



Lynn Spencer
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Date: August 1, 2023

Subject: ERA23LA307 Interview with Pilot

Contact: Mr. Jordan Reid

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Jordan Reid. Mr. Reid was interviewed by phone on August 1, 2023, at 1550 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED] and provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the interview, he 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. He agreed to the interview. He was advised that for transparency I would be typing the notes and would send to him for review and comment.

Mr. Reid stated that he is recovering well after his surgery, which was about a week ago. He fractured his L1 (back) and it needed to be surgically repaired. The surgery was a success. He stated that Adrian also had surgery as he had fractured his back in two places and fractured some ribs. In addition to the impact, Adrian was injured by the LIDAR computer, which weighs about 140 lbs, which came out from under its retaining strap and hit him from the left rear seat impacting him on his left side.

I asked Mr. Reid to walk me through what happened the day of the accident. He replied that the weather was not looking good. They were in Morgantown, West Virginia waiting for the weather to improve. He was helping the field mechanic because they couldn't fly, and he figured that he would lend them a hand. He had told Adrian that he would text him when the weather was clear. He said that time passed, and the weather started looking better where they were going to fly. They were going to head down toward Elkins, where it was VFR. Around 9-9:30 EDT he told Adrian that the weather was clearing up and that Adrian should get ready to go. He requested fuel

and when Adrian arrived, they preflighted. He checked the weather several times. They took off around 0940 EDT and had about a 16-mile ferry. They started on one power transmission line, and they passed the "dead end" and because the weather ahead did not look good, they turned around and started another line. It was mountainous in that area, about 600-800 ft elevation increases. They started on the power transmission line, and everything was feeling normal. (On a sidenote, he added that his company told him that they had looked at the tracks for that day, and that he was at the right altitude.)

He stated that when they got to the ridge top, he asked Adrian how the pictures were looking. They had topped the hilltop and they were descending for about 10 seconds toward the power line when the tailwind hit, and he felt a "push." He looked at his airspeed and noted that it had dropped due to a tailwind. He made a minuet movement by lowering the collective and pushing forward for airspeed and noticed that the airspeed had bled off again and they had lost altitude. He started to think that he was in settling with power and again made a minuet movement of lowering the collective and pushing the cyclic forward for airspeed; however, the airspeed kept bleeding off and losing altitude. He realized that he had to make a move, but they were over the power lines. He saw the trees to the left and he had been taught to cyclic flare into trees backwards, but he did not have the altitude or airspeed from where he was at. He calmly told Adrian, "We're going down bud. Brace yourself." and he just hugged the treeline to the left to avoid hitting the power lines. He felt the main rotor hit something towards the rear left side and suspected it to be a tree and then they dropped below the trees, and he pulled up on the collective to cushion the landing best as possible. They hit front skids first and leveled out on the skids for a brief second and then were slung hard to the right. He shut the helicopter down and turned the fuel valve, others switches including battery off. He pulled several breakers above him but couldn't turn to see if he pulled them all. He called out to Adrian and once he responded they started to assess their injuries.

His Apple watch connected him with 9-1-1 and he reported the accident; they could not pick up the ELT and he attempted to describe where they were. A man on a 4-wheeler, "Hope," found them. The man was able to get the LIDAR computer off Adrian. Hope was able to give exact addresses to where they were located and first responders were on the scene soon after. They airlifted Adrian first and then Mr. Reid.

I asked him if there was anything else that he wishes to add, and he responded that they were not expecting that weather at that hour, and that he never flew if the gusts were greater than 15 kts due to the helicopter having to be controlled more input wise to keep it steady and it could ruin the integrity of the LIDAR pictures (blurry) which would result in the power line having to have a reflight. When wind gusts would reach that speed he would always return to the airport to land for the remainder of the day.

He was told that, at the time of the accident, the wind was gusting 15-20 kts. The wind had not been forecast to begin until 2.5 hours later. He believes that he was in settling with power. He stated that there were no anomalies or malfunctions before they felt the tailwind. He said one of the personnel who uses them for contract work heard of his account and said, "Sounds like they got into the coffin corner and that the pilot was able to get them on the ground alive."

Mr. Reid stated that the company that employs him has already implemented safety procedures that include 10kt wind gust max and weather checks every hour.

The call ended at 1630 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on August 3, 2023. He replied on August 7, 2023, at 1245 EDT with edits incorporated into the narrative. The final digest was e-mailed to him on August 7, 2023.

NOTE: A follow-up clarification via e-mail with Mr. Reid, received on August 8, 2023, stated the following: "Minuet is defined as: a slow, stately dance in triple meter. But my usage of it was to explain that I made calm slow/light control inputs. I wanted it to be known I wasn't harsh or jerking the controls."

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Date: August 9, 2023

Subject: ERA23LA307 Follow-up interview with pilot

Contact: Mr. Jordan Reid

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Jordan Reid. Mr. Reid was re-interviewed by phone on August 9, 2023, at 1430 EDT. The questions were related to the helicopter's performance on the day of the accident. Mr. Reid was called at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

General performance questions:

Q: How much fuel did you take on?

A: 88 gal

Q: What was your estimate of the weight of the helicopter when you departed?

A: About 5 pounds under max gross weight

Q: What was the approved altitude and airspeed for your mission?

A: 400-500 agl; 45 kts

Q: Did the main rotor ever droop out of the green arc of the dual tach?

A: Not that he saw.

Q: Did the engine over torque or over temp when you increased collective as you neared the trees?

A: Not that he saw, but he had his eyes outside the entire time.

When you topped the ridge and were descending for about 10 seconds:

Q: Were you following the terrain during the descent?

A: Yes

Q: About how high above the terrain (agl) were you at this time?

A: 400 KIAS

Q: What airspeed at this time?

A: Around 45 KIAS, usually not less than 40 KIAS

When you mentioned that you looked at your airspeed and noted that it had dropped due to a tailwind:

Q: Did you lower the nose to help gain airspeed?

A: Yes, gently

Q: When you started to think that you were settling with power and lowered the collective, and saw that the airspeed kept bleeding off, did you lower the nose to help increase airspeed and attempt to fly out of the settling with power?

A: Yes, very slightly pushed the collective forward to gain airspeed because he was at 38 KIAS. He had about 85% power applied; he did not note the descent rate.

Q: Have you been trained in the Vuichard recovery technique?

A: Yes, but he only had about 10 ft from the power line.

When you were hugging the treeline and avoiding the power lines:

Q: Did you at any time, lower the cyclic to gain airspeed or attempt to turn into the wind?

A: He pushed it forward. He could not turn into the wind. There was no room.

Q: Did you ever lose effective translational lift? That is, did you feel the ETL shudder as the helicopter was slowing?

A: Yes, he lost ETL, but he did not feel the ETL shudder or vibrate

Q: About how slow did the helicopter get?

A: The last time he looked, they were at 22 KIAS

Q: Did the helicopter lose tail rotor effectiveness?

A: He doesn't recall

Q: Did the helicopter spin to the right?

A: Not really (Note that the computer operator reported that the helicopter spun to the right)