 10:30 a.m.

Topic: Aircraft accident in N294AB on 7-7-2018 Gulf Shores, AL

Mr. Higgins is an attorney and works with the other passenger, Ben Alexander. Mr. Higgins was seated on the left side of the airplane, behind the pilot and facing to the rear of the airplane.

Mr. Higgins has never flown in a plane that small. He has recently flown in a King Air and another type of medium sized twin engine plane about 10-12 years ago.

The Saturday before this trip, on July 30th, David invited Keith Saltzman to play golf in Gulf Shores. Keith invited Ben and Scott. Keith said that David had an airplane. Scott assumed that it was David's airplane. Scott does not really know David; he has met him before on a few occasions. Lafayette is a small town so everyone sort of knows everyone else. Scott did not pay David or anyone any money for the flight.

Nothing on the flight over was unusual. He saw the airport out the window as they circled around to come in for a landing. They touched down and bounced on the landing but it was nothing to be concerned about. He then felt and heard the engines accelerate. He was turned slightly to face forward. He saw David signal with his finger in the air that they were going around.

As they lifted up, Scott could tell that one engine was revving and that seemed abnormal. The engine was surging. The plane was slightly erratic. It was turning and then straightening. Scott looked at the others and they were all wondering what was going on. Then it seemed like the engine went silent. It may have made some noise again but he is not sure. The pilot then said to tighten their seat belts and that they were in trouble.

Scott pulled his seat belt tight. Ben was sitting in front of him and Ben braced himself. Scott had no peripheral sense of their altitude. Then they were on the ground after crashing through the trees. Ben was finally able to open the door. The pilot had briefed him about how to open the door.

When they all got out of the airplane and everyone was o.k., they asked the pilot why he went around. The pilot said that he bounced and that it can cause an accident so he decided to go-around.

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[REDACTED]

Record of Interview

Interviewee: Keith Saltzman, passenger

Contact info: [REDACTED]

Location: Hardee's, Grand Bay, AL

Date/Time: 7/8/2018 10:05 a.m.

Topic: Aircraft accident in N294AB on 7-7-2018 Gulf Shores, AL

Mr. Saltzman is an personal injury attorney. He was seated on the right side of the airplane in the last row facing forward. No one was seated directly in front of him and he was on the same side as David Barczuk. He has flown as a passenger in a small plane before, probably a few times. He has been in someone's King Air and a Twin Cessna.

Most of the flight he and the other two passengers just talked. David was up front wearing a headset. No one was wearing a head set in the back. Flight had been normal.

He remembers that, as they touched down, the airplane bounced. They may have bounced twice or so but neither time was "super hard." The pilot then decided to go-around. They were beginning to climb again and David Barczuk signaled they were going around. Mr. Saltzman did not know why they went around.

He could hear that the left engine was not turning but couldn't tell any more than that. The pilot then told everyone to check that their seat belts were tight and said that they were in trouble. Within 5 – 10 seconds, they hit the trees and ground. Everyone was o.k. and someone used their phone to figure out that the road was very close. Someone called 911 and they walked to the road.

He was not wearing a shoulder harness. He received bruises across his waist. He received no other injuries. The pilot did not ask his weight or look at any identification prior to the flight.

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Record of Interview

Interviewee: David Barczuk, passenger, N294AB, 7-7-18

Contact info: [REDACTED] cell; email: [REDACTED]

Location: Hardee's, Grand Bay, AL

Date/Time: 7/8/2018 10:05 a.m.

Topic: Aircraft accident in N294AB on 7-7-2018 Gulf Shores, AL

I first contacted Dr. Barczuk early Sunday morning 7/8/2018 to arrange an interview with him and the three other passengers. Since all four passengers were already enroute by car to Lafayette, LA, we arranged to meet at a Hardee's near interstate 10. When I asked Dr. Barczuk to confirm that he was a passenger on board the airplane, he stated "yes, I was onboard and it was a charter. I chartered the airplane."

The following statement summarizes the in-person interview conducted with Dr. Barczuk:

Dr. Barczuk is a chiropractor and practices at his office located at: 204 Petroluem Drive, Lafayette, LA 70508. He has flown in small planes about 12 times or so. He has flown in planes from Acadian Aviation about 9 -12 times with their pilot, usually Raja. The flight on 7/7/18 was the first time he had flown with that pilot, Marshall.

Usually Dr. Barczuk calls Acadian Aviation to arrange the charter. He speaks to Raja and tells him the number of people and the date and time they want to leave. Raja charges him a flat fee depending on the plane they use. Raja will text Dr. Barczuk the amount of the flight. Dr. Barczuk does not receive an invoice or receipt for the chartered flights. He usually, almost always, goes from Lafayette, LA to Gulf Shores. He has a condo on Fort Morgan and will often go over there to stay the night and play a round of golf. He has been in a 4 seat single engine plane a number of times and this twin engine plane at least one other time.

On 7/7/18 while enroute from Lafayette, LA to Gulf Shores in N294AB, Dr. Barczuk was sitting in the front right pilot seat and was wearing a headset. The whole flight over had been great; it was easy; pretty clear. They were descending on approach to runway 9. The pilot then flew to the left due to traffic and then came into the airport with the runway on their left (described entering the pattern from a 45 degree entry to left downwind). The approach seemed normal, nothing noticeable. They touched down maybe a little harder than other landings in same seat, same airplane but it was not noticeably harder. The airplane bounced a little and seemed normal but the pilot said, "I'm going around." Dr. Barczuk signaled to the rear passengers that they were going around by pointing his index finger in the air and turning it in a circle.

Then the pilot said there was no power in the left engine. Dr. Barczuk heard the pilot declaring an emergency on the radio and the pilot told the passengers to check their seatbelts. Within 20 seconds they were on the ground, crashed in the trees. He said it happened very quickly and does not really remember what was going on just before they landed in the trees. Although everyone was a little dazed, nobody was hurt. Dr. BARczuk got a bad gash on his knee where it hit the panel on landing.

During the flight to Gulf Shores, Dr. Barczuk noticed the altimeter said 11,000 feet and that the airspeed said 160. He did not notice anything else on the plane. He is not a pilot and has little experience in small planes other than riding as a passenger. He and the pilot made some small talk on the way over but he doesn't really remember what they talked about. He was just trying to be friendly and get to know the pilot. Dr. Barczuk remembered that while they were taxiing out, there was an intermittent beep beep noise. The pilot told him that it was the landing gear horn and it was not a problem.

Dr. Barczuk confirmed that they had brought two sets of golf clubs and estimated them to be 30 lbs each. He said everyone had small overnight bags and thinks their 4 overnight bags weighed 100 lbs together. He told Raja ahead of time that they were only taking two sets of golf clubs total since Dr. Barczuk has

extra clubs at his condo. The three other passengers were friends or acquaintances of Dr. Barczuk. The pilot never asked his weight or the passengers' weights or did he weigh any of the baggage.

Follow-up telecon 7/23/2018:

I contacted Dr. Barczuk and had the following discussion:

Dr. Barczuk did not expect to pay for the fuel on the return trip to Lafayette. He never does. Raja must have an account in Gulf Shores or gave the pilot a credit card. Raja charges Dr. Barczuk a flat rate for the flight. Dr. Barczuk gave Raja \$1200 in cash (half of the total fee for the round trip flight) with no receipt prior to the flight and expected to write a check to him for the balance when they returned to Lafayette. He was going to give it to the pilot or to the flight school when they got back. Since the accident, Raja has refunded Dr. Barczuk's \$1200.

Dr. Barczuk first got to know Raja when he was talking to some of his friends who are pilots. They told him about the flight school at Lafayette Airport. Dr. Barczuk's wife talked about taking flying lessons. In the course of meeting Raja, he became aware that Raja had an airplane that Dr. Barczuk could use to fly to Gulf Shores.

Dr. Barczuk has cancelled checks for previous payments to Raja for charter flights.

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