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Date: 1/17/2025

Subject: ERA24LA292, Interview with Flight Instructor Dave Hall

On 1/17/2025, this investigator spoke by phone with Maisie Bitler's flight instructor, Dave Hall.

The following is a summary of the conversation.

I introduced myself as the NTSB investigator-in-charge for the accident on July 4, 2024, involving Maisie Bitler. Mr. Hall declined representation. I informed him that I would take notes and provide him with a draft of the conversation for his approval.

Summarize your experience as a pilot and flight instructor?

Started flying @ 1970. US Air Force pilot training. 30-year career, flew B-52's and B-1's. About 5,000 hours when retired from Air Force. **Instructor/Evaluator for both B-52s and B-1's.** One of first 1st Lt aircraft commanders in B-52s **and initial cadre instructor/evaluator in B-1s.** Lots of instructing/evaluating. Ellsworth AFB, SD. **Wing Commander.** Retired in 2000. Obtained private single engine land rating a couple of

weeks before retirement from AF. Flew off and on for about 10 years, ran chambers of commerce. May 2011, obtained CFII. Multiengine **Instructor** through military competency rule. Then went back and obtained single engine flight instructor. May/June 2011, started active flight instructing. Over 7,000 hrs instruction time. **Since 2011 has flown with over 400 different pilots including students, certificated pilots, recurrency training, BFRs, IPCs, 70 Students have earned ratings (private ASEL and MEL, instrument, commercial, and instructor) with 95% first time pass rate.**

Are you the only flight instructor for the Lycoming Flying Club?

No. Mike Keller is the other instructor, they have worked together for several years. He has a couple of students at Lycoming Flying Club. **There is also at least one instructor who is a member of the Club as well.**

We were able to obtain Maisie's pilot logbook. It revealed the following:

Total logged flight time prior to the accident flight was 26.9 hrs? Sounds right.

First dual instructional flight was 12/21/2023. Correct. About 4.5 hours of ground instruction before that.

All flight time logged was in N739GV. Correct. All of her flight instruction was with Mr. Hall. Correct.

The accident flight was the second solo flight for the pilot. The first solo was accomplished on June 16, 2024 (0.5 hrs solo/PIC). Correct. 0.5 hours dual then she flew 0.5 hours solo. Prior to her initial solo, she logged 21.7 hrs dual instruction. She flew 4 dual instructional flights after the initial solo, the last on 6/28/2024. All correct.

Does this all sound correct? Yes.

Can you describe Maisie's skills as a student and as a pilot? Did she accept criticism well? Show tendency to be overconfident?

Maisie was an intense young lady. She was a good student at school, #4 in her high school class. When they first started flying, she had several cancellations. Some weather, some for school. Mr. Hall stressed that school always came first. The cancellations stopped around April, 2024 timeframe. Initially, she was quick to admit that she didn't know the answer to something. When she started back in June (2024) it was like someone had turned a switch on. She was attentive, knowledgeable, and turned into an "outstanding" student. There were 9 flights between 10 June and 28 June plus a 2 hour ground lesson on navigation. Her progress was exceptional. She

had been accepted to an aviation school in South Carolina. There may have been some anxiety to finish her private pilot before her aviation school started, but he felt sure that she would have completed her private by then.

Any areas of concern during training? Never any problems with control of the airplane. She performed several go-arounds with no issues noted. By June she was a "model" student. She was very competent and she was having fun with her training. Not over/under confident. When they flew a lesson to Lock Haven, he did not have to tell her a thing, she was prepared for that. She knew the frequencies there, what the runways were, how to get in and out of there.

During the last few days before the accident, Mr. Hall was teaching at Lycoming College and was unavailable for instruction. She knew he was not available on the day of the accident.

She decided to fly the accident flight on her own, she did not tell Mr. Hall that she was going to fly or make any attempt to call. It really bothered Mr. Hall that she did that, he had always emphasized that her training was a partnership and there was an understanding that she would not do anything that he did not know about.

Coordination with the instructor was part of their dispatch procedures for every flight and a part of the written syllabus. Mr. Hall was informed that the airplane was

overdue; that's how he learned of the accident. He did not see how she could interpret a solo endorsement as permission to fly without his knowledge. They discussed the subject many times previously.

Summarize her training in stalls and traffic pattern work.

No issues. Initially wanted to recover on the buffet instead of waiting for the break. Progressed well after that. No problems with pattern work and they had flown patterns at Lock Haven previously.

Any issues with receiving a solo endorsement?

She had no problems that held her back from soloing when she did.

Do you know if Maisie was familiar with the Lycoming Flying Club rule regarding permission to fly solo? He was not familiar with the club rules; not something they would have gone over in training. Glad they had a rule for that.

Has anyone from the FAA contacted you?

Yes. Interviewed by inspectors twice. I also was required to take a 709 ride reexamining my skills in Fundamental of Instruction, Logbook Entries, Slow Flight, Minimum Controllable Airspeed, Power On and Off Stalls, and Go Arounds. I passed.

Interview concluded.

Mr. Hall was provided a copy of the interview notes for his comments. He added the notes in red, above.

Also, Mr. Hall provided the following commentary in his email response (in blue, verbatim):

Not trying to put words into your mouth but the issue of her not telling me she wanted to fly that day has baffled me since the 4th of July. If she had, among other things, we would have discussed the FAA's PAVE preflight checklist .

P (Pilot) - After the fact I was told by her mother that Maise expressed some nervousness about the flight. I believe our relationship was strong enough she would have mentioned that too me and she and I would have talked about why she was nervous and what we could do to minimize the nervousness. Anything from an

outright cancelation of the flight to having the other instructor go with her and if both felt comfortable then a supervised solo, or maybe stay at Williamsport. Red flag#1.

A (aircraft) - As far as I know the aircraft was working properly.

V (environment) - I do not know what the temperature was at that day/time other than it was beastly hot - over 90 degrees - which meant a high density altitude and therefore degraded aircraft performance. The runway at Lock Haven is around 3800 foot with trees on a dike on the departure end of Runway 9. The runway at Williamsport is 6800 feet long. Red flag #2.

E (external) There was some anxiety on Maisie's part about being able to finish her training and completing her private pilot ticket. We could easily have our other instructor fly with her. Red flag #3.

Unfortunately, she choose to fly without discussing the mission with me, so we never had the opportunity.

Let me know if you have any additional questions, and my thanks for the way you are conducting the process.