

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
OAS-Eastern Region Aviation

Date: September 16, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview
Contact: William J. Hammond and Chief Smallwood

Mr. William J. Hammond, Airport Director of Fitzgerald Municipal Airport (FZG), Fitzgerald, Georgia, and Chief Smallwood were contacted on September 13, 2023, at 1759 EDT. They were contacted thru the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Regional Operations Center (ROC). Mr. Hammond was at the accident site. He was called at [REDACTED] He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED] Also on the call was Fitzgerald Police Department Chief William Smallwood, Jr. The chief's phone is [REDACTED] and his e-mail address is [REDACTED]

Mr. Hammond and Chief Smallwood were advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

Mr. Hammond was asked by NTSB the following –

Provide information about the flight and sight?

He indicated that he was getting ready to depart FZG and heard an engine start that he associated or correlated with the accident airplane. He walked outside of his office onto the ramp¹. He indicated that the pilot had not flown in a while. He reported that while taxiing he heard the engine misfiring, “not bad, but it was misfiring.” He watched the takeoff and reported that the engine sounded normal. The airplane climbed slowly, or more slowly than he thought it should. He did not know the airplane had crashed and departed the airport and went home. While there, he was notified of the accident by law enforcement and drove to the accident site.

¹ His location was later determined to be 31.682482° North latitude and -083.271030° West longitude.

NTSB Questions Continued –

What was the maximum altitude that he saw the airplane climb to?

No more than 1,000 ft, probably less.

Did you perceive the engine was at full power during takeoff?

I can't tell. Nothing stuck out to him that it was at a low power setting.

When you say the airplane had not flown was that the pilot, airplane or both?

As far as I know neither had flown in a "little while."

Do you know who was on-board?

Yes. Mr. Sumner (the pilot and fatally injured) and Mr. Walker (passenger). He (Mr. Hammond) did not know the passenger.

Did the pilot tell you what the flight intention was?

He had been trying to sell it to the passenger over the past week. The pilot told him the day before that he would take the passenger up on a flight, but Mr. Hammond did not speak with the pilot on the day of the accident.

Was the airplane fueled recently?

He did not recall seeing that airplane fuel recently but he will check?

Was there a postcrash fire?

No.

What direction did the flight depart?

To the south.

Was there any adverse weather in the area at the time of the crash?

No, not at the time of the flight.

Chief Smallwood was asked if there any witnesses?

Yes. He advised he would get written statements. Most reported seeing the airplane flying low, hearing the engine sputtering, crossed the highway, and stalled.

Chief Smallwood indicated that the pilot and passenger were ejected from the airplane and both were on the ground forward of the resting position of the airplane. The pilot was closest to the wreckage and the passenger was farther ahead of the wreckage.

The call ended at 1813 EDT.

NTSB Questions Continued –

On September 14, 2023, at a non-recorded time Mr. Hammond was asked the following:

Did you hear an engine run-up?

I did not notice one. He probably could not have heard it because of the distance and location between the 2 hangars.

On the same day at 1623 EDT, Mr. Hammond was asked to provide the following:

Where was he located when he witnessed the takeoff?

He was on the ramp. Using an APP called Theodolite, he was located at 31.682482° North latitude and -083.271030 West longitude.

Who was seated where in the airplane when it departed?

He did not see them get into the airplane and we could not discern who was where in the airplane.

Where did the airplane rotate?

Mr. Hammond went to the location on the ramp where he witnessed the takeoff and then while in communication with a vehicle that was on the taxiway, he estimated that the airplane rotated on the runway when it was abeam the vehicle located at 31.683971° North latitude and -83.271853° West longitude. The location over the runway abeam the vehicle was located about 31.684162° North latitude and -083.272748° west longitude. That location when plotted on Google Earth was located about 2,154 ft from the approach end of runway 20.

While determining the rotation location, one occupant of N44763 pulled to the fuel pump and at 1615 EDT on 9/14, added 8.8 gallons of fuel into the left fuel tank. The occupant, Seth Wallace, indicated that he was the best friend of the passenger. A NTSB business card was given to him and asked the family of Mr. Walker to call when able.

Following the meeting with the occupant, a cursory inspection of the fuel facility that fueled the accident airplane on September 11, 2023, and also N44763 was performed by NTSB and FAA with the Airport Director in attendance. During that inspection the fuel filter last change and due dates were clearly marked. A .5 gallon sample of fuel was pumped into one of their white buckets. Some small black specs were noted in the sample. The manager said he would classify the sample as 2A and would continue to sample until he obtained 1A.

The digest was e-mailed to them for review on September 16, 2023. Mr. Hammond replied on September 17, 2023 at 1311 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. Chief Smallwood did not reply. The FINAL digest was e-mailed to them on October 19, 2023.

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
OAS-Eastern Region Aviation

Date: September 16, 2023

Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: Linda Dunnom

Ms. Linda Dunnom was interviewed outside her home on September 14, 2023, at 1434 EDT. Her home address was [REDACTED] Fitzgerald, Georgia [REDACTED]. She provided a cell phone of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. Also present shortly after the interview began were Federal Aviation Administration inspectors Jeffrey Davis and James Manning, Jr.

She was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

She indicated that she has lived at that house for 20 years. He is on a disability retirement but does not have any hearing issues. She is not a pilot nor a mechanic and is not mechanically inclined.

NTSB Questions –

She was asked to explain what she saw or heard?

On the date and time of the accident she was in her kitchen, and the doors and windows of her house were closed and the air conditioner was on. Additionally, at the time her television was on. She heard a loud noise and knew the airplane's engine shut off. She went to her front door and saw fire trucks. She did not see the crash. She did not see the crash?

How long did you hear it?

A few seconds and then it quit. When it was running it was loud and then shut off. She then went to the door and saw fire trucks.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Is it normal to hear airplanes flying over her area?

Yes, but not that low.

How did you know it was low?

The way it sounded.

Was the engine running and then quit?

She heard it running and then it suddenly quit.

Did you see fire when you went to your front door?

No. She indicated that the fire truck location did not block her view of the wreckage.

Is there anything else I should know that I have not asked?

She saw “them” get one occupant out of the airplane and that person was covered in blood.

How was the engine rpm when she heard it running?

Low.

The interview end time was not recorded.

The digest was e-mailed to her for review on September 16, 2023. She did not reply as of October 19, 2023. The FINAL digest was e-mailed to her on October 19, 2023.

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
OAS-Eastern Region Aviation

Date: September 16, 2023

Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: Erastus Karuri

Mr. Erastus Karuri was interviewed in his work hangar (125B) at Fitzgerald Municipal Airport (FZG), Fitzgerald, Georgia on September 14, 2023, at 1602 EDT. He provided a cell phone of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

He was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

He is an airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanic, certificate number [REDACTED]. He has been an A&P mechanic for about 2 years and an apprentice for about 5 years.

He was asked the following questions –

Explain what he saw and heard with respect to the accident flight?

When the accident flight was presumed to have departed he was inside hangar 125B with the hangar doors closed. He heard what he thought was an airplane taxi and the stop. He did not hear the accident flight depart.

On September 12th, the day before the accident he saw the pilot taxiing. Later that same day, the pilot came into their hangar about 1500 with spark plugs. He used their spark plug testing and cleaning machine, and cleaned them. Sometime on September 12th, there was a huge storm and he did not think the pilot went flying that day.

Did the pilot say why he was cleaning the spark plugs?

No. The pilot did not test the plugs after cleaning. When he (Mr. Karuri) left FZG on September 13, 2023, at 1700 EDT, the hangar door where the accident airplane was kept was open and the airplane was gone.

The interview ended at 1613 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on September 16, 2023. He replied on September 19, 2023, at 1304 EDT with, "Hi Mr. Monville, I have received your email and attachment. Thank you. No change needed of facts recorded at interview. Erastus." The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him on September 19, 2023.

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
OAS-Eastern Region Aviation

Date: September 18, 2023

Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: Seth Wallace

Mr. Seth Wallace was contacted by phone on September 18, 2023, at 1248 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED] He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

He was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

He was asked the following –

How is Mr. Walker doing and whether he gave the family my contact information?

He did speak with his mother and gave her my contact information. He has been in surgery every single day since the accident.

Was his leg able to be saved?

Yes.

When you flew N44763 after putting 8.8 gallons into the left fuel tank, did you fly with the fuel selector positioned to the left tank?

They did fly the airplane with the fuel selector on the right tank, then after returning to Fitzgerald Municipal Airport (FZG), the flight remained in the airport traffic pattern where the fuel selector was positioned to the left tank. They did two touch-and-go landings in the left tank, totaling between 10 and 15 minutes of flying with no fuel related issues. He added that when he added 8.8 gallons into the left fuel tank, it already had 16-17 gallons of fuel on-board.

The phone call ended at 1252 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on September 18, 2023. He did not reply as of October 19, 2023. The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him on October 19, 2023.



Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: September 19, 2023
Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview
Contact: Connie Sumner

Mrs. Connie Sumner contacted NTSB by phone on September 19, 2023, at 1415 EDT. She called from [REDACTED] She provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

She was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

She was asked the following questions –

What was the purpose of the accident flight?

The passenger was going to purchase the airplane. She didn't know her husband was going to take him flying that day. She add that when her husband did fly he was always looking for a place to land.

Do you know if he flew the airplane after buying fuel?

He did not. The pilot put fuel into the airplane to "run it." She does not know if he put the fuel directly into the airplane or into 5 gallon fuel cans.

Do you know who owned the airplane at the time of the accident?

Her husband owned it.

Do you know when your husband last flew it?

She does not.

Did your husband have a pilot logbook?

He did at one time. He owned a twin engine airplane and kept track of his flight time.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Do you know if the airplane had a more recent annual inspection?
I'm pretty sure there was.

Who would have done that?
Pete Clark. He is sick. His full name is Charles A. "Pete" Clark.

What is his phone number?
It is on her husband's phone.

Did you talk with your husband before the flight?
He left their house at about 1200 to go to the airport.

Was the airplane going to be sold after the flight?
At some point it was going to be sold, but not after the flight.

What was the passcode to your husbands phone?
None. When you 1st turn on the phone you should see the home screen.

Who has the maintenance records?
Jeremy took them and provided them to Will Hammond, who was the director of the Fitzgerald Municipal Airport (KFZG), Fitzgerald, Georgia.

Prior to ending the call she was asked to make a 7-day history very soon documenting the time her husband went to bed, woke up, napped, etc. She said she would.

The call ended at 1436 EDT.

The digest was reviewed with her during the call and she agreed to the content. The FINAL digest was e-mailed to the pilot's daughter (Bonnie Sumner) on April 4, 2024.

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
OAS-Eastern Region Aviation

Date: October 4, 2023

Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: Griffin Carey Walker

Mr. Griffin C. Walker passenger in the accident airplane, and his attorney, J. Shane Hudson contacted NTSB by phone on October 4, 2023, at 1426 EDT. The call was made from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mr. Walker provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED] while the e-mail address for Mr. Hudson is [REDACTED]

They were advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

At the beginning of the interview Mr. Walker was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview with representation by J. Shane Hudson.

He was asked the following questions –

What is your full name, home address, phone and e-mail information?

Griffin Carey Walker, [REDACTED] Ocilla, Georgia [REDACTED] Phone [REDACTED]

What is your date of birth?

[REDACTED]

When did you begin your flight training?

I don't exactly remember. It started towards the end of 2022, but he did not have that many flight hours.

NTSB Questions Continued –

What type of airplanes had you flown?

Only what his flight instructor operated, a Piper PA-28 series.

What is your student pilot certificate information and number of flight hours?

He doesn't know his certificate number. He never got a student pilot certificate. He has between 3 and 5 hours maximum.

Are you medicated? If so, what are you taking (name, dosage and frequency) and when was/were it/them last taken?

Hydrocodone, Gabapentin, and Robaxin, which are taken 3X day. His last dosage was about lunchtime today. He can get me the dosage if needed.

Do you feel clear headed enough for this phone interview?

He was in a plane crash. He feels he is good enough for the phone interview.

Have you been told by any source how to respond to any questions from NTSB?

No.

On the date of the accident what was your height and weight?

72 inches and I don't know the weight. 190 pounds, under 200 pounds, about 200 pounds.

How accurate was your weight given in this answer?

His weight fluctuates.

Explain what your intention with the accident airplane was?

He was interested in buying it.

When did you begin communicating with the pilot about the airplane (exact date if known)?

Within 2 weeks of the crash, or about beginning on September 1, 2023.

As part of your potential ownership did you have a mechanic inspect the airplane?

I did not.

Whose idea was it to go flying that day?

The pilot's.

Where did you intend to fly to?

Mr. Walker had no control over the flight as Mr. Sumner was the pilot and he did not tell Mr. Walker where they were flying to.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Did the pilot tell you of any health issues he had or was having that day?

No sir.

Did you have any concerns about flying in the airplane that day?

No, although there is always a concern about flying. He says a prayer when the flight departed.

Did the pilot ask you your weight before the flight?

No.

Did the pilot tell you his weight before takeoff?

No.

Were there any weight and balance calculations done by you or him prior to the flight? If so, what were the numbers and CG determined?

None were done by him. He can't speak if the pilot had done them.

Explain what you knew, if anything, about the useful load of the airplane?

He had no clue what the useful load was.

Did you know how much fuel was exactly in each tank before takeoff?

No sir.

Did you look in either fuel tank before departing?

No.

Were you aware when the airplane's last inspection was?

So, I do not know. I have no clue. Mr. Sumner told him that the annual inspection was just completed. Mr. Sumner called him on September 12th, and told him the annual inspection was done and to come to the airport tomorrow at 1700 to go flying in the airplane.

Who did the recently completed annual inspection?

Peter Clark.

Do you have a phone number for Mr. Clark?

I do not.

Were you aware when the airplane was last flown?

Mr. Sumner told him that "we" had flown the airplane earlier that day, and then a few months before that. When Mr. Walker arrived at the airport for the accident flight Mr. Sumner told him he had already flown the airplane.

NTSB Questions Continued –

When you indicated “we” with respect to the airplane being flown by Mr. Sumner earlier that day do you know who the other person could have been?

The pilot did say ‘we’ but he did not say who was with him.

Did Mr. Sumner say there were any problems with the airplane during the flight earlier that day? Mr. Sumner told Mr. Walker that the airplane was perfect.

Did Mr. Sumner tell you the flight duration of the flight earlier that day? He did not say how long the flight was airborne.

Did he tell you when it was last fueled?

Mr. Sumner told him the day before the accident that he had put fresh fuel on-board for the annual inspection, but he did not say when the airplane was fueled¹. Mr. Sumner told him the annual was done, and there was good compression on all cylinders.

Did he tell you or do you know if it was flown after being fueled? Since it was fueled for the annual inspection it was flown earlier on the accident date.

Explain in detail any preflight inspection that was performed by the pilot or observed by you? OK, the pilot did a “walk around”, checked the wings, lights, tail (aft empennage), and moved the flight control surfaces. Mr. Sumner got into the airplane and he (Mr. Walker) got into the passenger seat. There were no headsets or canopy. The engine was started and Mr. Sumner told him that he had previously flown the airplane that day and performed an engine run-up.

Explain what restraint you were wearing at the start of takeoff and at the time of the accident? He wasn’t wearing anything. He didn’t know that the airplane had lapbelts.

Explain in detail what happened from engine start to taxiing to the approach end of the runway? Once the engine was started he asked the pilot about headsets and he was informed that there were in the hangar. Mr. Sumner taxied to the runway.

Did you notice any engine issues while taxiing?

He indicated that each engine has unique operating characteristics and although he was a novice to that airplane he did not detect any engine issues while taxiing. He added that it was not spitting or sputtering.

¹ According to fueling records, on September 11, 2023, about 1618, Mr. Sumner purchased 10.89 gallons of 100 low lead fuel (100LL) at Fitzgerald Municipal Airport (FZG), Fitzgerald, Georgia.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Explain in detail what happened when in the approach end of the runway before departing?

He questioned the pilot about the need for an engine run-up but he said there was no need, because he had done one earlier that day. He began to takeoff down the runway.

Explain how long the airplane was in the run-up area, any discussion in that area and what rpm the engine was operating at while there?

Mr. Sumner never stopped. He did a slow roll onto the runway. Mr. Sumner mentioned to him that he would show him how to do a run-up later. The pilot taxied onto the runway and added power.

Explain whether carburetor heat checked when in the run-up area and the results of that check?

It was not done.

Explain in detail the accident flight to include direction of flight, maximum altitude attained and what occurred?

During the takeoff roll the pilot said the airplane rotates at 85. The pilot turned to the left, and climbed to no more than 2,000 ft. Mr. Sumner mentioned to keep an eye out for water towers. He estimated that the flight was airborne for about 3 to 5 minutes. The only thing about the accident sequence that he recalled was the “airplane fell a little bit.” Mr. Sumner said there was a wind gust, then Mr. Sumner pulled aft on the control yoke. He recalled being close to the tops of nearby trees, and thinking they were too close to them. Mr. Sumner never said anything to him. The next thing he recalled was waking up on the ground, and he was unable to move his legs. It happened so fast.

Did you perceive a change in engine sound from takeoff to the accident?

No he did not detect any change in engine sound. There was no top, or canopy, and he was not wearing a headset.

Who was flying the airplane during takeoff?

Mr. Sumner was flying the airplane the whole time.

At any point of the flight did you take the flight controls?

No I did not.

Provide details about the extent of your injuries?

He sustained a broken coccyx bone, fractured both femurs, both tibias and fibulas, broke both ankles, his wrist was “messed up” and his back is sore. He was told he did not break his back. He sustained a “busted” chin, and both knees were gashed. He added that he currently does not have any feeling in his knees or legs.

Please clarify the engine sound from takeoff to the accident?

He couldn’t hear the engine because the “top” was off and he was not wearing headsets. Being a novice to that airplane, it sounded “descent/fine” to him. There was no spitting or sputtering.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Do you have any pictures or videos of the accident airplane on his phone, or does he have any text messages about the accident airplane with Mr. Sumner?

He does have pictures of the airplane when he first looked at it. They were taken 1 week prior to 9/1/2023, or on a Sunday. Mr. Sumner told him that the airplane was taken apart for an annual inspection and would have to be, “put together soon.” He indicated that Mr. Sumner did not text, but he did have 3 to 5 phone calls with him. When he first observed the airplane, its inspection panels were on the ground.

If you had to guess what was the timeframe between engine start and takeoff power being applied? 2 to 3 minutes.

What is your phone color and password?

His iPhone would have “saveastep used cars” on the home page. While he was in the ambulance, he was given a phone but the phone he was given was not his. His passcode is [REDACTED] Someone told him his phone was cracked.

Was the pilot wearing the restraint?

I have no clue. He (Mr. Walker) got a call while airborne from someone who was delivering a vehicle to his business. At that time the flight was half way between takeoff and the crash.

Were you video taping the flight?

No.

Do you have any questions for NTSB?

At this point the attorney asked if there would be an autopsy done on the pilot. He was informed there would be as that was standard procedure. He also asked if we have found any differing information from what we had found to what his client had said. He was informed that the interview gave NTSB missing information such as who was seated where, the use (or non-use) by his client of the installed lapbelt, and some details about what happened in-flight, so the conversation was extremely important. The attorney asked that he be informed about the annual inspection of the airplane. I advised during the call that the maintenance records reflected that the last annual inspection was 2006.

At this stage of the conversation the attorney indicated that with respect to his client’s phone, he was not comfortable with NTSB being in possession of it. He was informed that NTSB was the lead agency for the investigation and I had authority to investigate the phone for any content associated with the accident airplane².

² Since the passenger had photographs of the accident airplane on his phone, the photographs would be important for the investigation. The attorney was advised that the NTSB has no interest in any items on the phone that are not related to the accident airplane.

The phone call ended at 1527 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to the attorney for review on October 12, 2023. He replied on October 18, 2023, at 1152 EDT with, "Good morning Tim Griffin has reviewed this statement and no changes are needed." The FINAL digest was e-mailed to the attorney on October 19, 2023.

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: April 8, 2024
Subject: ERA23FA370, Record of Conversation/Interview
Contact: Bonnie J. Sumner

Ms. Bonnie J. Sumner was contacted by phone on April 8, 2024, at 1228 EDT. She was called at [REDACTED] She provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

She was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

She indicated that it was her biological father who was killed in the airplane accident. Her father's wife (Connie Sumner) was her aunt. She indicated in a previous e-mail that Connie Sumner had passed away on January 10, 2024, following an illness.

She indicated that with respect to the accident airplane, that Mr. Charles A. Clark had told her father's wife (Connie Sumner) that Bonnie's son William Morgan David Payne needed to keep his "mouth shut:" about the accident airplane. Prior to the accident flight the last time it had been flown was in 2022. Before September 2022, the airplane was down from September 2022 to September 2023 for an annual inspection.

Leading up to the accident flight, the passenger (Griffin Walker) called her father every day for 3 weeks inquiring about the airplane¹.

On September 12, 2023, her dad and son went to the airport where her son Morgan divided 5.0 gallons equally and added into the two fuel tanks. Her dad then taxied the airplane.

¹ This information came from Connie Sumner and William Morgan David Payne.

She was then advised that the NTSB had a fuel receipt showing 10.89 gallons of fuel were purchased by her father. A detective with the Fitzgerald police department advised her when picking up her father's personal effects about the fuel purchase.

She was then asked the following questions –

On the day of the accident was fuel put into the airplane and if so by whom?

She assumed it was her father based on information from William Morgan David Payne. She knows they obtained fuel at the airport from the front pump because the back pump which has 2 nozzles (called #2) had a sediment issue because of her son's past knowledge of the airport operations.

Do you have enough information to do a 7-day history of your father?

Yes. Her dad went to bed every day at 2200. His last seizure was "not too long before" the accident. She added that he was "present" when the seizures occurred. She reported that the seizures were uncontrolled muscle spasms and occurred "always" at dusk. Her father was sent to a clinic for medical evaluation in Valdosta, Georgia, and there they found a leak which changed blood pressure medication and added Keppra for seizures. He also had medication for skin cancer.

At this stage of the conversation, she was advised that the passenger advised that he was not wearing a restraint but the passenger did not know if her father was wearing a restraint. She was also advised that I inspected the restraint and found no damage to the webbing of the left seat lapbelt.

Do you know if or why your father would not wear a lapbelt?

Her dad was "pretty much" not wearing a seatbelt due to previous open-heart surgery. After having open heart surgery her father complained of the titanium wire used to hold the breastbone together and he obtained a prescription from Doctor Mann in 2014 (Figure 1) that allowed him not to wear a restraint as the shoulder harness portion irritated the wire. Since her father's open-heart surgery in 2011, he had stints installed. She relayed a story about her father flying a gyrocopter and feeling not well in-flight. He landed the gyrocopter uneventfully and then went to his vehicle with the air conditioning on maximum where people discovered him. In 2020 her father had the medication for his diabetes changed as some medication was not allowed for people with a commercial driver license (CDL) as he drove a semi tractor trailer.

DMC Internal Medicine, LLC
 Thomas R. Mann, MD, FACP
 Office: [Redacted] Fax: [Redacted]
 DE: [Redacted] LI: [Redacted]
 Name William Sumner Date 10/23/14
 Address DOB [Redacted]
 R Please excuse from wearing
 seat belt due to prior
 chest surgery.
☐ Label
 Refill - 0 - 1 - 2 - 3 [Redacted]
 Signature [Redacted] SNP.C
 WPI [Redacted] Walker Printing [Redacted]

Figure 1: Prescription Information for No Seat Belt Usage.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Who did the last annual inspection?

The way she understands it the last completed annual inspection was in 2021, performed by Charles A “Pete” Clark. She can’t say whether he ever performed maintenance on the accident airplane, but he did maintain her father’s twin engine aircraft. She indicated that Pete Clark had cancer and she did not know the exact arrangements between her father and Mr. Clark. She did state that in the past there was an arrangement between her father and Mr. Clark because they shared a hangar. Instead of paying rent for the hangar, Mr. Clark agreed to sign off the annual inspection.

Does your father have a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) airframe or powerplant certificate(s)?

No, not to best of her knowledge.

What proof is there about who did any inspection work to the accident airplane?

Her dad and her son worked on the airplane and her son only did what Mr. Sumner told him to do. She said that the accident flight was performed after the annual inspection was completed and Mr. Walker was to buy the airplane after the flight was completed. Based on 2nd hand information, Mr. Walker had cash on him but after the accident, bystanders who went to the accident site stole about \$2,000.00 from him, which was the exact purchase price of the airplane that she understood.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Was Mr. Clark present when the work was being done by your father or son?

She initially reported “not that she was aware of”, she did not believe Mr. Clark was present. Subsequently during a conversation with her on April 24, 2024, that ended at 1547 EDT, she indicated that her son stated that Mr. Clark was present for 2 days, September 11th and September 12th, 2023, but her son indicated that Mr. Clark did not “touch the aircraft” during those days. According to her son, Mr. Clark checked the maintenance that her father was doing and supervised her father during those 2 days.

Are there any pictures of the work being done by your father or son?

She does not believe so. There would have been no pictures on her son’s phone. She did indicate that the accident airplane was flown in 2019, 2020, and 2021, and there are videos on Facebook of those flights. She believed that Mr. Walker would have likely first seen the airplane after the inspection on September 13, 2023, and he likely did not see the airplane while it was being inspected by her father.

What time frame was the work being done and what work specifically was done?

She will get with her son, who is on the “spectrum.” She did state that the airplane was “re-assembled” in a couple of days by her dad and son. She indicated that on September 14th she went to get the maintenance records and make copies of them, but Jeremy Johnson removed them and took them to the airport. She indicated that Jeremy works in Fitzgerald, Georgia at either the Ford or Dodge car dealerships as a Master mechanic.

With respect to the timeline of the work being done she indicated she could get the GPS data from her son’s phone, and maybe from the GPS of her father’s phone, whose phone number was [REDACTED]

She suggested I send her a list of questions to go over with her son. She also indicated that her father’s most recent seizure was in August or September 2023.

Do you have any questions for NSTB?

No.

The call ended at 1320 EDT.

During the phone call on April 9, 2024, between 1102 and 1134 EDT, in which Ms. Sumner contacted NTSB, about 1130 EDT, Ms. Sumner indicated that Mr. Walker was likely not aware of her father’s medical condition(s), and she doubted her father was transparent with Mr. Walker about the condition of the airplane.

The digest with list of questions (below) was e-mailed to her for review on April 8, 2024. She communicated with NTSB on April 9, 2024, between 1102 and 1134 EDT with changes that were incorporated into the narrative. She will get with her son for more details.

Questions to Bonnie Sumner April 8, 2024, and her verbatim responses received by e-mail on April 24, 2024:

1. What were the start and stop dates of the re-assembly/inspection?

I only participated 2 days. The 11th and 12th of September 2023. Some work had already been completed previously.

2. How much fuel was in each fuel tank at the start of the re-assembly and inspection?

None. Fuel was added after the reassembly was complete. On the 12th when assembly was done. I was instructed to put 2.5 gallons in each wing in order to taxi the plane.

3. What type of inspection was performed?

Annual

4. Who did the actual inspection?

Papa Jack (William Sumner) did all of the reassembly, Pete (Charles Clark) was there watching. Pete never touched the plane. He and Papa Jack were talking about the plane as the work was being done. Pete did leave briefly a couple of times but looked over anything Papa Jack had completed while he was gone.

5. What reference material was used for the inspection?

I don't know. Pete would know. I know there was a plate inside the plane that said experimental "89 Octane experimental"

6. Where was the airplane when the inspection/reassembly was performed?

In the hangar Papa Jack and Pete shared at the Fitzgerald Airport

7. Was there ever a FAA certificated airframe and powerplant mechanic with inspection authorization present during the inspection or re-assembly? If so, whom (by name and phone number)

Yes, Pete. (Charles Clark) I don't have his phone number.

8. When you say re-assembly, please describe in detail what exactly was done and who did the work?

Papa Jack did all the work, I handed him parts/tools, Pete watched and talked. Reattached Cowling pieces, put a new fitting on the brake fluid reservoir, then checked all the fluids. checked and possibly changed the battery. I'm not 100% sure on that. Checked all the lights. They had done work before I got there. I'm not sure what they did.

9. Were there any pictures or video taken by your son or father for the inspection or re-assembly? If so, provide)

Not that I am aware of.

10. Were there any text messages or e-mail messages from your son or father about the inspection or re-assembly? If so, provide.

No, Papa Jack always called. He didn't text a whole lot. I haven't seen him email anyone since the golf cart shop (10 years ago)

11. Was there anything found wrong during the inspection or re-assembly? If so, explain in detail.

Just the fitting on the brake fluid reservoir that he replaced. Nothing else was mentioned.

12. Was there anything that was not airworthy about the airframe or engine during the inspection of after re-assembly? If so, explain in detail.

After the reassembly was complete, I was instructed to put 2.5 gallons of fuel into each wing. Then Papa Jack took the airplane from the hangar to taxi it on the runway. Papa Jack forgot to turn off the priming pump and it stalled. We had a little laugh about it and he started the plane again and proceeded to taxi without incident. Neither of them had anything negative to report about the plane as far as I could tell.

The digest was e-mailed to her for final review on April 24, 2024. She replied on May 1, 2024, at 1926 EDT with, "Tim, I am sorry. I meant to email you sooner. Everything appears correct to the best of my knowledge." The FINAL digest was e-mailed to her on May 2, 2024.