

Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety - Eastern Region (AS-ERA)

Date: May 24, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA238 Interview with Airport Manager
Contact: Mr. Jeff Garrison

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Jeff Garrison, airport manager at the Oconee County Regional Airport, [REDACTED], Seneca, SC 29678. Mr. Garrison was interviewed by phone on May 24, 2023, at 1007 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED] and provide an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

I informed Mr. Garrison that I was calling to inquire about fueling records for N272S. He responded that they have looked at all their receipts and have no record that Mr. Bofinger purchased any fuel. He stated that Mr. Bofinger did pull the airplane out of the hangar the day before the flight and asked for an air chuck because his landing gear tires were low on air. This indicated to Mr. Garrison that he had not flown in quite some time. They have also reviewed video footage; however, they have no video of him purchasing fuel at the self-serve fueling station, and no records showing any purchase. He stated that they will look in his hangar, where Mr. Bofinger's car is currently parked, to see if they can locate any maintenance records or other items that may be informative for the investigation.

The call ended at 1003 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 4, 2023. He replied on May 24, 2023, at 1114 EDT with an edit that was incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on May 24, 2023.

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Date: June 16, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA238 Interview with Mechanic
Contact: Mr. Rob Ripchick

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Rob Ripchick. Mr. Ripchick was called at [REDACTED] and a voicemail was left. He returned my call at 0906 CDT. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At this stage of the conversation, he was advised that for transparency I would be typing the notes and would send to him for review and comment.

Mr. Ripchick assisted in the performance of maintenance on the airplane from 2016-2018 and assisted Mr. Bennis with the annual inspection on the accident airplane in 2018. He looked up the record for that annual inspection for the airplane and stated that it was on 5/25/2018, at "TSMOH of 548.5 and tach time of 548.5. Time on airplane of 11,420.2 hrs". Jack wanted to do as much work as he could, under the supervision of a mechanic.

He stated that Mr. Bofinger would do maintenance with a mechanic overseeing. "He was a meticulous kind of guy and seemed to make every effort to keep his plane properly maintained. He was good, but you had to watch him like all owner/mechanics." He stated that Mr. Bofinger liked to run his engine lean of peak, which bothered him somewhat as he was raised that you run an engine rich of peak ...about 100-125 degrees rich of peak.

He recalled that at one point when another mechanic was working on the engine, there were sticky valves, and his recollection was that they had to re-ream the valve guides and he thought it was because he ran the engine lean of peak. He recalled looking at the cylinder at it was a whitish pink cylinder and that he thought looked like

it was running hot. He stated that Mr. Bofinger likely "did his own oil changes for sure."

The call ended at 0920 CDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on June 20, 2023. He replied via phone call on June 20, 2023, at 1021 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on June 20, 2023.



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Date: May 24, 2023

Subject: ERA23FA238 Interview with Airport Personnel

Contact: Melissa Morrone, Orange County Airport, Montgomery, NY

The following is a record of conversation with Ms. Morrone, who works at the Orange County Airport, Montgomery, New York. I reached Ms. Morrone at [REDACTED] and she provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

I informed Ms. Morrone that I was calling to inquire about N272S, which I understood to be enroute to the Orange County Airport on May 21. I indicated that I was trying to find contact information for a mechanic by the name of Joe Bennis, who I understood maintained the accident airplane.

Ms. Morrone stated that they were familiar with Mr. Bofinger, and that he had a hangar there at the airport, but that Mr. Bennis was not located at the airport. She stated that she believed that Mr. Bennis was located in Ellenville, New York.

I gave Ms. Morrone permission to designate an airport representative to search the hangar of Mr. Bofinger for any pilot or airplane records that may be pertinent to this accident.

The call ended at 1045 EDT.

In a follow-up e-mail received from Ms. Morrone at 1053 EDT on May 24, 2023, she stated: "the mechanic you had referred to would be based out of Ellenville, NY, but I am not sure if he did do any work on Mr. Bofinger's plane. One of our tenants said that Mr. Bofinger was looking to have his last Annual done in North Carolina, but that was the only information we received."

In a second follow-up e-mail received at 1218 EDT on May 24, 2023, Ms. Morrone stated: "Our Director just did a thorough look through Mr. Bofinger Hangar, including the vehicle that is in it. Unfortunately he did not find any records. Please let us know if you need anything else."

The digest was e-mailed to her for review on May 24, 2023. After e-mail correspondence, the final digest was e-mailed to her on May 24, 2023.

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Date: May 24, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA238 Interview with spouse
Contact: Mrs. Patrice Bofinger

The following is a record of conversation with Mrs. Bofinger, who returned my call at 1211 EDT on May 24, 2023. She called from [REDACTED] and provided an e-mail address [REDACTED].

Mrs. Bofinger explained that she was calling from California in response to my voicemail. She confirmed the phone number for her husband's mechanic, and also clarified the address of his mother. She stated that she had spoken to the mechanic (Joe Bennis) and that her husband was flying up to New Jersey to open their home there for the summer, and he was going to have the annual performed on the airplane as he did every June.

The call ended at 1221 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to her for review on May 24, 2023. She replied on May 24, 2023, at 1235 EDT indicating that the narrative looked correct. The final digest was e-mailed to her on May 24, 2023.



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Date: May 24, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA238 Interview with Witness
Contact: Ms. Crystal Holden

The following is a record of conversation with Ms. Crystal Holden. A voicemail was left for Ms. Holden at 0845 EDT on May 24, 2023, at [REDACTED]. Ms. Holden returned my call at 0847 EDT. She provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

She is working on her pilot's license, and she owns a Cessna 182. She and her family pay attention to airplanes because they are interested in airlines. Her parents live behind her. She was at her parents' house at [REDACTED], and she heard the airplane fly overhead and noted that the engine did not sound good. She believes it was traveling northeasterly. It was spitting, sputtering and there was a "knocking sound." She said, "That sounds absolutely horrible," and her mom and dad went outside. She recommended that I speak to her father. They heard the impact which sounded like an explosion. They looked over the tree line and immediately saw smoke. They had an idea of where it crashed, but they drove to the area and drove through the field in the hopes that there were survivors. They called 9-1-1 on the way over to the site. When they got there, the airplane was completely involved in fire. It was overcast at the time of the accident, what she considered a low ceiling.

The call ended at 0901 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to her for review on May 24, 2023. No edits were received. The final digest was e-mailed to her on August 3, 2023.



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Date: May 24, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA238 Interview with Witness
Contact: Mr. Vern Miller

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Vern Miller. A voicemail was left for Mr. Miller at 0953 EDT on May 24, 2023, at [REDACTED]. Mr. Miller returned my call at 1021 EDT. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

Mr. Miller was standing in his yard at [REDACTED], about a half mile from the impact site, and heard an airplane. He lives 5-6 miles from the Raleigh Regional Airport at Person County (KTDF), Roxboro, North Carolina, so it is not unusual for airplanes to be overhead. But this airplane was loud and low and headed for the airport. Right before the airplane came into sight, the engine died down then came back up, and as the airplane came into sight Mr. Miller could see that it was a v-tail Bonanza. The engine started to backfire badly, and Mr. Miller as a pilot and mechanic, was telling himself that the pilot was trying to make it to the airport, and he hoped he'd make it. At the same time, there was a field right in front of him. A short while later, it got quiet, and the airplane was out of sight. A short time later, he heard the impact. He got into his car and called 9-1-1 and headed to the scene and there was a large plume of black smoke. The airplane was engulfed in flames 12-14 feet high.

The call ended at 10:27 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 24, 2023. No edits were received, and the final record was e-mailed to him on August 3, 2024.