

Inspector Statement

Subject: Interview with Jack Bishop

On June 19th, 2021 at 11:30 am I interviewed Mr. Jack Bishop. Mr. Bishop is the Ground Operations Director for A-Cent Aviation Inc. office located at Fernandina Beach Airport Florida. Mr. Bishop said the Fernandina Beach facility started in May 2021. He oversees the operations at the school, scheduling training flights and maintaining the facility. The questioning focused on the accident of N1300Q that occurred on June 18th 2021 at approximately 11:30 am.

I asked Mr. Bishop for information on the instructor pilot of N1300Q, Mr. David Cuttino. Mr. Bishop said he had known Mr. Cuttino since the beginning of May when Mr. Cuttino began working as a flight instructor at his facility. Prior to that, he knew that Mr. Cuttino had worked at Sunrise Aviation at Cecil Field as an instructor. He said Mr. Cuttino wanted to get a flight instructor job closer to his own home in Fernandina Beach. Mr. Bishop indicated that he held Mr. Cuttino in high regard. He said he had flown with Mr. Cuttino twice. In those flights, he said that Mr. Cuttino let him be the pilot in command because Mr. Cuttino said he had already accumulated enough pilot in command time, and that Mr. Bishop could use the experience. Mr. Bishop gave no indication of any unusual personality traits or poor flying habits. He said Mr. Cuttino was a very caring person and would give personal attention to his students and took great care in instructing. I asked if Mr. Cuttino was one to take any risks while flying. He said that Mr. Cuttino was very cautious and would cancel flights if the weather looked like it would be bad for training. I asked if Mr. Cuttino had a log book. Mr. Bishop said that he usually carried his log book and other items in a green military helmet bag. He said he probably had the helmet bag with him while he was flying.

I asked Mr. Bishop if he could provide any insights into the performance of aircraft N1300Q. Mr. Bishop said he owns a Cessna 150 himself. He said he had a few hundred hours flying his own Cessna 150, and around 10-20 hours in flying N1300Q. He said he preferred N1300Q to his own aircraft as N1300Q had a new engine, propeller, and avionics. He said that N1300Q had no unusual handling characteristics when compared to his own aircraft. He said he assisted in picking up N1300Q in Foley Alabama when A-Cent purchased the aircraft in December 2020. He said since purchasing the aircraft it had been flying regularly with no reported unusual problems.

I asked Mr. Bishop if he saw the pilots of N1300Q the morning of June 18th. He said that he was at the office in Fernandina Beach airport when Mr. Cuttino arrived back from his first training flight at around 9:30. His first flight was with student Robert Simpkins (REDACTED). After the flight he said that neither pilot mentioned any issues with the aircraft. He said the fuel truck arrived and refueled N1300Q for the next flight. Mr. Bishop said that the next student Alexis George arrived. Ms. George and Mr. Cuttino conducted some table talk then went outside to preflight the aircraft. Mr. Bishop said he walked out to the aircraft with them, and noted that there was nothing unusual or concerning with the two pilots at all. Mr. Bishop said everything seemed normal during the aircraft start, and the aircraft departed around 11 am. Mr. Bishop did not know of a plan of action for the flight, or where Mr. Cuttino was planning to go to. He said he received a call about the accident around 11:30 from the police in St. Marys Georgia. He immediately left the facility to head to the site. He said that at the site of the accident on the riverbank, he watched as the first responders tried to find the aircraft. The wife of the pilot, Mrs. Cuttino joined him at the site. He said that Mrs. Cuttino was prior law enforcement, and was concerned that they had not been told anything since arrival at the scene. He said their hopes were

dropping as time went by. Mr. Bishop inferred that it was a while before they were told that the pilots were killed in the accident. Mr. Bishop said the earlier student; Mr. Robert Simpkins called him later that afternoon. Mr. Simpkins said to Mr. Bishop that they had a great flight. The weather was good and that Mr. Simpkins had flown well that day. He said that they were both in shock of what had happened.

I asked about the amount of training conducted at Fernandina Beach. Mr. Bishop said they had 3 or 4 students taking lessons at the facility. All the flying was conducted in the Cessna 150, N1300Q. He said occasionally a Cessna 172 would be flown over for training if the pilots were too big for the 150. He said they maintained folders at the Fernandina Beach office with the student information. When asked about specific record keeping, he said that Mr. Cuttino took care of tracking of the student progress.

I asked Mr. Bishop how long he had known the student pilot Alexis George. Mr. Bishop said that she had started flying there the beginning of June. Before she flew with A-Cent, she had been flying with a high school aviation project outreach evidently operated in conjunction with the EAA. (Experimental Aircraft Association). Mr. Bishop said that after Ms. George graduated from high school in May, she could no longer fly with that program so she started flying with A-Cent. He said that he thought she may have conducted a solo flight while at the high school. He said that Ms. George was sharp. She took her lessons seriously and always seemed to be prepared for the lessons. Mr. Bishop said that she had flown about 5 hours total in the previous flights she had with Mr. Cuttino.

I asked if Mr. Bishop had anything to add that I had not asked specifically. He said that he held Mr. Cuttino in high regard. Even though they had not known each other very long, he still had a lot of respect for him as a person and a pilot. Mr. Bishop asked me if there was anything he could have done to prevent the accident.

It is my opinion that Mr. Bishop provided truthful and open answers. He was clearly upset with the circumstances as the accident had only occurred the day prior.

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Aviation Safety Inspector