



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: Aug 28, 2015

Person Contacted: Brian Neff - [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: WPR15FA250

Narrative:

During a conversation at the facilities of the Soaring Academy Mr. Neff stated the following:

- He fly's both gliders and tow planes at the Soaring Academy.
- He observed the first glider launch, and observed that the tow plane make a left base approach to land on Runway 7 as it came to pick him up, and that this was in direct contravention with the club SOP, which require powered aircraft to utilize the right downwind approach for Runway 7.
- Mr. Neff was the second glider to depart that day. They flew to the "second ridge" south of the airfield. The tow was uneventful, and he did not see him after release.
- He has observed Mr. Morse perform unusually low landing approaches on multiple occasions in the past.
- He does not recall if the Pawnee has a stall warning horn, but stated that they are equipped with noise-cancelling headsets so it is unlikely that it would be heard anyway.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Western Pacific Region

Date: Aug 27, 2015

Person Contacted: Chris Bennett, [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: WPR15FA250

Narrative:

During a conversation at the facilities of the Soaring Academy Mr. Bennett stated the following:

- He is the General Manager of the Soaring Academy.
- Two months prior Mr. Morse had flown the approach to land at Runway 7 unusually low in N8821L, unaware that the tow line had not retracted. The line subsequently struck and became wrapped around the power lines short of the runway, causing the line to snap and cause a short circuit to the lines, disabling electricity to local residents. The power was restored within a couple of minutes.
- Mr. Morse did not give a specific reason why the line was not retracted, but Mr. Bennett stated that checking the line was part of the landing checklist, and was posted in the cockpit. There are mirrors to observe the line, and typically it will not retract if the airplane is flown too fast. Mr. Bennett reminded Mr. Morse on the day of that incident to always fly his final on runway 7 so to overfly the power lines by a minimum of 200 ft.
- He noted that Mr. Morse is a competent and professional pilot. He discussed the incident with him the week following, and reminded him to always fly with 200 ft or higher terrain clearance over the property line on final in case the line had not retracted. He also made this part of his morning safety briefings with all pilots.
- On the morning of the accident Mr. Bennett gave the usual safety briefing, reiterating the need to maintain a high approach specifically with Mr. Morse. He reiterated to assume the towrope is extended on all landings.
- The plan was to have Mr. Morse fly the tow airplane in the morning, with another pilot takeover in the afternoon. Both were at the safety briefing. Mr. Morse then had to return to his home in San Diego later in the afternoon.

- Mr. Morse spent the night prior sleeping on the fold out bed in the clubhouse. This was not an unusual practice for pilots. He believes this was where Mr. Morse stayed overnight at the field. He sent an email on 8/20 asking if he could “crash on the couch in the trailer Wednesday night” as he had business in Los Angeles the day before.

- During the warm up flight, he observed Mr. Morse overshoot the Runway 25 centerline during the turn from base to final, he specifically recalls this overshoot as it was an unusual occurrence. He did not observe all of the other flights, but the ones he saw were early in the day and they appeared normal.

- Immediately following the accident he asked one of the staging crew to check the weather, and it was 94 degrees F, with 4 knots westerly wind.

- Mr. Bennet provided me (Elliott Simpson) with a review of the Soaring Academy airport operations, pointing out the staging area, runway landing and takeoff procedures for both gliders and tow planes. He stated that on the morning of the accident, gliders were utilizing right traffic for Runway 25, with the tow plane on right traffic for Runway 7. The procedure that day was for the tow plane to land on the dirt runway surface of Runway 7 (to the right of the tarmac runway), and taxi forward to the gliders which were ready to tow at the approach end of the tarmac surface of Runway 25. He stated that it was not unusual to have simultaneous landings in opposing directions, as long as the tail wind for the tow plane was not excessive, and safe clearance was maintained. He stated that tow planes always land on the dirt runways, on the south side of the asphalt runway, regardless of which direction they approach from. Gliders always land on the asphalt runway regardless of which direction they approach from.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: Aug 27, 2015

Person Contacted: Gary Forister: [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: WPR15FA250

Narrative:

During a conversation at the facilities of the Soaring Academy Mr. Forister stated the following:

- He is a part-time CFI at the Soaring Academy.
- The day prior to the accident, Mr. Morse told him he needed to travel from home to Los Angeles to conduct business that day, so rather than drive back from San Diego in the morning he would stay at the Soaring Academy in Llano overnight.
- Mr. Morse slept on the fold out bed/couch in the clubhouse that night. Mr. Forister saw him watching a football game in the clubhouse that afternoon at about 1500, he was reading and seemed relaxed.
- Mr. Forister walked along the runway at sunset that night, and by the time he returned the lights in the clubhouse were out. Nobody, including Mr. Morse, drank alcohol that night.
- The morning of the accident, the following day, Mr. Morse appeared normal, and the group was casual as Mr. Bennet performed the safety briefing. Mr. Bennet specifically briefed the tow pilots to use a high approach for Runway 7 due to the power lines, making a point to specifically remind Mr. Morse.
- Mr. Forister was the third to receive a tow that day, with seven or eight tows planned in total. Mr. Forister's second tow was delayed briefly while the tow plane was refueled; the accident occurred on the tow plane's return from his tow. He described Mr. Morse's performance as, "rock solid". For the accident tow they flew to the south in the vicinity of the "2nd Ridge".
- He did not see the accident flight, but recalled hearing Mike Malis on the radio saying there was a problem with the tow plane. Mr. Forister stated that the radio transmissions heard from the tow plane were normal traffic pattern calls. He did not think anything of the "problem" call, because often similar calls are made when the tow line breaks, or similar minor issues are encountered with the tow plane.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Western Pacific Region

Date: Aug 27, 2015

Person Contacted: Laura Flory, [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: WPR15FA250

Narrative:

During a conversation at Mrs. Flory's residence, she stated the following:

- She lives in a house on Avenue X, just to the south side of the airport property adjacent to the approach end of Runway 7. Typically, when tow planes are landing, the window in her living room is about eye level with the pilots. She owns an airplane at Crystal with her husband, and she flies with him regularly.
- On the day of the accident, she was pulling out of her driveway in her car. The driveway is perpendicular to the runway, and facing north. She looked to her right and could see a glider over the trees coming in to land. Its location seemed appropriate.
- She turned left onto Avenue X, towards the west and directly ahead in the distance she could see a tow plane coming generally towards her in the direction of the approach end of Runway 7 (1). She was instantly concerned because it looked far lower than she is used to seeing. From her perspective, she thought it was already past the power poles on 165th street, and she could not believe it had not hit them.
- She continued driving west as her view opened to the south revealing the San Gabriel Mountain foothills. The airplane then abruptly began to climb "turned straight up" (2), turned right (her left), towards the mountains such she thought it had broken off the approach and was joining the left downwind for Runway 25 (3). The airplane then rapidly descended and appeared to turn right as it approached 165th street (4). She was not sure if it had crossed the street but it was now very low and she couldn't understand why none of the power lines had been struck and why it had not hit the ground. It then began another rapid climb (5), arching back over and striking the ground (6).

See attached photo for annotations.



Photo 1 – View West Along Avenue X



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: Aug 28, 2015

Person Contacted: Miguel Vega Paz, [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: WPR15FA250

Narrative:

During a conversation at the facilities of the Soaring Academy Mr. Vega Paz stated the following:

- He works in ground operations at the Soaring Academy
- He was in the glider staging area just north of the runway, at the approach end of Runway 25, readying a glider for tow.
- He was with Lofty, the other ground staging person, when he heard Mr. Morse in the tow plane report that he was on the downwind leg. A glider was in the traffic pattern, and its pilot, Mr. Weisz, asked the tow pilot if he needed him to land short. He looked up and saw the tow plane was about midfield right downwind for Runway 7, and at the appropriate pattern altitude.
- The glider landed and rolled to the right, and off the runway to the staging area.
- He then heard the tow plane call for right base, but he did not look up.
- He proceeded to move the next glider onto the runway, but when he looked up, expecting the tow plane to be taxing towards them, he saw nothing. He made a radio call but did not hear a reply.
- He proceeded to get into the club truck and search for the tow plane. At no time did he hear a radio call indicating distress.
- During his interactions with Mr. Morse earlier in the morning he appeared normal. He asked if Mr. Morse needed water at one point during the morning, but he said he was fine. Mr. Vega Paz was one of the first to arrive at the accident site, and he saw an empty water bottle by the wreckage.
- For the prior landing, the tow plane appeared unusually low turning from base to final, about 100 to 200 ft lower than normal. He planned to call Mr. Morse to remind him of how low he flew, but he got too busy to do so. He recalled that Chris Bennet had reminded all tow pilots in the morning briefing the

need to keep well above the power lines at the approach to Runway 7, and that Mr. Bennet specifically directed his request to Mr. Morse, as he had a history of flying the approach low.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: Aug 27, 2015

Person Contacted: Adrian Weisz, [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: WPR15FA250

Narrative:

During a conversation at the accident site Mr. Weisz stated the following:

- He is a CFI at the Soaring Academy
- He received an uneventful aero tow from Mr. Morse the flight before the accident. And during that flight he was towed to the "2nd Ridge" area to the south of the airport.
- He was returning to the airfield and entering a 45 degree entry for Runway 25 when he heard Mr. Morse make a radio call that he was inbound at "Bobs Gap".
- He reported inbound and as he joined the right downwind leg he heard Mr. Morse call, "established on downwind".
- While flying on the downwind he heard a radio call from who he believed was Chris Bennett, the manager of the Soaring Academy asking if he was inbound for landing. He replied "yes I am inbound, do you want me to make a short approach?" to which there was no answer to. He asked if he should land short in order to help the staging crew more promptly position the next glider for takeoff.
- His approach continued uneventfully and during the landing rollout he could see the tow plane at the approach end of Runway 7 in a steep 70-80 degrees right bank coming from the north side of the airport and flying south. He could clearly see the underside of the wings. It crossed the runway centerline but he could not judge whether it had reached the runway or not.
- He did not see anything else as the airplane passed out of his view beyond the terrain at the end of the runway, and he attempted to make radio contact with Mr. Morse.
- Prior to the accident, he touchdown just beyond the runway threshold and rolled off the runway before reaching the club house, within 1,000 ft of the threshold.

In an email dated 9/1/2015 Mr. Weisz stated the following:

Mr. Simpson,

While I was flying on the downwind, I recall a radio call from whom I believed was Chris Bennett, the manager of the flightschool asking "if I was inbound for landing?" I replied "yes I am inbound, do you want me to make a short approach?" which there was no answer to.

I've attached a picture for your reference.

The green flight path is mine.

The red was of the towplane.

The numbers are approximations of where we were at the same time.

The green #3 is where I pulled off the runway and attempted to make radio contact with the towplane.

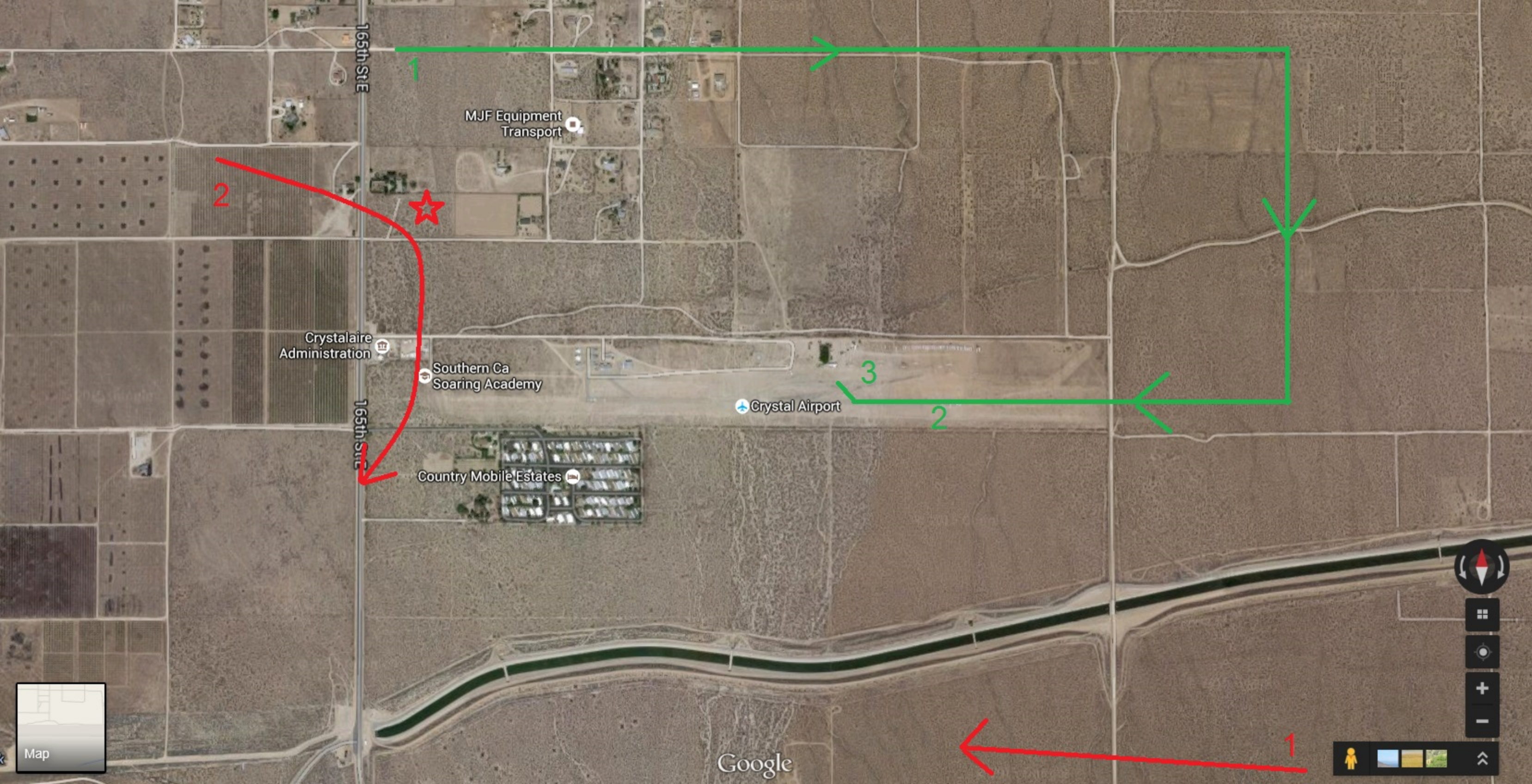
I've labeled a red star as where I noticed an aggressive low altitude climbing very steep right bank maneuver. I recall this maneuver as non-standard due to the location north of the runway. The aircraft appeared to be over the hangars which is unusual for a towplane pattern.

I'm back to work so I've used my work email since my gov't computer doesn't allow me to send attachments using gmail.

Please use this email address for further correspondence.

V/r,

Adrian Weisz



165th St E

1

MJF Equipment Transport

2



Crystalaire Administration

165th St E

Southern Ca Soaring Academy

3

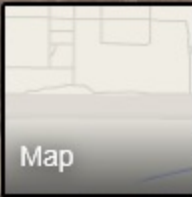
Crystal Airport

2

Country Mobile Estates

Google

1



Map

