



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: December 14, 2018
Person Contacted: Gene A. Wilson
NTSB Accident Number: ERA19LA055

Narrative:

Mr. Gene A. Wilson was contacted by phone on December 14, 2018, at 0829 EST. He was called at [REDACTED] and left a voice mail message. He returned the call the same day from the same phone number, which is his cell phone. His e-mail address is [REDACTED]

At the beginning of the 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 but advised if it “gets twisted”, he will re-evaluate whether he needs representation.

He advised that his flight instructor certificate is not current. About 99.5% of the time he flies fixed wing airplanes, but in the last 12 calendar months he flew “a little time in a R-22 and a R-44” helicopter, but the majority of his time in helicopters is in a Hughes 300C, which was over 20 years ago. The R-44 and R-22 was the only 2 flights in rotorcraft in the last 10 years. His last Flight Review was on November 20th, 2018, in the accident airplane. He obtained his latest medical certificate about 1 year ago.

He has rented aircraft from Carolina Aviation of Aiken for about 6 years, always being fixed wing rentals. He had also previously rented the accident airplane, which Carolina Aviation of Aiken obtained about 3-4 years ago. In the past year, he flew the accident airplane in January, sometime in April and May (totaling 2.0 hours in which he flew his grandchildren around Lake Murray, SC), July, and on November 20th for his Flight Review, which lasted 1.6 hours. In his previous flights in the accident airplane he has had no issues with the airplane braking system.

He indicated that the purpose of the flight was to look at investment property and visit 2 friends. About 2 hours before the flight he obtained a standard weather briefing, and about 45 minutes before the flight, he obtained an amended weather briefing to get an update on surface winds, winds-a-loft and hot MOA's etc.

No flight plan was filed, but he did obtain VFR Flight Following with radar services for the flight. The airplane was equipped with a Garmin GNS430 transceiver, but he did not have a handheld GPS receiver in the airplane. He performed a preflight inspection of the airplane using the laminated checklist prepared by the operator; his preflight also included a check of the fuel, oil, ailerons and aileron rod ends, flaps and flap rollers. The engine startup was normal, and he then turned on the avionics and transponder, and checked all equipment. He began to roll forward and checked the brakes, controls, and instruments reporting no discrepancies. While taxiing and also during the engine run-up before departure at Aiken Regional Airport (AIK), Aiken, South Carolina, he reported that the brakes were OK with no evidence of being mushy or going to the floor. The airplane did not have wheel pants on the main landing gear tires.

While wearing the three-point seatbelt and shoulder harness, he announced his departure from AIK to the east for the intended 1.6 hours flight to Grand Strand Airport (CRE), North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. About 2 miles after takeoff he was in contact with Columbia Approach. When the flight was about 10 miles from CRE while talking with Myrtle Beach Approach, he began the pre-landing checklist. He flew about 4 miles southwest of CRE, when he was transferred to CRE local control. He contacted CRE tower, and was asked if he had the latest automated terminal information service (ATIS), was advised to extend the flight pattern to left midfield downwind, and they were using the taxiway as the runway because it was closed. He performed the landing checklist, and when abeam the taxiway threshold, reduced power to 1,800 rpm, applied carburetor heat, and with no flaps extended turned onto base leg of the airport traffic pattern, where he descended, then turned onto the final leg of the airport traffic pattern. While on final approach to landing on a taxiway (temporary runway), he completed the final checklist and, "...knew that [the] ATIS reported winds gusting and that is why I only used 10 degree of flaps, came in hot (higher air speed) and landed 200 ft past the threshold"¹ reporting the landing was smooth.

After landing, he did not apply the brakes to slow, rather, he had to add power to keep rolling because of the headwind. He was told to stay on the local control frequency and exited at the first taxiway (Taxiway B), where he completed the after landing checklist which included retracting the flaps and putting the transponder to standby. He turned left and called the tower asking if the fixed base operator (FBO) was to the left of the terminal. He was advised to look right about 1/2 mile to spot a white van. He advised the controller that he had the van in sight. He taxied towards the white van and when he was on the ramp following the white van, it started to accelerate, becoming about 1,000 to 1,500 feet ahead of his position. While taxiing about 2 miles-per-hour next to a row of aircraft he "initiated a right turn with the rudder. At about 10 degrees into the right turn a wind gust pushed hit the tail and fuselage of the aircraft, causing the nose to go to the left. He applied the right brake which failed, then reduced power. The nose kept going to the left,

¹ The pilot landed on taxiway Alpha, to the northeast, due to closure of runway 05/23 from 11/05/2018 Thru 12/31/2018.

and he then applied both brakes which exaggerated the left turn because the left brake was working and the right brake was failed. His airplane was heading towards a parked airplane, so he removed the left brake input, and pulled the mixture control to idle cutoff and about that time, the propeller was “winding down with low [rpm] and struck the left [wingtip] of [the parked airplane] which caused his airplane to jump forward about 5 [ft].” His left wing contacted the “top of the Baron’s fuselage and left four-[bladed propeller].” He exited the airplane after coming to rest and immediately inspected the right brake and noticed, “a puddle of fluid approximately 6 inches by 4.5 inches on the ground beneath the right brake caliper.” The fire department arrived, and he was told to turn off the fuel but they told him no one was allowed in the airplane. He added that the puddle of fluid was also noted by the first person on the scene, which he believed was the person driving the white van, but may have been someone from the fixed base operator (FBO).

The same day Kirk Barret of Carolina Aviation of Aiken flew a Cessna 310 into CRE, and was at the airplane about 1645. During that time he put his foot on the left main landing gear tire, and rolled it to make sure it was not “locked up.” He did not see any fluid on the ground beneath the left brake caliper. He also did not see evidence of the right brake dragging, but he did notice a stain on the ground beneath the right brake caliper from the puddle that was observed by the pilot 5 to 6 hours earlier and had dried up. Mr. Barrett removed the right brake caliper while he was present². When the brake line was disconnected, no fluid came out of the separated line. Mr. Barrett took possession of the right brake caliper, and hoped to get the airplane to AIK within 2-3 days.

With respect to the van, it was away but that wasn’t a concern for him causing him to taxi fast, because he could see where it was parked. He did not change his taxi speed because the white van was far away.

He did not communicate with the person in the white van while he was taxiing, and remained on the local control frequency while taxiing.

Pending Item(s) Pilot:

- 1) Annotate on an airport diagram (provided by e-mail 12/14/2018) The place where you touched down, taxied off the taxiway, your taxi route, and where the collision occurred. Please also note where the white van was when you first began following and where it parked.

² During the removal he took pictures using Mr. Barrett’s cellular phone.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on February 4, 2019. He replied on February 15, 2019, at 1613 EST with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on February 26, 2020.