

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

Date: April 23, 2025

Subject: ERA25LA183, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: Matthew Hefner

Mr. Matthew Hefner was contacted by phone on April 22, 2025, at 1407 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 contacted to clarify details about whether he was recording the approach and landing and also what he had witnessed regarding the accident involving N497AR, that occurred on April 18, 2025, in Taylorsville, North Carolina, which involved the pilot and his son.

He indicated that he was not taking video, rather he took a single still image during the approach.

He was asked the following questions:

Did you know the pilot?
I did.

How long have you known him?
About 5 to 6 years. He (Mr. Hefner) owns an airplane but is not a pilot. Though he is involved in aviation and works on museum aircraft.

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, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Where did the accident flight depart from?
NC27, Lenoir, North Carolina.

Was the pilot aware of the wind before takeoff from NC27?
There was no wind when the airplane was approaching but as the approach started the wind started. He was watching the approach and when the flight was about 1/2 mile from landing the wind picked up and was, “spinning all directions.” The pilot flew a low pass and never touched down then added power to go-around. The airplane pitched up, when a wind gust hit the tail and “hit us hard.” After the crash he (Matthew) jumped into his truck and went to the accident site.

Where was the wind from?
SSW. The pilot was approaching with a tailwind.

What direction was the airplane flying?
To the east.

On the low pass portion of the flight where was the wind from?
It was a tailwind.

What was the velocity?
The gusts were “strong gusts” and then the wind was calm.

During the go-around what occurred?
A wind gust hit hard, hit the tail of the airplane, and pushed the tail out from under him.

Did you hear a malfunction of the engine during the approach or go-around?
No, no. The engine was operating smooth. During the approach the pilot was “feathering” or adding and removing power. During the go-around the pilot increased power and the engine then was running smooth.

Did the engine sound smooth when engine power was increased to go-around?
It did increase in sound during power-up for the go-around. The engine never powered down. The airplane then went straight down.

Do you think the airplane stalled?
No I don’t.

What kind of engine was installed?
Continental.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Was there a windsock at the landing site?

Yes

Where was the windsock located?

At the west end.

Did you attempt to call or text the pilot or son in-flight during the approach to tell them of the wind?

No, I didn't. The wind came up quick.

The call ended at 1423 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on May 12, 2025. He replied on May 12, 2025 at 1227 EDT with 1 comment. "It looks good to me the only thing is I think it's a continental engine but not positive just a flat four cylinder."