



RECORD OF COMMUNICATION

Michael Huhn
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: July 19, 2017
Person Contacted: Mr. Keith DiNicola (Pilot, N2812)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR17FA146

Narrative: The following are verbatim extracts of information provided in two email exchanges between the NTSB and the pilot on the noted dates:

July 14, 2017

Hi Keith,

Several questions re the post ditching please:

- a) Can you tell me what you & Mr Watson were wearing? (I recall you had pants & shirt, Mr Watson shorts & shirt, no jackets. Didn't hear shoe types (eg boots, sneakers etc))
- b) Can you estimate how far from shore you ditched?
- c) Can you estimate how long you two remained with the aircraft before it began to sink & you headed for shore?
- d) Do you recall whether the aircraft moved, and in which direction (eg, towards, or away, or along the shore) in the period between the during the time you ditched and the time you left it?
- e) Can you estimate how far the aircraft was from shore when you left it
- f) Can you describe the relative sequence & timing of when you & Mr. Watson left the aircraft
- g) Can you estimate how long it took you to reach the shore
- h) Can you describe the proximity of you & Mr. Watson during the swim in, as well as the timing between your arrival on shore and the recovery of Mr Watsonc

As before, if you don't really know, that's fine, and just state that

RESPONSE

We were both wearing sneakers.

Here's what I have so far as to my recollection of the flight, swim (will let you know if any changes/additions) which should answer most of your questions if not all:

Bill and I decided to fly to the beach with two other aircraft. Went through pre-flight inspection and then boarded the plane, bill in the left seat and I in the right (Bill was a CFI and preferred the right seat). We got the current ATIS to check wind/weather, wind 260 @9 and a @15 degree difference in dew point/temp. We verbally noted that and proceeded to start the engine for warm up. During taxi

warmup we identified the radio was not transmitting and pulled into hangar area, shut down the engine and got a replacement radio for the flight. We restarted the engine and proceeded to the staging area for takeoff.

Prior to take off we held short while the first aircraft took off, switched the electric fuel pump on and checked both magnetos were functioning as expected and they were. We were second of the flight of three to take off and proceeded along the standard SE departure to the beach. At the beach we proceeded south over the ocean toward Pt Mugu following the shoreline.

@2 miles as we were passing a beach (not sure of the name) I noticed a slight skipping in the engine and asked Bill if he noticed. Since this was not normal we decided to turn around and head back to Camarillo. As a precaution we decided to gain a little altitude and I applied full power but I noticed we were only seeing 5,900 rpm (expecting @6200-6300). Bill confirmed that that was not the expected rpm and we proceeded in level flight, checking instruments, fuel line and filter (visual) etc. The skipping was getting more pronounced and max rpm was deteriorating so we decided to hold steady hoping to make it past Mugu Rock to open area on the other side if the engine issue didn't clear up. RPM continued to decrease below @5400 needed for level flight and we determined we weren't going to make it to the other side of Pt Mugu. Bill was the more experienced pilot and I asked if he wanted to take the controls. He agreed the controls were transferred to Bill while I continued to try to determine the issue and monitor the gauges or anything else Bill needed. Looking down at our options at this point there was PCH jammed with traffic and the ocean. The beach we just flew past was filled with swimmers and people on the beach so returning there was not an option. As we slowly descended Bill brought the aircraft closer to the shoreline in preparation for a water landing. We both undid the lap buckles of our 4 point harness and kept the shoulder straps to minimize issues exiting the aircraft in a water landing. Bill held off the water until the mains touched the water and the plane pitched forward into the water (This was expected since the engine is mounted at the top of the aircraft and the weight of the engine will cause the plane to pitch forward in sudden deceleration).

Underwater I freed myself from the shoulder straps and went for the surface. I was expecting the aircraft to be upside down and no obstructions but I bumped into the bottom of the wing. Since the wing is only @4 ft wide I followed it to the edge and broke the surface of the water. I did not see bill and called for him (I couldn't see over the wing). About that time Bill broke the surface on the other side and we verbally verified we both were OK. The plane was floating at the time and we decided we'd stay with the plane and follow it in. That lasted @45 Seconds and the plane was below the surface and we decided it was time to swim to the beach which I estimated to be @500ft away. I pushed off the cage of the plane and started swimming. When I turned back I saw bill was behind me and asked if he was OK and he said he was fine. I could see he was dog paddling slowly and I switched to dog paddling. At one point when I asked if he was OK he said he was getting tired and I told him to float on his back and rest, swim a bit, rest. As long as we controlled the pace for our swim to beach we'd be fine. Every time I checked if he was OK I got a positive response from him. Closer to shore I bumped into a rock and was taken over it and under the water. Since the shoreline was only @20 feet away I swam till I could support myself on the rocks and turned to see where Bill was. He was treading water but not moving forward and I asked if he was OK and received no response. I told him if he was tired just go on his back like we had been doing and again got no response. He was above water but not moving and he slowly pitched forward face down in the water. Some of the bystanders from the parking area above had come down with swim fins and went to get Bill, pulled him to the shoreline above the surf and continued CPR without the waves coming in jostling Bill. Paramedics arrived with stretcher and equipment. I stayed out of the paramedics way, caught my breath and slowly made my way to the top of the cliff. At the top a rope was thrown to me and a group pulled me up the last 10 feet of the steep lip to the parking lot.

July 19, 2017

Q1 - What engine warm up procedure did you use, and when?

A1 - Slow taxi around the field to let the water cooled engine warm up and prior to runup/magneto check

Q2 - Can you provide estimates of the distance(s) between you and Bill during the swim in, and also once you reached the rocks?

A2 - Distance and time are a blur during that period. Initially we were < 20 feet. As we got closer to shore and I was bouncing against some rocks and swam @25 feet to get footing on shoreline rocks and when I turned around Bill had stopped swimming and was @50-75 feet. Never having swam in the ocean and dealing with the surf I would not bet on my recollection. There were 50+ people on shoreline giving statements to various emergency personnel as well as pictures which may be a more accurate accounting.