



NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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National Transportation Safety Board

Date: 7/28/2021
Person Contacted: Justin Dix (Flight Instructor)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA295

Narrative:

The individual noted above provided the following information via telephone. The below contents are a summary of what was reported:

Mr. Dix was a flight instructor that provided training to the accident student pilot (Mr. Alan F. Arant) beginning in February 2021. He reported that he needed to obtain an SFAR 73 checkride himself in order to begin flight instruction in an R44 with Mr. Arant.

Mr. Dix reported that in February 2021 he received this checkride endorsement and in the same month began flight instruction with Mr. Arant. The student pilot had no flight certifications or other training prior to the flight instruction with Mr. Dix. This information was to Mr. Dix's best knowledge.

Mr. Dix believed he conducted about 20 hours of dual flight training with Mr. Arant. They used the Robinson training guides primarily during training. The training was conducted from William M. Tuck Airport (W78), South Boston, Virginia. Mr. Arant had completed a "pre-solo knowledge test." He had not completed the actual written knowledge examination required for the private pilot certification.

Early in May 2021, Mr. Dix signed off Mr. Arant for supervised solo flights and local solo flights. In June 2021, Mr. Arant moved his helicopter's base from W78 to his private residence (Mr. Arant was the owner of the accident helicopter). He informed Mr. Dix over a weekend and flew the helicopter without the proper endorsements to his house. It was not a mutual decision for the helicopter's base to be relocated to the pilot's residence. Their flight training frequency and communication decreased after this movement of the helicopter. Mr. Dix saw pictures online of Mr. Arant flying with other people in the helicopter after this move.

Mr. Dix received text messages¹ from Mr. Arant on the day of the accident. Mr. Arant informed Mr. Dix that he was going to fly to OBX from his house for a fishing trip later that day, through W78 for a fuel stop. Mr. Dix informed Mr. Arant that the fuel was out of service.

¹ Refer to Appendix A of this memorandum for screenshots of these text messages.



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Mr. Dix reported that he had never provided a solo cross country endorsement to Mr. Arant. They had never flown to the OBX area together and had only flown one longer flight together, which was their first flight together from Culpeper, Virginia to W78 (this was the return trip after Mr. Dix had completed his SFAR 73 checkride).

Mr. Dix reported that Mr. Arant utilized ForeFlight in the cockpit and he had a mount. Mr. Dix was not aware of any ongoing mechanical issues with the helicopter.

Mr. Dix reported that it was his impression that Mr. Arant “knew what the rules were” and further stated that “some people don’t always play by the rules.” He asked, what is an instructor supposed to do in these instances?

Mr. Dix was asked via email to respond to several questions posed by this investigator-in-charge. Below are Mr. Dix’s unedited responses in blue text:

The FAA medical certification office has confirmed that Mr. Arant’s 3rd class medical application was not issued and was ‘Deferred for Further Evaluation’. It is my understanding that you were under the impression that Mr. Arant held a third-class medical certificate, and you endorsed him for a supervised solo which he completed May 9th, 2021.

1. Please explain why you believed Mr. Arant held a valid 3rd class medical?

I had explained to Alan that he needed a 3rd class medical prior to solo flight of the helicopter and it was also in his best interest to get this as soon as he can so that he would know if there were any issues that may be disqualifying. On January 21st 2021, Alan messaged me that he had a medXpress ID number and had scheduled a medical exam with an examiner in Roanoke. On January 29th 2021, Alan messaged me that he had completed his physical. I did not see a copy of the medical certificate. I informed him that having the medical certificate was a requirement prior to flying the helicopter solo.

2. Did Mr. Arant present a 3rd class medical certificate to you? Did Mr. Arant tell you that he was approved for the 3rd class medical?

At our next meeting, 02/26/2021, Alan did present me with a medical certificate. He did not specifically say that he was approved but he said that he did not have any problems completing the physical. It was implied that he now possessed a 3rd class medical certificate. I do not remember the details of the certificate but I again stated that he will need to keep that with him because it is required documentation for him to fly solo.

According to FAA registration records, Mr. Arant purchased the helicopter in January 2021. It is my understanding that Mr. Arant started flight training with you, after you completed the SFAR training in Culpeper, VA.



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3. What date did you receive the SFAR endorsement?

I received the SFAR 73 endorsment on 02/26/2021 from Steve Nixon, a DPE from Culpepper VA.

4. When did you start flight training with Mr. Arant?

I started flight training with Alan on the return trip back from receiving the SFAR 73 endorsment. This took place on 02/26/2021.

5. How many dual instruction hours did Mr. Arant fly with you?

I found 15.4 hours of dual instruction in my logbook labeled as dual instruction given to Alan. I know I did not log a couple of the flights that we did in my personal logbook but I always logged and signed his book after each flight. I am confident that I gave him about 20 hours of dual instruction. Also, he received some instruction from another instructor that counted toward the 20 hour SFAR 73 requirement.

6. How many solo flight hours did Mr. Arant fly as part of your supervision and training of him (not including unauthorized flights he may have completed)?

Alan flew aproximately 6 hours under my supervision as a solo student. This would have been during the months of May and June of 2021. I have not inspected his logbook since our last flight together on 05/28/2021 to know the exact number of hours.

7. When was your last dual instruction flight with Mr. Arant?

The last flight I had with Alan was on 05/28/2021 for a duration of 2.1 hours. We also flew for 2.2 hours on 05/27/2021.

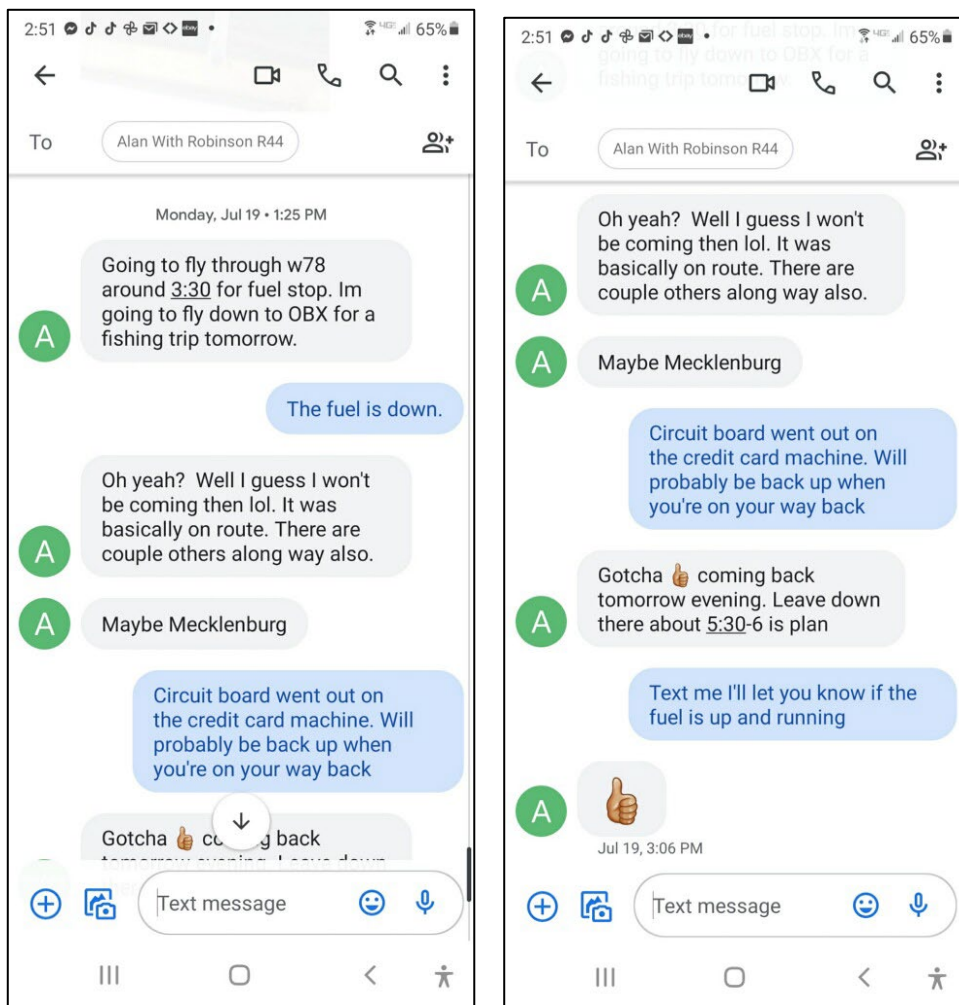
8. It is my understanding that sometime in late May 2021, he moved the helicopter from South Boston Airport to his residence. Is this accurate to your knowledge.

Based off of my text messages, Alan informed me that he would be flying his helicopter on the afternoon of 06/30/2021 beginning around 3 PM. I had only authorized to perform solo flights in the local area during day conditions. At 7:22 PM, he messaged me that he had taken the helicpter to his house. It is possible that he had taken the helicopter other places without my knowledge prior to 06/30/2021. I do know that the helicopter was stored at W78 consistently from mid January 2021 until 06/30/2021.



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APPENDIX A:



Figures 1 & 2: Screenshots of text messages from the day of the accident between Mr. Dix and Mr. Arant.

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