



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Allison Diaz
Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety – Western Pacific Region

NTSB Accident Number: WPR16FA124
Witness Statement Summaries

1) Hawthorne Police Department- Officer Moulton

Officer Moulton reported that he was on patrol in his cruiser, driving north bound on Grevillea Avenue and approaching West Broadway Street. He stated that he observed a red and white airplane, at about 100 feet above the buildings, headed west bound and descending. He reported that the airplane was low enough that he could see the occupant in the left side of the airplane reaching for items in the cockpit. The officer reported that he continued to track the airplane and initially drove past the point of impact because he did not see where the airplane struck the building. He reported that he turned his cruiser around and saw that the airplane had impacted a town house and had come to rest nose down in the base of the building, and the tail section on the second story patio, and it was not on fire at the time.

2) Hawthorne Police Department- Officer Allison

Officer Allison reported that he was at his desk on the second story of a building located at HHR. When he stood up and looked out of the window and noticed an airplane at low altitude, with wings level and a nose high attitude. He reported that the occurrence took place at 1709.

3) Aaron Talbott

Mr. Talbott stated that he parked his vehicle and was visiting friends in the unit south of the affected town house. He stated that, mere seconds after opening a gate that separated the affected home and the home that he was visiting, he heard a loud bang, and saw a red 2 door airplane crash into the building. He stated that the airplane struck the building at the mid-point between the base of the building, and the beginning of the second story.

#4) Parker Thomas

Mr. Thomas stated that he opened the door for witness #3. He stated that after hearing the doorbell, he stood up and saw an airplane flying towards them. He stated that he saw the airplane hit a palm tree then hit the house. He stated that he saw the left wing hit the top of the palm tree.

5) Jarrod Miller, Mechanic at Security Aviation (HHR)

Mr. Miller stated it was his understanding that the pilot and CFI were conducting a flight review. He was not familiar with the CFI and stated that the pilot typically flew alone. The pilot and CFI met at the Security Aviation lobby and proceeded out to the airplane about 10 minutes later. The elapsed time between the CFI's arrival at Security and the takeoff was about 20-30 minutes. The pilot's other airplane, N6124L, was parked at Security Aviation; the accident airplane was parked further down the ramp. The pilot initially indicated to Mr. Miller that he would be taking "the white one" (N6124L) for the flight review, so it was a surprise to him when he saw the accident airplane taking off.

Mr. Miller stated that he "knew something was wrong" when the airplane was approximately abeam the control tower on takeoff. As it neared the departure end of the runway, the airplane was "about at the roofline" of the buildings, and in a nose-up attitude. He stated that the engine was running "smooth," but it sounded like it was "maybe at half power."

Mr. Miller stated that Security Aviation had not performed maintenance on either of the pilot's airplane, apart from charging the accident airplane's battery several months ago. He did not know where the pilot had the airplanes maintained.

6) Frederick A. Sanchez

Commercial/Instrument Rated Pilot with about 4300 hours Single Engine flight time.
via email:

At approximately 5:00 pm, I was getting ready to start my Cessna at the Hawthorne Airport wash rack. An aircraft departing runway 25 caught my attention because of the rough sound of its engine. The aircraft, a Grumman AA1 Yankee, was much lower than other typical aircraft at climb out over that part of the airport, approximately 200 to 300 feet in a nose high pitch attitude. The aircraft crossed the airport threshold at Prairie avenue between 400 to 500 hundred feet and was not observed to climb any higher. The accident aircraft pilot could be seen trying to gain altitude by lowering the nose to gain airspeed and pitching up, but each time the nose was raised, the aircraft descended further. At last sight, I could see the aircraft steering around some palm trees to avoid a collision before disappearing below the trees and buildings to the west of the airport. A short time after that, clouds of black smoke could be seen rising in the direction of the aircraft disappearance. The aircraft maintained a slightly south of the runway 25 heading course during the whole period.

I had just pushed our Cessna out of the Hawthorne Airport Wash rack located at the west end of the airport near the Hawthorne PD Helicopter facility. The accident aircraft passed about 100 ft. south of that location."

7) Bill Allen

via email to FAA:

I observed the following details regarding the accident sequence of N4SU. All times are Pacific Daylight Time on 10 June 2016 and approximate to the best of my recollection. My observations were made from hangar B1 at the Hawthorne, CA, Municipal airport (HHR).

1630

Engine start. I observed the startup sequence and immediately heard a loud metallic screeching noise. This noise continued for what appeared to me to be a long time given the nature of the sound. I would estimate the duration of the sound at slightly less than 60 seconds.

1635

The accident airplane taxied from its tie-down location to the northern extension of taxiway Foxtrot at taxiway November. The airplane sat north of taxiway November for several minutes. The accident airplane had sat there for at least 5 minutes by the time I left my location. This was a normal pattern for this pilot. I closed up my hangar and proceeded to head home to my residence in Signal Hill, CA. In leaving, I drove around the left wing of the accident airplane. I noticed that there were two occupants. I also noticed that the occupants seemed to be rather crowded inside the cockpit of the accident airplane. Since I was homebound for a meeting with a member of my Homeowners' Association, I texted the person with whom I was scheduled to meet. The time stamp on that text was 1649 on 10 June 2016. The text was sent from the HHR Tower gate.

1747

I arrived at my home in Signal Hill. Shortly thereafter, I was texted by one of my hangar neighbors at HHR asking me who was in the Grumman that had just crashed. That was my first indication that the accident had occurred.

I have been encouraged to report my experiences relating to this event by Dirk and Dave in the HHR control tower and by Jim McGill, a former FAA FSDO employee and current hangar neighbor. My contact information is noted below if you have any questions.