



RECORD OF COMMUNICATION

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Western Pacific Region

Date: January 12, 2017
Person Contacted: Mr. Doug Schell (Friend of pilot)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR17FA041

Narrative: The following is a summary of information that was provided in a conversation with Mr. Schell on this date:

- Mr. Schell was a former neighbor of the accident pilot (Mr. Huene) at Sierra Sky Park, and had known him about 20 years
- He was a close friend of the pilot
- Mr. Schell was a pilot, and had a total general aviation flight experience of about 4,000 hours
- He had previously built and flown 5 other airplanes
- He had previously built and flown his own Express S90
 - Like the accident airplane, his S90 was equipped with a Lycoming series IO-540 engine
 - He estimated that he had about 150 hours flight time in his S90
 - He no longer owned his S90
- He had flown the accident S90 several times, with the accident pilot
- The two airplanes flew/handled nearly identically
- The two pilots' most recent flight in the accident airplane was about 5 days prior to the accident
- One purpose of that flight was to enable the pilot to better familiarize himself with the airplane's electronic displays
 - Once established in level flight, Mr. Schell handled the airplane, while the pilot studied and manipulated the electronic displays
 - While trimmed for and in level flight, and uncommanded by Mr. Schell, the airplane began to pitch nose up and climb
 - Mr. Schell questioned the pilot as to what was happening and why, and the pilot replied that his (the pilot's) iPad was "resting" on the control stick, and offered that he thought the iPad (which he was actively using at the time) inadvertently physically contacted and actuated the ANU electric trim switch
 - The pilot pulled the iPad away from the stick, they re-trimmed the airplane, and the remainder of the flight was uneventful

- Mr. Schell explained that the pitch trim switches (to actuate the electric [and only] pitch trim) were located on each control stick
 - Each control stick had two pitch trim switches, which Mr. Schell explained were more like "buttons" that were depressed to activate the trim
 - The ANU button was on the aft side of the stick, and the AND button was on the forward side of the stick
- Mr. Schell reported that the accident airplane "flies straight and level hands off" and that it "flew really well"
- He also stated that the flight controls were "heavy handed," and manipulating them was "like driving a Mack truck"
 - He explained that he had many hours in a Harmon Rocket, which was a very responsive airplane, and that the S90 was "much heavier" [in terms of control input and airplane response] than the Harmon Rocket
 - He stated that he had about 2,000 hours in Cessna 182 airplanes, and that the S90 was less responsive than the C-182
 - He reported that the control forces in the three axes were relatively similar, and that the "elevator was the most sensitive" flight control
- He normally used about "5 to 10 degrees" of flap for takeoff in his S90
 - Full flap deflection in his S90 was 45 degrees
 - He did not know the maximum flap deflection of the accident airplane
- He was not aware of the accident airplane having a cockpit flap position indicator
- He said the pilot also used about the same approximate takeoff flap setting as he did, and that the pilot determined the amount of flap deflection visually [by looking out the cockpit window]
- He said that in his airplane, neutral (tab faired with elevator) was the pitch trim setting that he used for takeoff
 - His discussions with the pilot indicated that the pilot used a similar takeoff trim setting
- Mr. Schell was not at E79 at the time of the accident, but he did return and spoke with several witnesses
- Based on the witness reports that he heard, the airplane reportedly transitioned through some unusual and extreme attitudes before impact
 - Mr. Schell's initial thought was that "something must have broken" with the airplane to result in the reported dynamics
- He knew the pilot well, and firmly believed that the pilot "wouldn't intentionally jerk the stick back" to result in the reported flight path and attitudes
- He also stated the following about the pilot:
 - The pilot "didn't show off"
 - He "didn't try to scare people"
 - He was "very conscientious"
 - He "didn't do high performance takeoffs"
- When asked what he meant by a "high performance takeoff" Mr. Schell stated that it was one in which the airplane is caused to climb away from the runway at an unusually steep angle or flight path