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February 9, 2025

Josh Young
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Mr. Young,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to write about my experiences teaching and flying with Jennifer. I hope this information is helpful. Please ask if you identify any other way I can assist with your investigation.

I met Jennifer Serrano-Gual late in the day of February 22nd, 2024. Her then primary instructor, Grant Williams, had reached out to me asking if I would fly with her as she sought to maintain her proficiency while awaiting her upcoming private pilot practical exam. I agreed and, after meeting her, observed her preflight the aircraft and rode along with her for just over an hour in the early evening. Her preflight inspection was methodical and thorough. As we chatted during the inspection, she explained that she was an A&P mechanic working for Delta Airlines in an engine shop. Every time I flew with her, I observed the same level of attention to detail when it came to preflight inspection. That evening flight was spent mostly in the traffic pattern working on the performance takeoffs and landings required for the private checkride. I do recall that her short-field landing technique was not one that I am a fan of, but is consistent with how many people fly and teach the maneuver. My preferred technique involves stabilizing on short final with a stable view of the desired aim point. At an appropriate height for the conditions, I teach students to reduce power to idle while keeping the flight path stable with pitch, bleeding off excess speed along the way, so that we achieve minimum float and reduce our kinetic energy to minimum right at the point of touchdown. Jennifer's technique that evening involved reducing power to idle, allowing the nose of the airplane to decrease in pitch while nearly maintaining

approach airspeed, then allowing the aircraft to decelerate while in ground effect and in a relatively flat pitch attitude. We discussed the benefits of each method between the landings and the next takeoff, and again after landing, and that was that. She was not my student so I was not interested in forcing change on her, especially so close to her checkride date.

After that flight in February and she earned her private pilot license, I was advised by Grant that Jennifer was interested in flying with me during her instrument training. Grant was nearing his time of departure from the flight school and was looking to help his students transition to their future instructors. I was honored to learn of the request and eager to get started.

Jennifer was not as eager to begin. She had something near 100 hours accumulated while working toward certification and wanted to slow the pace of her training somewhat. My understanding is that she had been flying twice a day for some portions of her private training, had some iffy instructors, and only after slowing down with Grant was she able to pull her skills together in a way that allowed her to succeed. This was the idea behind her decision to slow the pace of her training. Our first ground lesson in the instrument curriculum would be about a month after our first encounter - March 23rd. Our next encounter was April 12th in the RedBird simulator as we worked on the basic attitude instrument flying skills we'd discussed in March.

There were periods when she was very regularly scheduled to train but more often, there were noticeable gaps. I know that she experienced some pressure at work. My understanding was that she was at least somewhat involved in the push to resolve the then ongoing engine fan blade issues occurring in Pratt & Whitney engines. Additionally, without much detail, she had expressed some difficulty in personal relationships and had asked me several questions regarding joining the military. I know that she had indeed joined the Air Force Reserve (or possibly Air Guard), at least in part because of the expense of her flight training. These are the things that I know affected her ability to train regularly.

The general course of the instrument curriculum that we followed started with basic ground and simulator sessions on basic attitude instrument flying, partial panel operations, holding, and DME arcs. There were just a few flights before we began the next stage which consisted largely of short-length cross country flights (> 50 NM) with multiple approaches each. We sought out destinations with approaches that were unique or at least different from what was available locally. We flew hurricane relief supplies to Knoxville, Tennessee for one trip.

I remember two key struggles during her training that I would like to share.

First, the curriculum called for a period of solo cross country time building after the dual cross countries so that students could round out the required 50 hours of pilot-in-command cross country time required to apply for the instrument rating. She explained some frustration she had felt once she was done with that phase that she wanted to fly a certain approach into (I believe) Albany, Georgia, but that ATC would not let her start at the initial approach fix that she had requested. As we fleshed out the situation, it turns out that she had filed an IFR flight plan and flown on a clearance while not yet rated. I remember seeing her on the ramp that evening as she prepared to depart solo, discussing her destination, and that it was a perfectly VMC night to go fly. This was an example of when our school's odd ground school system did not support the students. I believe that because there was not any specific chronology to the order of lessons, there was a lot of misplaced trust that students would learn required knowledge either there or on their own. Turns out she had not been taught that 61.3 forbids this and I had previously assumed she understood the limitation.

The second struggle was with speed control during landing. I believe this is closely related to the short-field landing method described earlier. While Jennifer became adept at flying the glideslope/glidepath on-speed during instrument approaches, once the approach terminated in a landing, she struggled with slowing the airplane to an appropriate landing speed. I have always taught an 85-knot approach speed with flaps at 10° for the Cessna 172. This allows a relatively easy missed approach and a quick reconfiguration to reduce power and introduce up to full flaps for landing at a more normal VFR approach airspeed of <65 knots on short final. More than once I verbally corrected her attempt to force the airplane to land with too much speed at the touchdown point, describing how excess speed and flat pitch attitudes at this stage of the procedure were undesirable. One of our last flights together, I made her conduct a VFR go-around including flight in the traffic pattern to reacquaint her with what more normal airspeeds on short final looked and felt like and how to achieve them.

Jennifer did not always get things right on the first try but she usually got them right after some practice. She struggled with flying the VOR approaches into Eufala, Alabama but got the VOR approach we flew into Gadsden, Alabama right. There were a few times early on that holding procedures were challenging for her. During an evening flight to Montgomery, Alabama, we practiced holding and she did fine. Likewise during her 250-mile cross country flight; we received unplanned holding

instructions while approaching Gadsden and she handled that quite well. Jennifer routinely flew with the precision and attention to detail that characterized the way she conducted preflight inspections. She made what I would consider to be appropriate mistakes while she was learning and practicing new skills but would often impress me in the next flight or two with how she had grown through those moments into a more skillful pilot.

Sincerely,


Scott M. Shepro

To Whom It May Concern,

I provided the primary flight training for Jennifer Serrano-Gual to achieve her Private Pilot's certificate. Here is a bullet point list of training areas we covered during her training:

- Preflight Preparation - Knowledge of regulations, weather information, and flight planning.
- Preflight Procedures - Aircraft systems, preflight inspection, and cockpit management.
- Airport Operations – Airport markings, lighting, and airspace.
- Takeoffs, Landings, and Go-Arounds - Proficiency in normal and crosswind takeoffs and landings, short-field and soft-field takeoffs and landings, and go-arounds.
- Performance Maneuvers – Steep turns, slow flight, and stalls.
- Ground Reference Maneuvers - Turns around a point, S-turns, and rectangular courses.
- Navigation - Use of pilotage, dead reckoning, and navigation systems.
- Flight by Reference to Instruments - Basic instrument maneuvers and recovery from unusual attitudes.
- Emergency Operations - Handling of simulated system malfunctions and emergency procedures.
- Night Operations - Knowledge and skills specific to night flying.
- Postflight Procedures - Engine shutdown, securing the aircraft, and postflight debriefing.

I provided Jennifer's flight training from her early stages of training through successful completion of her private pilot check ride. Jennifer was a very dedicated student who strove to be the subject matter expert on whatever she was doing. She seemed very thorough in everything she did. She would show up to a flight or ground lesson having researched all training areas ahead of time. Early in her training, she had a proclivity toward fixation on numbers displayed on the instruments during flight. As a result, she struggled to feel what the aircraft was doing and interpret the corresponding action. This demonstrated itself particular during slow flight, stalls, steep turns, and short/soft field takeoff and landings. Toward the completion of her training, Jennifer demonstrated a good level of proficiency in all those areas.

Please advise if any further information is needed.

Respectfully.

Grant Williams