



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Robert Gretz**  
**Senior Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region Aviation**

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**Date:** June 28, 2019  
**Person Contacted:** James Merritt, Fayetteville, NC  
**NTSB Accident Number:** ERA19FA201

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Merritt was interviewed in person at the accident site. He is not a certificated pilot, but flies often with his brother, William Merritt. Mr. Merritt stated that his most recent flight with his brother was on Friday, June 21, 2019. They flew uneventfully from FAY to CWV and return. While at CWV, they completely fueled the fuel tanks with fuel. During that flight, the pilot utilized the autopilot often and there were no anomalies. Additionally, the pilot did not report any anomalies or warnings during that flight.



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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**Date: June 30, 2019**  
**Person Contacted: Robert Ostendorf, Fayetteville, NC**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA201**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Ostendorf was interviewed via telephone. He is friends with and flew with the accident pilot on Monday, June 24, 2019 from FAY to INT. The purpose of the flight was to transport Mr. Ostendorf and his copilot to pick up a BeechJet. Mr. Ostendorf and his copilot returned in the BeechJet to FAY, and arrived prior to the accident pilot, who returned solo uneventfully. He added that the accident airplane departed with FAY with 120 gallons of fuel and estimated that 60 gallons remained for the accident flight.

During startup at FAY for the flight to INT, the AHRS fail amber caution light illuminated in the cockpit at engine startup and remained illuminated for 12 to 15 minutes. The accident pilot remarked during engine runup that the light usually extinguished by then. They discussed continuing the flight VFR and the fact that the autopilot would not engage, so the accident pilot would have to hand fly the airplane. The accident pilot hand flew the flight and Mr. Ostendorf noted that he was distracted by the cockpit caution light illumination, accidentally turning left, and then flying through his course when trying to correct right. Mr. Ostendorf reminded the pilot to ignore the light and fly the airplane. Mr. Ostendorf added that while the caution light was illuminated he did not observe any anomalies with the Aspen display. To his knowledge, the autopilot would not engage with the caution light illuminated and would disengage if engaged and that caution light activated. The light extinguished shortly after that. The accident pilot engaged the autopilot for the remaining trip to INT. Mr. Ostendorf spoke to the pilot after they both returned to FAY. The accident pilot reported that the light remained extinguished and he utilized the autopilot on the return trip to FAY; however, after landing at FAY, he shut the avionics off and back on, the light illuminated for 3 minutes before he shut down and planned to take the airplane to an avionics maintenance facility. The pilot also commented that he planned to perform three night landings to maintain his night currency.