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Date: June 12, 2023 @ 1145

Subject: ERA23FA266
In Person Conversation with Owner and Friend of Accident Pilot.
Location: [REDACTED], Porter, NY; Hanger

Contact: Jason Berger @ [REDACTED]

Partial owner of Skydive the Falls. Discussed the circumstances of the accident. On the day of the accident, the weather wasn't great, so it was a light day. His friend, the accident pilot (Caruana) flew his private airplane, a Harmon Rocket up from his home in Grand Isle and hung out for the day as he often does. Around 3:00 pm he had to fly back home because he had plans.

He got into his airplane and departed. He has a routine that he always does as a show for his friends to say goodbye when he departs. He takes off to the south, does a climbing 180 degree turn back to the runway and flies a low approach at high speed to the north. Then he usually climbs and does a barrel roll before turning south and heading home, but this time he did not climb, and it looked like something was wrong because the roll started but didn't finish. He lost altitude and went into the trees. He heard him radio in "Oh expletive" He knew something was wrong.

When asked how tall the trees were on the southern part of the airport, he stated about 40 feet tall. The pilot seemed lower than he has ever seen before anytime. "Why isn't he climbing, why isn't he climbing?" He said the low pass was done about 10 to 15 feet. Then he normally climbs, banks left, then heads home to Grand Island. That is where he is based.

What did you see after the low pass? He started climbing, then banking then went into the trees. He had the portable radio on and was talking with him. I think he knew it was happening, he screamed oh expletive! He never finished the word. "Most competent pilot I've ever met in my life. "

As soon as he saw him low, he started running towards him instinctively. Another person watching (J.T.) who did not want to be identified, stated to Berger that he saw a piece of the propeller land next to the hanger and he swears it came off before the accident. J.T. was the person who discovered the piece of propeller. A couple of people said they heard it fall and hit the ground with a clank but didn't know if it was before or after the impact. J.T. said he watched it fall. Everything was happening too fast. If it came off before, maybe he hit something like a bird or a tree, but that is unlikely because the pilot would have radio'd in that he hit something.

He was at high speed during the low pass. The airplane can do 180 knots no problem.

After the low approach, he got to maybe 10 to 15 feet above the tree line, then the plane dipped into the trees. It was like he went inverted into the trees; like a roll that stopped rolling.

Everyone was watching him depart; there were about 6 or 7 people there watching him.

We watched a doorbell camera of the preflight, engine start up and taxi out before losing the airplane out of the video frame at 3:06 pm. No other recording of the airplane was captured according to him and as far as he knew, none of the witnesses took photographs or video with their own devices.

Is it possible he did a tree strike down on the south side of the runway? He would have told me if he had hit something. J.T. did not want to be interviewed by the police and elected to go home. It's possible the prop piece came off and shot back towards the hanger especially since the airplane was likely tumbling. Its over 900 feet away from the initial impact site to the hanger.¹

He will send the Doorbell camera footage and gather statements.

[END]

¹ Actual distance when measured was 440 feet.