



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Douglass Brazy
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

January 21, 2021

Subject: NTSB investigation ERA21LA102, unregistered, Kolb Firestar KXP, Vineland, New Jersey, January 11, 2021. Record of witness interviews conducted by FAA Inspector Tina Bonnette, of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Flight Standards District Office.

Ms. Bonnette provided the following records of witness interviews in an attachment to an email on February January 21, 2021:

Witness Interviewed on site 01/11/2021:

McDowell, Charles Thomas

[REDACTED]

Pittsgrove, NJ 08318

Cell: [REDACTED]

DOB: [REDACTED]

Repairman Light Sport Aircraft # [REDACTED] Sport Pilot # [REDACTED]

Third Class Medical dated 03/05/2020

Witness was interviewed on site of crash. He is a registered sports pilot and was at the airport working on a recently purchased sport plane in a hanger on Downtown Airport. He reported that he did not know the deceased pilot, but observed the two Ultralights flying into 28N approximately 1200. Mr. McDowell reported the aircraft involved in accident soon took off again and flew a wider than normal pattern around the airport at approximately 900 to 1000 feet AGL. He reported that all operations seems normal and did not witness anything subroutine until the aircraft turned base leg to final, at which time he observed a straight 45 degrees nose down pitch into the woods on approach to runway 20 of the airport. He reported that before the pitch down, the wings were straight and level and the aircraft was not in a turn, but in straight and level flight. He did not believe it was a stall situation and he reported hearing a running engine. Mr. McDowell did question as to whether it was a true Ultralight because he noticed that it was equipped with 2 seats and 10 gallon tanks. Mr. McDowell, being a rated Sport Pilot, is familiar with regulations and guidelines of FAR Part103 operations. Mr. McDowell was also familiar with the make and model of engine installed on aircraft, reporting it was a Rotax 2 cylinder engine.

Witness Interview on 01/12/2021 via phone:

James Bertonazzi III

Address:



Vineland, NJ Cell:



Non-certificated pilot of second Ultralight that accompanied the deceased into 28N on 01/11/2021

Mr. Bertonazzi resides on a farm with approximately 100+ acres of land where he has an unofficial grass airstrip that he uses to fly his personal Ultralight around his property and local area. He is not a registered rated pilot or AP mechanic, but reported that he has grown up around aviation his whole life and has approximately 600 hours in the Ultralight airframe. Mr. Bertonazzi is the owner of the 2 aircraft reported flying into 28N. Bertonazzi reported that approximately 20 years ago someone left the aircraft involved in accident at his hanger and never returned and remained folded up in hanger until last winter where Mr. Asselta (deceased) inquired about purchasing the aircraft for his personal use. There is no registration, Bill of Sale, or insurance on aircraft involved in accident. Bertonazzi reported that he did not know Mr. Asselta very well, but aided him in the repairs and operational instruction of the Ultralight over the past year. He reported that Asselta was a rated pilot with approximately 300 hours in Cessna 152/172, but lost his medical sometime back due to a heart condition and is why he was interested in flying the Ultralight. Bertonazzi reported that the aircraft had been equipped with new tires and new fuel lines. He verified that the make of the aircraft was by Kolb manufacture. He reported that the aircraft was equipped with 10 gallons fuel tanks with an electronic fuel pump that he had disengaged. He also reported aircraft was equipped with 2 seats with a mounted plaque stating "Restricted for Instructional Purposes Only" with side stick mounted on right side of pilot, a Rotax 2 cylinder, 55 horsepower engine with aluminum, polyester airframe. He also stated that the aircraft was a home build constructed by a certified A&P mechanic around 1993, but did not know his name. We discussed what he witnessed in regards to the accident. He reported that he and the deceased departed his airstrip located on his property in Vineland approximately 1130 and flew into Downstown 28N airport, which is approximately 7 miles apart. He reported that the deceased demeanor was excitable and anxious to get flying that day. He reported that they had also flown together in 2 separate aircraft that previous Sunday, 01/10/21 around the local area. He stated that the deceased only had about 3 to 4 hours in the Ultralight. Mr. Burtonazzi stated that once they landed at 28N at approximately 1200, the deceased was anxious to take-off again, at which time he boarded the aircraft and took-off from 28N on Rwy 20. He stated that the deceased wanted to fly over a friend's house in the local area. He stated that the aircraft was always in view, and all operations seemed normal. He observed the aircraft turn base leg to final at approximately 400 to 500 feet AGL and seemed to be at normal cruising speed of 80 MPH. He reported that he observed that he had passed the 90 degree turning point from downwind leg onto base, and once he turned onto final he was aligned off to the west of the end of Rwy 20. He

reported hearing the engine operating normally and no indication of sputtering or engine failure of any kind. He reported that when the deceased turned onto final, he appeared to be off significantly to the west side of Rwy 20, but did not observe any attempt to correct the alignment, stating the wings were straight and level. He reported that he observed a gradual descent followed by a steep 45 degrees nose down pitch into the trees, as if on purpose. He repeated that he was sure that the engine was running and aircraft at cruising speed at approximately 400 to 500 feet AGL. He did not believe it to be a stall and stated it appeared almost like there was no one flying the aircraft. I asked how many times the aircraft had flown in the past 6 months and he reported that him and the deceased had flown the day before in 2 separate aircraft, and that he personally had flown the aircraft involved in the accident 3 to 4 times in the past 6 months around the local area. He reiterated that the engine was running and that the observed sharp pitch down did not appear to be a stall.

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