



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Doug Brazy
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: 10/25/19
Subject: ERA20FA019, Mooney M20A, N8354E, Summit Point, WV 10/24/19
Witness Interviews

On 10/25/19 Mr. Tim Jordan, a friend of the pilot provided the following information in person at the accident scene:

Mr. Jordan had previously flown with Mr. Powers in N8343E. He advised that Mr. Powers often balanced the airplane by adding fuel to the auxiliary fuel tank, when there were no passengers seated in the rear seats.

On 10/25/19 Mr. Rock Skowbo, a friend and former coworker of the pilot, provided the following information in person at the accident scene:

Mr. Skowbo had flown with the pilot about 1.5 weeks ago to have the pitot static system checked out. They flew from Front Royal, VA to Weyers Cave, VA. They also flew to Luray, VA for fuel. There were no issues with the airplane.

Mr. Skowbo flew with Mr. Powers many times, in many airplanes. The passenger, Mr. Randy Garcia, was learning how to fly, and had some flying experience, but Mr. Skowbo did not know if Mr. Garcia had been licensed as a student or otherwise. Mr. Skowbo advised that Mr. Powers may have had a flight instructor certificate, but if so, he was likely not current as a CFI. He typically flew local VFR flights and was probably not instrument current. Mr. Powers was a former airline pilot, and had about 10,000 hours of flight experience, and was generally healthy. Mr. Powers also drove for Uber part time, he was recently married, and lived in Inwood, WV. Mr. Powers had owned the airplane for about 1 year, and it was kept in a hangar. Mr. Powers had a specialist inspect the wood wings before he purchased it.

On 10/25/19 Mr. Greg Opas, a witness who was attending a meeting at a nearby Inn, located at coordinates 39.258441 N 77.962849 W (about 0.3 mile NNW of accident site) provided the following information in person at the accident scene:

While outside on a patio, Mr. Opas heard an airplane overhead, looked up and saw a yellow/white low wing airplane flying a “somewhat erratic flight path”. The engine noise may have changed from “low idle” then to a higher RPM for about 5 seconds. The airplane was upright “holding course but not steady, the wings were rocking slightly back and forth”. The airplane then “banked to the starboard [right] about 60-70°, changed course, and descended.” The airplane then went out of view, and Mr. Opas heard a “crunch” followed by a “whoomp” and shortly thereafter saw smoke rising. The engine may have “cut out” as the airplane was turning, about 10-15 seconds before impact. There was no smoke trailing from the airplane while in flight, and Mr. Opas did not observe anything fall from the airplane during his entire observation.

Mr. Opas called 911 at 1630 based on his phone call log, about 1-2 minutes after impact. An ambulance arrived about 7 minutes later, fire trucks arrived about 13 minutes after the ambulance.

On 10/25/19 Mr. Mark Foster, a witness who was attending a meeting at a nearby Inn, located at coordinates 39.258441 N 77.962849 W (about 0.3 mile NNW of accident site) provided the following information in person at the accident scene:

Mr. Foster was outside on a patio, when he heard an airplane, looked up, and saw an airplane flying with its wings rocking. The airspeed was “really low”. He heard the engine “tail off” as if it had throttled down, before the airplane went out of view behind a building. Mr. Foster estimate the airplane height to be “a couple of hundred feet” above the ground. The engine may have “sputtered” and then “come back a little”. Mr. Foster did not observe any smoke trailing from the airplane or any items falling from the airplane during his entire observation. Mr. Foster further offered that the airplane’s speed seemed slow, based on its relative speed compared to the house/landmarks in view, the decrease in the engine speed, and the nature of the oscillating roll attitude of the airplane.

On 10/25/19 Mr. Phillippe Lopez, a witness who was attending a meeting at a nearby Inn, located at coordinates 39.258441 N 77.962849 W (about 0.3 mile NNW of accident site) provided the following information in person at the accident scene:

Mr. Lopez was outside on a patio. He saw the airplane flying toward the accident site at a low altitude, which he estimated to be about 200 ft above the ground. The airplane was in a nose high pitch attitude, at a slow speed, and was “wiggly”. The engine RPM seemed “too slow”, the engine was running but the noise was “very quiet, maybe at idle”, there was no variation in the engine noise. The airplane disappeared behind a house, and then about 20-30 seconds later, he heard a loud “bang”.

Mr. Lopez had flown a few hours in a Mooney, years ago.

<end>



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Michelle Watters, MD, PhD, MPH
Medical Officer

Date: October 26, 2019; approximately 3 pm
Person Interviewed: Lacy Sanders
NTSB Accident Number: ERA20FA019

Narrative:

I had a brief in-person interview with Ms. Lacy Sanders, a resident living in a home adjacent to the field where the plane crashed and the aunt of the 7 year-old girl (Abby) who witnessed the plane's descent. Ms. Sanders reported that a few minutes prior to the accident she and her brother (Aaron Price 703-789-6700), who was visiting her home, had been on her back porch. They went inside to her kitchen and heard no unusual noises. At 4:30 pm her niece, who had been playing in the front yard, ran in and announced that the plane had crashed. Her niece told them that "the plane was trying to do a trick and came down." The niece did not report any smoke coming from the plane prior to the crash. Her brother ran to the site, while she called to her son to call 911 and then got in her car to drive to the site. On arrival there was fire and smoke—she and her brother noticed one body lying in front of the plane. She did not see a second body. Ms. Sanders stated that her brother had gone to the hospital for smoke inhalation and had been released later the same evening.

Ms. Sanders said she thought her brother would be willing to have an interview, but stated that her niece was very upset about the crash and her understanding was that her brother did not want his daughter interviewed.