



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Michael Huhn
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: July 18, 2017

Person Contacted: Mr. Ron Severson (Solo Pilot, N7712)

NTSB Accident Number: WPR17FA146

Narrative:

The following is a synopsis of the information provided by the Mr. Severson in a telephone conversation on this date:

- Mr. Severson is a member of SKFC, and was flying the single-place Quicksilver N7712 as one of the flight of three aircraft when the accident occurred
- He is also the Secretary of Ventura County Ultralight Aircraft Society (VCUAS)
- Due to difficulties with his radio, he was unaware of the reasons for the accident aircraft's (N2812) descent and water contact
- Although he was watching N2812 descend, due to his need to maneuver and operate his aircraft, he did not see N2812 strike the water; he only saw it on low approach and after it entered the water
- After N2812 entered the water, and was floating right side up, he initially did not see either of the pilots
- A few seconds later, he did see the two pilots surface near the wing leading edge
- Both pilots appeared to hold onto the aircraft while it remained afloat
- The pilot was wearing a "peach" colored shirt and was easy to visually detect in the water
- The CFI was wearing a dark-colored shirt and was difficult to visually detect in the water
- The aircraft started sinking about 15 to 30 seconds after he saw the pilots surface
- The pilot began to swim "straight to shore"
- The CFI left the aircraft more slowly, and initially appeared to be paralleling the shore
- The CFI did not appear to have "great coordination" in the water and was making slower progress than the pilot
- The pilot of N7712 kept circling the two in the water to monitor their progress, and was concerned enough about the CFI to consider ditching his aircraft to assist the CFI
- He then flew to the north/west of Mugu Rock with the intention of landing on the beach he knew was there, but that beach was too populated to offer a viable landing site
- He then returned to the location of the pilots in the water
 - o The pilot in the peach shirt was easy to detect, and he was nearing shore

- o The CFI was much harder to locate, and he was now well behind the pilot, and still far from shore
- At this point the CFI appeared to be treading water
- The CFI then began swimming again, this time more directly towards the shore, in a much more "intentional and coordinated" manner
 - o At some point he observed the CFI swimming backstroke style
- When the pilot reached the shore, the CFI was still about 200' away from the shore
- The pilot of N7712 saw a bystander swimming out to assist the CFI
- As the CFI and the assisting bystander neared shore, the pilot of N7712 thought the CFI appeared to have "banged his head" on the rocks/shore due to the wave action
- At some point, the pilot of N7712 returned to CMA

Other Comments/Observations

- The CFI was the VP of SKFC
- The CFI very recently became the president of VCUAS; his first meeting in that position was the morning of the accident
- The CFI was a "modest and shy" individual
- The CFI was the "go-to guy" for many SKFC and VCUAS members
- The pilot of N7712 had seen carburetors "sweat" (gather condensation on the outside) several times postflight on hot and humid days like that of the accident
- Earwig insects are attracted to either the fuel or fuel/oil mix used for the aircraft
 - o A few years ago, the pilot of N7712 observed earwigs climbing up to the fuel tank on one of the aircraft
 - o Also a few years ago, he had an engine runup problem at CMA that he troubleshot and traced to insect residue/remains in the fuel system
- The IIC asked about SKFC & VCUAS rules, policies, guidance, and norms re personal flotation devices (PFDs)
 - o There are no SKFC or VCUAS requirements, guidance, or suggestions re PFDs
- Prior to this N2812 accident, there had been several discussions among SKFC & VCUAS pilots regarding the use of PFDs for overwater flights
- Most pilots did not use or wear PFDs, but one couple recently purchased and were showing off their inflatable PFDs
- A few years ago, an SKFC or VCUAS pilot ditched his aircraft relatively far from shore, but successfully swam to shore without a PFD
 - o That pilot was young and in very good physical condition
 - o That pilot worked as a scuba diver and was therefore very familiar with the ocean
- The pilot of N7712 allowed that it was unlikely that the clubs (SKFC and or VCUAS) would require PFDs, but that if PFDs were provided, pilots would likely fly with them