



NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region, Office of Aviation Safety (ERA)
National Transportation Safety Board

Date: 11/15/2019

Person Interviewed: Mr. Denny Velarde -Maintenance Test Pilot

NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA034

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the above-named individual:

- Mr. Velarde stated that he was a flight instructor for Cloud 9 helicopters until December 2017.
- Mr. Velarde was a commercial pilot and flight instructor.
- Mr. Velarde was very candid about his experience with the accident gyrocopter, and the persons involved with the build. He spoke very quickly, and his recounting of events while detailed, moved around chronologically, and rather than interrupt him, I chose to let him speak until he finished, and then asked if he would prepare a written account of his recollections. Mr. Velarde agreed, but never provided the statement promised even after multiple assurances by telephone and email that his statement was forthcoming.
- During the telephone interview, Mr. Velarde stated he was hired to complete the 40-hour Phase One flight testing, and his test plan was modeled after FAA Advisory Circular AC90-89A. He performed engine run-ups, system checks (pre-rotator), high-speed taxi tests and short “hops” over the runway about 20 feet above the surface.
- Mr. Velarde stated that the cyclic control exhibited a “sharp left pull” and that he returned the gyrocopter to maintenance and explained the issue. He stated that multiple exchanges with Geoff Painter, Matt Hood, and AutoGyro USA in Maryland failed to resolve the issue. Mr. Velarde stated that he “grounded the aircraft” at that time due to improperly rigged flight controls and would not fly it again until it was “fixed.” He said the 16.6 hours on the gyrocopter at the time of the condition inspection was consistent with the amount of time he accrued on the gyrocopter at the time he ceased flight testing.
- Mr. Velarde could not articulate exactly what he wrote in the maintenance logs to “ground” the gyrocopter.