



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Michael Huhn
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: July 8, 2017

Person Contacted: Mr. Robert Schidel (SkyKnights Flight Club president) and Mr. Keith DiNicola (pilot)

NTSB Accident Number: WPR17FA146

Narrative:

The following is a synopsis of the information provided by the two above-named individuals in a telephone conversation on this date:

Mr. Schidel

- Mr. Schidel is the President of the Sky Knights Flight Club, based at Camarillo Airport (KCMA)
- The aircraft is N2812, a Quicksilver Sport II with a Rotax 582 engine
- The aircraft is kept in a hangar at KCMA on the "Ultralight Field"
- The aircraft was part of a flight of three
- The two persons on board were Mr. William Watson (deceased) and Mr. Keith DiNicola
- Both named individuals are members of the club
- Mr. Watson holds a CFI certificate
- Mr. DiNicola is permitted (by club rules) to take the aircraft solo
- The flight was not an instructional flight

Mr. DiNicola

- Mr. DiNicola holds a Light Sport pilot certificate
- The flight was to be a flight of 3 aircraft to tour "the beach"
- The weather was "great" including a 5 degree temperature-dew point spread and wind of 260/9
- They departed CMA via the "southeast pattern" which is one of 3 pre-specified routes to exit the CMA traffic area
- Mr. DiNicola was the pilot flying
- The aircraft was equipped with dual controls, including dual throttles

- They departed with about 10 gallons of avgas on board
- He estimated that it took about 15 minutes to reach the shoreline (to the south of CMA)
- At the shoreline the 3 aircraft turned left, which put the shoreline off their left side
- Shortly after they passed "Point Mugu," a large rock outcrop [also known as "Mugu Rock"] Mr. DiNicola felt a "skip" in the engine
- They were cruising off the shoreline, above the ocean, at an altitude of about 300 feet
- The skip repeated a few times, and he asked Mr. Watson whether he too felt it; Mr. Watson replied in the affirmative
- They decided that they should reverse course and return to KCMA
- They did so, and advised the other two aircraft of their intentions
- The engine irregularity continued, and they agreed that they should climb to gain altitude in case the situation deteriorated
- At that time Mr. DiNicola advanced the throttle to climb, but the rpm only went to about 5,900, instead of the desired/target value of 6,100 to 6,300 rpm
- He remarked on the situation to Mr. Watson, and asked that Mr. Watson advance his throttle to try to obtain more rpm
- Mr. Watson did so, but was unable to increase the rpm above 5,900
- The rpm was then observed to be slowly decreasing
- The aircraft could not climb, and then became unable to maintain altitude
- Due to their different experience levels, they agreed that Mr. Watson should now become the flying pilot, and a transfer of control was effected
- The rpm was observed to decrease slowly, over a period of 4-5 minutes to 5,300 rpm
- It became apparent that they would have to conduct a forced landing
- The coastline was rocky, and Pacific Coast Highway was crowded with traffic, so they realized that they would have to continue flight to reach a sandy beach, or else put the aircraft in the water
- The continued decrease in rpm and lack of a suitable landing location forced them to ditch just offshore
- They undid their lap restraints but left their shoulder harnesses buckled in preparation for the ditching, because they expected the aircraft to flip inverted once it contacted the water, and they wanted to improve their chances of escaping the aircraft
- The aircraft touched down slowly and under control but flipped inverted as expected
- They both successfully escaped the aircraft, and began swimming to shore
- Mr. DiNicola was slightly ahead of Mr. Watson, and they kept in verbal contact as they made their way to shore
- Mr. DiNicola kept verbally checking on Mr. Watson, and at no time did Mr. Watson indicate that he was not OK
- Both individuals remained calm for the swim in
- Mr. DiNicola climbed onto a rock on shore and turned to see Mr. Watson, who was just a few feet behind
- He asked Mr. Watson if he was OK, but Mr. Watson did not reply
- Mr. Watson then went face down in the water and a bystander pulled him from the water, but he was unresponsive
- They conducted CPR until the paramedics arrived shortly thereafter