

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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LANCAIR 320, N670BS FATALITY *

IN BOCA RATON, FLORIDA, *

ON FEBRUARY 24, 2021 *

Accident No.: ERA21LA141

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Interview of: JOSEPH VANGEL, Ground Controller
Boca Raton FCT (BCT)

Via Video Conference

Wednesday,
March 10, 2021

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

MR. SOPER: Okay. I've started the recording.

Again, just to reiterate, my name is Brian Soper. I'm a senior air traffic investigator with the NTSB. As I mentioned earlier, we're a federal -- independent federal agency charged with developing a probable -- investigating and developing a probable cause of serious transportation incidents and accidents. We are not attached or have any affiliation with the DOT or the FAA. As I mentioned, we're independent, and we have no regulatory or enforcement powers.

With me today I have Dan Carrico from NATCA as ASI, representing NATCA on the air traffic control group, as well Ted Zimmerman from the FAA, representing the FAA on the air traffic control group. Also with us is Doug Brazy, the investigator in charge, from our Eastern Region. And then with me is Joe Vangel --

Did I pronounce your last name correctly?

MR. VANGEL: Vangel. Yep. Close enough.

MR. SOPER: Vangel. I'm sorry. Joe Vangel.

And Stephen, your last name again?

MR. GATEWOOD: Gatewood.

MR. SOPER: Gatewood?

MR. GATEWOOD: Yes.

MR. SOPER: Okay. Great.

And he is the representative for Joe and is the NATCA

1 facility representative at Boca Raton tower.

2 Today we'll be using a digital voice recorder to record the
3 interview. A transcript will be made from that recording and the
4 transcript, not the recording, is what will go into the public
5 docket at the end of the day.

6 The purpose of our investigation is safety, as I mentioned
7 earlier, to develop probable cause and prevent reoccurrence. We
8 don't assign fault, blame or liability. That's now what we're
9 concerned with. The interview is part of the fact-finding phase
10 of our investigation. We cannot, however, offer a guarantee of
11 confidentiality or immunity. That's important to point out,
12 especially for you guys that have a military background, you know
13 that safety investigations there carry with them what they call
14 privilege; you're offered privilege which means that that stuff
15 won't be released later on, strictly for safety. With the NTSB,
16 it doesn't work that way. We're highly transparent. That's --
17 you know, our credibility is greatly based on our transparency.
18 And so, everything that we glean will be made available into a
19 public docket at some point.

20 Each of our group members will have a chance to ask questions
21 as we go through this, like I mentioned. We'll ask one at a time.
22 You can have us pause at any time you need to, or if you have a
23 question for us, please say so. You're entitled to the one
24 representative that you've chosen.

25 And do you have any questions before we start actually

1 getting into the questions?

2 MR. VANGEL: I don't.

3 MR. SOPER: All right. Outstanding.

4 So right now I show the time at 12:25 Eastern Time. And I
5 will start out with some basic stuff that I'm sure you won't have
6 trouble answering.

7 INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH VANGEL

8 BY MR. SOPER:

9 Q. So can you, if you would -- is your name Joe or is it Joseph?

10 A. Everybody calls me Joe. It's Joseph, J-O-S-E-P-H.

11 Q. Okay. And you go by Joe. And the correct spelling of your
12 last name for me, please?

13 A. V as in Victor, A-N-G-E-L.

14 Q. Okay. And what's your age?

15 A. Fifty-four. Be 55 next month.

16 Q. All right. And your operating initials there?

17 A. Julie Victor.

18 Q. And you are a CPC there, correct?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. And I know you mentioned earlier you have a military
21 background. When were you in the Navy again?

22 A. 1985. Got out in 1994.

23 Q. And you served at NAS Patuxent River?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. Maryland. And where else?

1 A. USS *Forrestal*, Mayport, Florida.

2 Q. And you were an air traffic controller in the Navy, correct?

3 A. I was.

4 Q. And did you have any other pre-federal contract tower
5 experience? Did you work anywhere else in between the Navy and
6 coming to RVA?

7 A. I did. I worked for Midwest Air Traffic Control in Martha's
8 Vineyard. Left Martha's Vineyard, went to West Hampton, New York.
9 And then I went to work for Sikorsky helicopter company as a
10 controller up in Connecticut. And then after that, that's when I
11 got hired on with the FAA.

12 Q. Okay. If you could, with Midwest, from what month and year
13 to what month and year were you with Midwest, to the best of your
14 recollection there?

15 A. It was about May 1995.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. And I started in '96 with Sikorsky.

18 Q. Okay. So Martha's Vineyard -- I have to ask. So '95 you're
19 at Martha's -- did you know Scott Twellow (ph.)?

20 A. Scott Tellow (ph.). No. The name sounds familiar, but I did
21 not work with the man.

22 Q. So Martha's Vineyard, is that the one where you guys did half
23 the year there and half the year out west somewhere, right?

24 A. Right. The way it worked is I got hired on as seasonal, and
25 then usually the way it worked, everybody who does the season,

1 they'll move on with a full-time job somewhere else.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. I was actually hired by RVA for Key West, and when I told
4 Midwest that I was going to be leaving them because it was a
5 guaranteed full-time job, they offered me West Hampton, New York
6 immediately to keep me there because, you know, I was leaving.

7 Q. Yeah. Yeah, I gotcha. Okay. Cool. Yeah, I remember. I
8 mean I -- you know, I think everybody in their military career at
9 some point is debating on whether to get out or whether to stay
10 and what's available out there and what they could do.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. You know, of course, contracts are always a big one for
13 military guys, you know.

14 A. Yep.

15 Q. Mostly because you actually get to still work traffic, right?
16 Like a lot of guys are like -- if you want to really work traffic,
17 you're like, oh, let's go to contractors, they actually work
18 traffic. But anyway -- all right. Well, I was just kind of
19 curious about that.

20 And when did you start with RVA again? Month and year?

21 A. RVA was June of 2017.

22 Q. And did you -- were you with Midwest all the way up until
23 that -- or I mean Sikorsky, all the way up until that point or --

24 A. No, no. So I left Midwest. I went to work for Sikorsky for
25 about a year, and then that's when I got hired on with the FAA.

1 Q. Oh, that's right. Okay. And then you went to the FAA. And
2 then with the FAA, I think I already have that on your background
3 information. I think they provided that to me, the month and year
4 start dates of everything you went through there.

5 Okay. Do you hold any collateral duties or have you been on
6 any recent details that took you outside of your facility for
7 longer than -- that affected your currency or proficiency there,
8 you know, like currency standards? So collateral duties --

9 A. Here at Boca Raton? No.

10 Q. So collateral duties, do you hold other things? Do you write
11 the watch bill? Are you the training guy --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- or anything like that?

14 A. I do nothing.

15 Q. Okay. And if you could, just kind of step me through your
16 aviation background. And when I ask you this question, just real
17 high level. Like if you were giving somebody a quick bio, like,
18 yeah, you know, when I was in high school I was always interested
19 in aviation; I graduated; I went to the Navy; I did this, then I
20 went here and I did that, and then I went here and then I did
21 this. Just real high level, if you'd just run -- and if you have
22 a pilot's license or dispatcher's license or if you did any of
23 that, just kind of step me through that aviation background.

24 A. It kind of all started when I was a little kid. I know my
25 mom used to drop my sister off at dance class, we would go to

1 Philly airport and kind of hang out and wait for her to be done,
2 and I just got into aviation back then. I remember watching
3 planes and I remember looking at the tower in the background.
4 (Indiscernible) of course when I got older, I decided I was going
5 to be a pilot so I started taking lessons. I got my pilot's
6 license after I joined the military. (Indiscernible) be in it.
7 Loved aviation.

8 Q. You said you got your pilot's license after you joined the
9 military?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Cool. And are you -- do you still fly today?

12 A. No.

13 Q. No.

14 A. No, my (indiscernible).

15 Q. I hear you. All right. And have you ever been fired,
16 terminated or suspended or asked to resign from employment
17 since -- in air traffic control?

18 A. No.

19 Q. And how would you describe your overall health in the terms
20 of good -- excellent, good, fair or poor? I always want to go to
21 braking action on that and be, good, fair, poor, nil? Like that's
22 understandable to everybody, right? But --

23 A. For (indiscernible) my actual health?

24 Q. Yeah. Just in your opinion, how do you think your health is
25 if you just classified it under a word? Excellent, good, fair or

1 poor?

2 A. I'm going to say excellent.

3 Q. Okay. And you had a second class medical clearance at the
4 time of the event, correct?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And do you have any restrictions or waivers to your medical
7 clearance?

8 A. No. I wear reading glasses.

9 Q. Okay. So the glasses, are you -- are they on your medical as
10 a requirement to wear or carry while you're performing air traffic
11 duties?

12 A. You know, I don't know. I don't believe it is.

13 Q. Okay. All right. And were you taking any maintenance
14 medications at the time of the event? Do you take medications for
15 other stuff?

16 A. No. I take none.

17 Q. Were you taking any over-the-counter stuff at that time that
18 you can recall for colds, flu, anything like that?

19 A. No. No.

20 Q. Okay. And was a drug or alcohol screening performed
21 following this event for you?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Any major changes in your health over the last year, good,
24 bad or indifferent? When I say that I'm talking like major
25 surgery, you know, serious -- had a heart attack, anything like

1 that, that was significant?

2 A. I had two shoulder surgeries.

3 Q. Two shoulder surgeries. Same shoulder?

4 A. Yeah, the same shoulder. I had surgery approximately a year
5 ago. Physical therapy (indiscernible) in another spot, so I had
6 to have another one last February.

7 Q. Dang.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Are you a golfer?

10 A. I am not.

11 Q. Okay. All right. The last one, you said, was when? In
12 January?

13 A. Last surgery was last February, February of 2020.

14 MR. SOPER: Oh, okay.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If I could offer a request. I'm
16 sorry. If Stephen would mute his microphone in the background, I
17 don't think we will get the feedback. We're getting a little bit
18 feedback on this end.

19 MR. SOPER: Great. Thanks. Okay. And --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's (indiscernible).

21 BY MR. SOPER:

22 Q. And any major changes in your personal life during the last
23 year? These are big things too, like, yeah, I got married, got
24 divorced, adopted a child, anything good, bad, or indifferent that
25 was major?

1 A. Nothing major. I have some issues with an older son, but I'm
2 not going to get into that.

3 Q. Yeah, you don't have to. That's fine. But nothing that kept
4 you from being able to do your job and that type of thing on a
5 regular basis or anything?

6 A. No, not at all.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Nothing at all.

9 Q. And any major changes in your financial situation in the last
10 year? Again, big ticket items -- you know, won the lotto, filed
11 bankruptcy?

12 A. I wish. No.

13 Q. I know, right? Okay.

14 And now this one is a little bit more difficult because I
15 know it's been a little bit since the event. But to the best of
16 your recollection, if you could recall the 72 hours leading up to
17 the time of the event, so those 3 days previous to that. During
18 that 72 hours, was there anything in there that was a wrench in
19 the spokes of life so to speak? And what I mean by that is like,
20 you know, things that, you know, you weren't getting good sleep
21 because you were not feeling well or you had a family member that
22 was sick and you were constantly having to try to take care of
23 them or you or somebody in your family had a car accident. Things
24 that would have taken you out of your normal daily routine that
25 affected your daily sleep, eating, or general, you know, well

1 being?

2 A. Nothing.

3 Q. Nothing.

4 A. Nothing at all. I mean I -- nothing has messed with my life
5 except I'm tearing out 200 feet worth of ficus that I just
6 finished. Other than that, no, nothing at all. Everything's
7 good. Life is good.

8 Q. Okay. Good. And did you file an -- well, actually you guys
9 file ASAP, right, with RVA? That's how you guys -- you file? Did
10 you file one as a result of this event?

11 A. I did not.

12 Q. Okay. And have you been interviewed about this event prior
13 to now?

14 A. Prior to now? Only with the manager.

15 Q. Okay. The air traffic -- your air traffic manager?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. And have you had an opportunity to review a replay of
18 this event, like a Falcon replay or anything like that?

19 A. I did.

20 Q. Okay. Was that -- I assume that was like previously sometime
21 while you were with the manager probably, or sometime around that
22 or after the event?

23 A. I believe, if I -- I think it was either last Tuesday, a week
24 ago Tuesday, or Wednesday. I can't remember which day it was.

25 Q. Okay. And when you -- you were working ground control at the

1 time; is that correct?

2 A. That is correct.

3 Q. Do you remember if a relief briefing was conducted when you
4 took the position?

5 A. I would have to say yes because we always do.

6 Q. Okay. And do you guys utilize a checklist there?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Is that like an electronic checklist or is it one you got
9 posted on the bullnose or something like that?

10 A. No, it's under plastic. It's -- we call it cellophane.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. It's -- yeah, sitting right at the position.

13 Q. And was the -- do you record your position relief briefings?

14 A. We do.

15 Q. Okay. So on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most -- or, I'm
16 sorry, 5 being the heaviest, how would you rate the traffic volume
17 for the tower at the time of this event? So, you know, this is
18 your view of it.

19 A. I have no recollection of it. I don't remember how busy it
20 was. I don't know if it was slow. I don't know.

21 Q. Okay. And the next one: If you can remember, on a scale of
22 1 to 5, 5 being the most complex -- you probably won't be able to
23 answer this either, but how would you rate the traffic complexity
24 at the time of the event? Do you recall anything about how things
25 were going?

1 A. No. Same answer, I don't remember.

2 Q. Okay. All right. And do you recall any distractions that
3 were occurring at or leading up to around the time of the event?
4 What I mean by this is, do you recall anything happening like
5 there was an emergency aircraft, there was a lost comm, there was
6 somebody kept bugging me on clearance because of whatever, there
7 was equipment problems, you guys were dealing with loud noise in
8 the tower, techs were working on something. Anything like that,
9 that may be construed as kind of a distraction or that were an
10 issue around that time?

11 A. Yeah, Brian, I -- honestly there was no triggers for that.
12 You know what I mean? You know, usually --

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. -- you have a trigger that makes you think, okay, and, you
15 know, I'll remember that event. But no triggers at all. I
16 just -- it seemed like an everyday -- when I look back now, you
17 know, that Wednesday was like a Tuesday or a Thursday.

18 To give you an idea like -- you know, I just had a Vision Jet
19 the other day. I was working ground, of course, and when he
20 landed, he had a flat tire. So that's a trigger for me. So,
21 yeah, I remember. I don't remember the call sign already, but --
22 just no triggers that day.

23 Q. Okay. Do you recall at all what the general weather
24 conditions were around that time? And I'm not necessarily looking
25 for your METAR. I'm just looking for like was it predominantly

1 VFR, IFR? Was it sunny? Was it raining? Was it cloudy?

2 Anything that you can recall about the weather.

3 A. I don't know. I'm going to guess it was windy because it's
4 been windy for the last couple weeks here. So --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And do you guys conduct the pre-duty weather briefings there
8 at your facility?

9 A. We do. We have it on the -- it's on the computer behind us.
10 It's where we have our little clearance delivery function.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. We just click -- yeah, we click on it.

13 Q. Is it --

14 A. And it gives --

15 Q. Go ahead.

16 A. Yeah, it's a briefing that I guess the center puts out. It's
17 the weather guy.

18 Q. Okay. Yep. And do you -- so you, did you do it that day?

19 A. Yes. I do it every time I get up there.

20 Q. So I have a question related to that actually, while we're
21 sitting here on the subject of pre-duty weather briefing. Do you
22 guys -- in its current state, do you believe that the pre-duty
23 weather briefing is value added for you guys there at BCT or not?
24 What are your thoughts on it?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. And what's the main reason do you think it's not for
2 you?

3 A. I think it's more -- I think it should be more, I don't know,
4 utilized for the -- more in the center environment maybe and maybe
5 in the TRACONs because that's where the bigger facilities, because
6 they're pushing out the traffic.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. So I think it's a good idea to have a great idea of what
9 could possibly be an issue for them depending on, you know,
10 different VTAs going out, different fixes. I mean, sure.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. But at Boca itself, no.

13 Q. They don't get that --

14 A. In my opinion?

15 Q. Yeah, just your opinion.

16 A. I don't think so.

17 Q. Yeah. They don't get down into the tower level of
18 granularity too much, right, in those?

19 A. Correct. And any information we ever do get, you know, we'll
20 talk to Palm Beach. They'll tell us right off the bat, hey,
21 listen, we've been having some delays. But it's pretty obvious.
22 Just before going into work, I'll -- if I'm looking at the news
23 that shows the weather, I say to myself, oh, Joe, it's going to be
24 great going out that way today.

25 Q. Yeah. Okay. Do you remember, did you have a cell phone or

1 PED on you at the time of the event?

2 A. Well, I always have a cell phone. It was probably in my bag
3 either downstairs or up in the tower in the bag.

4 Q. Okay. So to the best of your recollection you wouldn't have
5 been using it around the time of the event?

6 A. Oh, absolutely not.

7 Q. And had you requested a relief or assistance leading up to
8 the time of the event? What I mean by that is, were you waiting
9 on a relief because you had asked for one because you had been on
10 for a while, or was this your normal rotation, what you were
11 expecting to work that day and that was that, or --

12 A. Normal rotation.

13 Q. And are you the one that notified the supervisor about --
14 well, actually you guys didn't know about this event on the day
15 that it happened, correct?

16 A. Yeah. I did not find out until Friday night.

17 Q. Okay. All right. All right. Very good.

18 So that being said, I would like to ask you that question
19 since it leads right into it before we get into the open
20 questions. So you learned about it Friday night. Do you remember
21 how you learned about it, how you were first made aware and who
22 made that contact with you and what was --

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. -- what it was that was provided?

25 A. Yeah. I was up in Palm Beach at my son's wrestling

1 tournament and I got a phone call from the manager. It was very
2 late in the evening or late in the afternoon. I think it was
3 around 6:30, 7 o'clock, because my son was just about to go on the
4 mat. I couldn't hear him real well because there was a lot of
5 noise in there. It was a big regional competition. But he said,
6 hey, listen, do you got a second? I know you're doing the
7 wrestling. We had an incident the other day.

8 And I said, oh. I said, what did I do? And he said, well,
9 you didn't do anything. It involved Dan, but you were up in the
10 tower. And I said, okay. I said, well, what's up? And he
11 basically -- he gave me a quick synopsis. Somebody checked, never
12 made it to the airport, and after researching, he disappeared over
13 the ocean. And, of course, you know, I was shocked, but -- I
14 said, all right, so how can I help you? He just said, do you
15 remember anything about that event? You know, I told him no. He
16 then said the call sign, do you remember that call sign? I said,
17 no, not at all. I did ask him, I said, Raymond, the call sign
18 sounds familiar, but I said, is he based here at Boca? And he
19 said, he is. And that's how I remember the call sign.

20 Q. Gotcha. All right. Well, and that leads me to my next
21 thing, which it sounds like I'm going to know the answer to. So
22 normally I would ask you to step me through everything you can
23 recall about that day surrounding the time of the event. But is
24 it a safe assertion that you don't recall around the time of the
25 event? Or have you been able to refresh your memory through

1 anything that rung a bell for you?

2 A. You know, I've been banging my head, believe me, since
3 finding out about this, and it's just -- I have nothing. It was
4 just a normal day. Like I said, I didn't have any triggers for
5 anything.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. You know, I told the manager, I was like, I can't help you.
8 I don't know. I just don't know.

9 Q. Fair enough. Well, that being said then, let me just ask you
10 a couple other questions with regard to -- so I assume you are
11 fully qualified there, right? Like you're -- you work local as
12 well, right?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Yeah. And so you kind of know what happened with this event
15 now. Does it -- do you find it surprising that -- have you seen
16 this type of thing happen before there at Boca, where a VFR guy
17 checks in and you give him initial instructions and then it's just
18 forgotten to go back to him or they end up flying through and
19 going somewhere else without notifying you guys? Or did it strike
20 you as surprising that that would have happened that way?

21 A. I am surprised. I mean, come on, it's out of the ordinary.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Am I really truly shocked? No. I've actually had pilots
24 check in with me and then disappear. I've had that happen before.
25 Maybe -- I don't know. I'm trying to remember. Maybe a month and

1 a half ago, somebody coming down the shoreline, and I'm looking
2 for him, he's not there, and then I see a target up north. So we
3 have the little top left button. You know, I clicked on it, and I
4 remember, you know, saying, oh, my God, that's the guy. And I
5 asked him, what are you doing? He says, oh, we decided we're
6 going to go back the other way. I'm like, well, tell me next
7 time.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. So it does happen.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. So you guys, you do have a tower display there, correct? Is
13 it a -- you do have one, right, a tower radar?

14 A. We do. Yeah.

15 Q. Is it a TDW? Is it a STARS display, like a -- slaved off
16 of --

17 A. It is STARS.

18 Q. Is it off of Palm Beach's STARS?

19 A. Well, it's all mosaic, so we get beads from all the different
20 radar facilities.

21 Q. Yeah. Okay. It usually comes from one or the other TRACONS,
22 though. Meaning you'll get all the radar sites that are in there.
23 So on that one, I assume it's -- I'm assuming it's Palm Beach.

24 A. I would say we're slaved off of Palm Beach.

25 Q. Yeah. And then you get whatever sensors that are in their

1 fused product?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Yeah. Okay. Is there a tower requirement for the setting of
4 your TDW for range and area? Like is there a general setting that
5 it's supposed to be set on all the time and then you can adjust as
6 necessary during operations, or is it strictly a controller
7 preference on how they set up the --

8 A. Controller preference.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. It's definitely controller preference. I think we all set it
11 12 miles, maybe. Maybe 10 miles. I don't have my own settings.
12 I never cared to do it.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Because everybody's settings are the same. So I just use
15 whoever's is up there. I'm not real picky.

16 Q. Sure. And you guys are -- do guys have, do you have any
17 silent coordination with other facilities via the STARS? Meaning
18 can they send you -- do you take automated coordination over it,
19 like call signs or information from adjacent facilities, or do you
20 have the ability to type in call signs on ones that you're
21 working? I know you're not a radar facility, so I know you're not
22 doing radar contact or providing radar services, but do you have
23 that ability at all through your SOP?

24 A. We just started that as a routine function, which is just,
25 you know, I type in the code for the release. But other than

1 that, that's -- if we need to talk to anybody, we call on the
2 landline.

3 Q. So you can do silent releases now, where you type it in and
4 it's able to release without calling them for a release or
5 whatever?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And if we do any talking at all, it's strictly because we're
9 always runway heading. Or if we're off of runway 2-3, it's a 330
10 heading.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. So if anything is other than those headings, we'll
13 communicate. They'll call us.

14 Q. Okay. Is there -- what is your Class Delta there? What is
15 it, 4. something? Or what's the mileage on --

16 A. Yes. Basically it's 4 miles.

17 Q. Okay. And I don't -- I'm not super familiar down there.
18 Does that take you out over the coast on the one side or is
19 that -- is there other airspace beyond you, between you and the --

20 A. It does. It does go out over the water.

21 Q. Okay. So, yeah, so it's there. So do you guys -- do you
22 feel when you're working local -- okay, this isn't about the other
23 guy. But when you're working local, do you utilize your tower
24 display for surveilling the Class Delta at all? Like I mean to
25 monitor for aircraft that might be cutting through inadvertently

1 or, you know, not contacting you before they transit? Is that
2 problematic down there? Do you guys watch for that or how does
3 that work?

4 A. I use it. You know, we're real close to Pompano. They get
5 really, really busy, and a lot of those guys come off there and --
6 yeah, I keep an eye on it.

7 Q. Okay. All right. So it's fair to say it's in your normal
8 scan, at least when you're working, you utilize it as part of your
9 normal scan?

10 A. I attempt to every single day, yes.

11 Q. Okay. Do you guys get strips at your facility?

12 A. We do.

13 Q. Okay. And when you have somebody like this that's not coming
14 from another facility, they're a VFR -- they're just a VFR entry,
15 you know, popping up, and they're calling you because they're
16 going to land there like this gentleman was. What's the procedure
17 for you guys when you have that?

18 A. When they call us inbound?

19 Q. Yeah. I mean, do you -- is the standard procedure for you
20 guys to write up a manual strip on them? Do you type them into
21 the FDIO and actually have it --

22 A. Oh, I --

23 Q. How do you do it?

24 A. I see what you're asking.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Okay. When they call me up, if they're not IFR, I just write
2 it down on a pad of paper. We have pads in front of us.

3 MR. SOPER: Okay. All right. Very good. Okay. I'm going
4 to go ahead and pass this along for right now to -- I'm going to
5 start out with Ted.

6 So Ted?

7 BY MR. ZIMMERMAN:

8 Q. How are you doing? Thanks for being with us. Really
9 appreciate it. And again, I do a lot of the station stuff for in
10 your district. And I -- one of the reasons I was interested in
11 this was, when I saw the radar services and how the facility uses
12 radar and what it's used for, I've (indiscernible) this issue at a
13 couple places. So I just had some basic questions, again, not
14 necessarily ground control questions, but whenever you're CPC,
15 local controller.

16 So, if you were -- in most of my VFR tower experience we had
17 a version of a pad, a way to keep track of traffic. Is that what
18 you use that?

19 A. Yes, sir. We have pads of paper.

20 Q. If you were to write down inbound traffic, would you -- how
21 would you annotate that? Just with a call sign or some other
22 annotation?

23 A. I'll use the call -- I'll write down the call sign.
24 Depending on which way they're coming from -- if they're coming
25 from the northwest, I put NW next to it and I'll circle it. If

1 they tell me what they're going to do, you know, inbound for a
2 full stop, taxi back, I'll put FSTB. Touch-and-goes, I'll put TG.
3 If they're full stop, I just put FS.

4 Q. Um-hum. My experience, too. Thanks.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. So in different facilities I worked at, either kept those,
7 didn't keep them, saved them for the end of the night for traffic
8 count; they did all kinds of stuff with them. Would it be a
9 facility practice to save those for the traffic count at the end
10 of day, for instance, or you just -- I mean, most of the
11 facilities I was at, we just disposed of them. We didn't keep
12 them.

13 A. We crumble them up -- you know, when a page gets full,
14 crumble, throw them away.

15 Q. Throw them at each other, you know, that kind of thing?

16 A. If you want to do that.

17 Q. Yeah. So I'll jump around a little bit question wise. Radar
18 duties wise, we were -- Brian had asked about radar duties. I saw
19 on the letter of agreement with West Palm that Boca's allowed to
20 provide IFR separation between the standard stuff that we have for
21 towers, between departures and departures, and departures and
22 overflights, but no approaches or anything like that and no radar
23 contact, just kind of whatever you said you work with IFR wise.
24 It looks like there was a change in 2015 that is not part of
25 the -- or not part of LOA change. Were you there in 2015 whenever

1 that changed over?

2 A. No, sir. I got there in 2017.

3 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Thanks. And as part of your qualification
4 training, did that include radar qualification training or this is
5 what we do --

6 MR. SOPER: We lost you, Ted.

7 MR. VANGEL: Hold on a second. Can you hear him?

8 MR. SOPER: No. I think he hit the --

9 MR. VANGEL: I'll (indiscernible). Hold on a second. I --

10 MR. SOPER: I think he hit the space bar by accident.

11 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Can you hear me?

12 MR. VANGEL: Now I got you back. Go ahead.

13 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Oh, okay.

14 BY MR. ZIMMERMAN:

15 Q. So wherever there are radar services, we do radar
16 qualification training. Would you have been sent to radar
17 qualification training whenever you arrived, 2017? Did you take
18 the radar qualification test or anything like that?

19 A. I don't recall. I know I did a lot, oh, my God, a lot of
20 eLMS courses, and I think there were some radar ones in there. I
21 can't remember. I'd have to go through the training folder and
22 see.

23 Q. Very good. Thanks.

24 So I noticed there's an airport off the coast, like South
25 Bimini or Port Royal or something like that. Do you ever -- do

1 aircrafts ever go out there? Is that something you work or work
2 with?

3 A. Yeah. We got planes come here, go everywhere, yeah.

4 Q. Do you know specifically how common it is for -- if you were
5 hanging out in the cab and you saw an aircraft fly by heading off
6 the coast, would you consider that normal? Do aircraft frequently
7 go in that direction?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. But that -- Port Royal and the Bimini reporting, do you
10 interact with them directly at all? Do they call you or --

11 A. No, sir. Not at all.

12 Q. So a couple questions about the tower cab environment. So
13 you have -- obviously you have shades, right? I imagine every
14 facility in Florida has shades and strong shades. Do you have one
15 of the window sprayer things? Like do you have --

16 A. We do not. We do not.

17 Q. Would that be beneficial? Is that something you would be
18 interested in?

19 A. Having a window sprayer?

20 Q. Yeah, for foggy mornings.

21 A. No, just -- we do have -- there's a hose outside on the cab
22 wall. And like if you come in -- the biggest thing is -- I think
23 we've all got together, like when you leave off the night shift,
24 don't leave the air conditions on, especially in the middle of
25 summer. If you're going to leave it on, just leave it on low

1 because you come in there and the condensation is bad. So you
2 normally have to go out there with a hose and squirt it off. I
3 will do that.

4 Q. Up in the northeast we have the same problem. But, yeah,
5 it's before (indiscernible). So if you're at local, and every
6 facility has a local sort of position. Some of those
7 (indiscernible), but if you're working local and sitting or
8 standing -- do you sit or stand generally? Is that -- what's the
9 facility practice?

10 A. I'm a sitter. I'm comfortable sitting.

11 Q. Which way would you normally face? I ask because I have a --
12 my eyes are particularly sensitive to the sun, so I do tend to sit
13 away from the sun.

14 A. I'm very sensitive. I think I'm known in the tower for
15 making it as dark as I can get it. I'll put those shades down.

16 Q. Um-hum. Which way is --

17 A. West --

18 Q. Which way would local control face usually, generally?

19 A. Locals face in west and northwest. Westbound, I guess.

20 Q. And this would have been, the event was --

21 A. I mean --

22 Q. And the event was right around 11 o'clock in the morning, so
23 the sun would have been more to your south, which would have you
24 facing kind of even more north or northwest then?

25 A. Well, local faces west/northwest. Give me one second. I

1 want to turn this air condition thing -- I'm freezing. It's
2 blowing right on me. Hold on.

3 Q. Sure.

4 A. See me shivering up there. I apologize. I'm freezing here.
5 Go ahead.

6 Q. So, yeah, I was just trying to get a feel for how much the
7 towers (indiscernible) way out, and which way everyone kind of
8 hangs out and is there a sort of standard position for everyone,
9 which way you face. I'm trying to get a feel for how you do it
10 there.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. So most facilities (indiscernible) combine the CIC with
13 ground control. I didn't have a staffing report for you, what was
14 the (indiscernible) side, but I'm assuming was ground control
15 combined with CIC. It's pretty rare to have CIC and local
16 controller combined, but it changes from place to place. Do you
17 recall what was combined with (indiscernible)?

18 A. That, 100 percent, I know because I open up every Wednesday,
19 and I work with Dave, the manager, every single Wednesday. So
20 it's common. I come in, I open up, I log in as CIC, and I never
21 touch it again for the rest of the day.

22 Q. Oh, okay.

23 A. So I know for certain, 100 percent, because it was a
24 Wednesday, that it was Dave. When I open up also Thursdays on the
25 day shift -- I also open Thursday -- I'm on now. You can look

1 through all the logs. So that, for certainty, I know.

2 Q. Very good. So the -- most facilities have a bathroom like
3 right below the tower cab. Is that the same there, is a restroom?

4 A. Yep. Yep.

5 Q. So I've done CIC for 8 hours. Most facilities it's normal to
6 take a short bathroom break and you have to leave the cab for
7 brief amounts of time to attend to those needs. Is that a
8 facility practice also, I would assume?

9 A. If we have to go to the bathroom, yeah, of course, we go to
10 the bathroom.

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. We were talking about memory joggers a little bit and memory
14 aids and the pad management. Do you think there would have been a
15 time where if the local controller -- and assuming that he took
16 the opportunity to write down the inbound like you do, because
17 some controllers don't -- you know, we have memory aids for clear
18 to land; you have to document that. Is there -- during periods of
19 a lot of activity, is it possible that the controller did not
20 write down the inbound aircraft? Would there be a --

21 A. Of course, yes. Absolutely. It would be possible.

22 Q. And you don't do -- at the moment, you don't do tower tours
23 or anything like that? No one's visiting because of Covid.

24 A. No, we -- correct. Because of Covid, nobody comes up.

25 Q. And you had mentioned already the radar settings, that you

1 usually just use someone else's settings.

2 A. I do. I do.

3 Q. Okay. But your filter limits, the filter limits would have
4 been -- I mean everyone at my -- the facility I was at, or
5 facilities, they all kind of use the same filter limits, you know,
6 the surface, the 3,000 or 4,000 or whatever. Is it safe to say
7 that you feel the filter limits would have been adequate?

8 A. Oh, 100 -- yeah, I've never seen them -- I think somebody
9 last week actually said, oops, who did that? I can see -- I don't
10 need to see all that. I think we were showing somebody was up
11 around 9,000 feet. I don't know. Again, I don't change them. I
12 don't have my own settings, and they're all very similar. So I
13 don't notice a difference.

14 Q. Okay. Thanks. That's all I had.

15 A. Okay.

16 MR. SOPER: Thanks, Ted.

17 So I will go ahead and pass it along to Dan Carrico now.

18 Dan?

19 BY MR. CARRICO:

20 Q. Joe, I have probably just two quick questions reference the
21 pad paper. Is it a form type pad or is it just a regular blank,
22 single sheet of paper? Okay.

23 A. For standard recording just a regular, normal paper. And
24 it's on a pad, just blank, just lined piece of paper.

25 Q. Now I'm going to ask you your opinion here. Do you think

1 that a form type thing would help keep track, you know, where --
2 I'm just thinking, you know, specific to O'Hare, where I work, you
3 know, we have a form that when pilots check on, you know, we write
4 their call sign down, we put checkmarks -- they have little boxes
5 for plane in hold short operations. We have frequency changes,
6 things like that, little boxes you put checkmarks in that would
7 indicate a different type of operation, whether -- if it's a
8 helicopter, we have a specific area for helicopters, a specific
9 area for vehicles, runways, etc.

10 Do you think a form like that would benefit? I don't know
11 your traffic. I don't know the complexity and I don't know the
12 volume. Is that something that you think the facility would
13 benefit from, is having a standard form to keep track of the
14 through flights and overflights and --

15 A. I personally would hate that. I like the free flowing --
16 only because, you know, it depends on what's going on. What I do
17 is I do have a piece of paper. I don't know which you're seeing
18 it obviously, but when they check in, I put it right here. Next
19 one, the next one, next one. Predicated on what they're doing, if
20 they're going up or down the shoreline, I put an arrow going down.
21 I think I explained earlier, I'll put FSTB next to it. We all
22 have our own way. I will say that our ways are very, very
23 similar. So if -- I would not want a -- to answer your question,
24 I would not want something that had boxes and we checked it. It
25 would be too much. I like it free flowing this way. It's easier.

1 I hope that answers that question for you.

2 MR. CARRICO: And yeah, I don't have anything else. Thanks,
3 Joe.

4 MR. SOPER: Thanks --

5 MR. CARRICO: Thank you.

6 MR. SOPER: Thanks, Dan.

7 And Doug?

8 MR. BRAZY: No, sir. I think all those questions are
9 covered. Thank you, though.

10 MR. SOPER: Great. Thank you.

11 BY MR. SOPER:

12 Q. Okay. I have a little bit additional here for you, Joe. So
13 this is general in nature. Can you recall any training being
14 conducted at your facility that you may have been a part of in the
15 last year, whether it was through recurrent, whether it was
16 through whatever training refresher, recurrent training, that
17 involved this type of thing, meaning what you do in response to
18 losing communications with an aircraft that you expect to be
19 having -- that you're providing services to, where you have an
20 unexpected loss in comms or loss in -- I use radar loosely because
21 you're not required to be using the radar, so --

22 A. Right.

23 Q. -- it's not quite the same as a loss of radar contact because
24 you don't have that. But I mean if you are providing services to
25 an aircraft and you subsequently lose contact with them where you

1 can't locate them or you can't get them on comms, have you had
2 training involving that for your facility that you can recall in
3 the last 6 months to a year?

4 A. No. That doesn't sound familiar. I can't recall.

5 Q. Okay. Do you know if you have a procedure there? Are you
6 aware of a local procedure that if we have people check in and we
7 subsequently lose comms with them unexpectedly, a process by which
8 you're supposed to follow at all?

9 A. No, I don't think there's a process. I think it's a -- your
10 basic air traffic control process. You know, if you're talking to
11 somebody and you see him, I mean obviously, you know, if he -- you
12 know, there's no process.

13 Q. Yeah. Okay. I get it.

14 A. If that makes sense. You know what I mean? That --

15 Q. Yeah. No, I'm with you. I'm with you. I don't mean to --

16 A. If you know you're talking -- I'm sorry. If you know you're
17 talking to somebody and they're not talking to you anymore, of
18 course you reach out and you start -- I'll call Palm Beach, I'll
19 call Pompano. Because many a times, you know, people leave my
20 frequency early. I had people start coming down the shoreline and
21 they're not even a mile in the -- you know, inside of my airspace
22 and they're already looking to switch to Pompano. I'm like, sir,
23 you just got in the airspace, so kind of hang out for a little
24 bit.

25 Q. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think --

1 A. No, I'll reach out to other facilities.

2 Q. Yeah, I think we can all agree we -- especially at towers
3 like that, VFR towers, where you have a lot of airplanes that
4 leave your frequency early and don't tell you when their leaving
5 or whatever, and you have to end up tracking down to see what was
6 up. But in the case of where they're coming in there, where
7 you're expecting them to land there and they don't come back, do
8 you guys have an internal checklist for emergency response or
9 anything like that for when you consider something to be an
10 emergency? I'm not saying this even particular incident per se.
11 But when you get to an emergency situation, do you have a
12 localized checklist or procedure that you guys follow for
13 emergencies there?

14 A. We do. It's up in one of the binders. We have our different
15 alerts how we handle it. Yeah, we do.

16 Q. Is that -- do you happen to know, is that incorporated into
17 your SOP or is that a separate standalone procedure for you guys?
18 Do you know?

19 A. You know, I don't know.

20 Q. That's all right.

21 A. I know where all the -- yeah, I don't. I know where all
22 (indiscernible) --

23 Q. Well, it's more important that you know where it's at.

24 A. Yeah. I know where it's at.

25 Q. Okay. All right. Very well. We'll get that from them

1 later.

2 I have another question that's -- this is collateral in
3 nature, kind of. It's not really related to the event per se.
4 How has -- the Covid pandemic impact on air traffic has been
5 pretty great across the NAS, quite frankly. How has it affected
6 you guys? Has it been a significant impact? Has it not really
7 impacted much from what you've seen? I mean it is the same as
8 what it is for you guys always? I mean, how has it impacted your
9 guys operationally, in your opinion, from a work standpoint and
10 does it affect -- and I can almost answer the next question, but I
11 need to ask it, is has it affected your ability to remain
12 proficient or anybody within your group to remain proficient due
13 to the restrictions of Covid?

14 A. To be proficient as an air traffic controller? No.

15 Q. Yeah, current --

16 A. No.

17 Q. It doesn't affect currency and proficiency there, I would
18 assume?

19 A. No. I would say absolutely not. I mean we still come in, we
20 still work. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. As usual.

23 MR. SOPER: Okay. All right. I'm going to ahead and pass it
24 back.

25 Ted, do you have any additional questions?

1 MR. ZIMMERMAN: I do not. Thank you.

2 MR. SOPER: Thanks, Ted.

3 How about you, Dan? Do you have any additional questions?

4 MR. CARRICO: I do not. Thank you.

5 MR. SOPER: And Doug, did anything pop into your mind that
6 you wanted to ask?

7 MR. BRAZY: No, sir. I'm all set. Thank you.

8 MR. SOPER: Okay. Great. All right. Outstanding.

9 Hey, Joe, I appreciate you taking the time out. I'm going to
10 end the recording for now unless you have any questions for us?

11 MR. VANGEL: I do not.

12 MR. SOPER: Okay. I'll go ahead and end the recording at
13 this time. I show the time at 1311 Eastern Time.

14 (Whereupon, at 1:11 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

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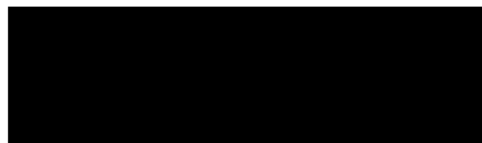
IN THE MATTER OF: LANCAIR 320, N670BS FATALITY
 IN BOCA RATON, FLORIDA
 ON FEBRUARY 24, 2021
 Interview of Joseph Vangel

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA21LA141

PLACE: Via Video Conference

DATE: March 10, 2021

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Kay Maurer
Transcriber