

N84CP Accident Witness Report:

by JP Richardson

Date of Mishap:

18 Aug 2018 approx 11:30 MDT

Location of crash site:

44deg 59min 28.1 sec N 114deg 44min 52.2sec W

In Short Creek drainage, in the trees, canyon center

Airplane is 90% destroyed by post impact fire

Events leading up to Mishap:

2 Airplanes were flying out to ID12 Flying B Ranch for breakfast on day of mishap.

N84CP the mishap Aircraft had 2 souls on board, it's pilot Bill Furling and 1 passenger, Tom Kopera.

N786JP had 2 souls on board, myself JP Richardson as PIC and 1 passenger

Paul Halliday [REDACTED]

Before departure we briefed our route and formation for the flight. N84CP was in the lead and 786JP flew 3000-6000 feet in trail as is our standard for 2 ship backcountry flying.

Weather was sunny, slightly obscured visibility (in my estimation 10-15 sm) winds light and variable.

N84CP needed fuel and it was delivered to N84CP before takeoff by McCall Air out of their small 100LL truck.

(As a side note, when I returned later that afternoon around 3:30, I advised McCall that there was a mishap and that N84CP was fueled and I didn't take fuel and I assumed they had a protocol to check any suspect fuel just in case that had anything to do with the mishap. Laura from McCall Air said they had a procedure and would follow up.)

At approximately 0900 MDT we departed KMYL for 12ID via Big Creek Airfield-Big Creek-Middlefork Salmon River to 12ID. Flight was uneventful and we both landed upstream at 12ID at approximately 09:45. I witnessed Bill Furling do a post flight inspection of his aircraft after landing and there was no mention of any defects or

problem with his plane from the flight we just completed. We then went up to the Ranch for breakfast and a tour of the facilities.

Mishap Flight Series of Events:

We once again briefed our departure as N84CP out first, followed by N786JP. We had planned to takeoff downstream since there was approximately 5 knots of wind out of the north. We were to fly downstream a bit then turn 180 degrees and head upstream to head up the Middle Fork towards Indian creek for our return flight to KMYL

N84CP took off first. Takeoff looked normal and he climbed straight ahead, even clearing the rising terrain just off to the north of the strip with no noted problems. The only radio call made was his departure for 12ID downstream. I released brakes sometime after N84CP passed the river and flew the flight path as shown in my diagram to build some altitude.

When I was abeam Bernard airstrip I saw N84CP gently turnabout 90 degrees to the left on a westerly heading. He was abeam Short Creek at this time. My first thought was he was just going to use the bowl at the base of Short Creek to finish his 180 degree turn to head upstream as briefed.

At this time he started heading up Short Creek and I was confused as to why since you cannot out climb the rising terrain to the west and it is a tight little canyon to turn in.

To the best of my knowledge I made the 1st radio call after takeoff.

I, N786JP said, **"Where are you going"**

N84CP replied, very calmly **"I'm going down"**

Since in the backcountry we primarily speak about flying upstream or downstream I was confused as to what he meant. I thought, does he think he is going downstream through impassable canyon?

I N786JP replied **"Down Stream?"**

N84CP replied, **"Crashing"** or something similar. It was at this time I realized he was preparing to attempt on off field landing.

That was the last communication out of N84CP.

I was probably about 3000 foot in trail and gaining on N84CP so I could tell I had good closure on him. I was at about 70 mph and following him. It appeared he was very slow, and heading up stream right in the middle of Short Creek. There was no excessive wing rocking. In fact the aircraft was being held perfectly still as it impacted the top of the trees. From my vantage, it looked like it settled in quite

nicely and was completely intact and still pointed in a westerly direction up canyon. He did a good job with the hand he had been dealt and probably saved his and Tom's life by flying so precisely. Sometime during this sequence, I had sent out on 122.9 N786JP **"MAY DAY MAY DAY, Northwest of Bernard Aircraft Down!"**

I needed airspeed and altitude so I initiated the first of about 3 circling climbing left turns about 2000 feet east of the impact site. By the time I made the first 270 degrees of my first 360 I saw fire on the left side of the aircraft.

By the second 360, the aircraft was completely obscured by black smoke.

I kept climbing and went to 121.5 to try and call Salt Lake center. I was unable due to the ELT blocking me and probably being below the ridges.

I completed 1 more 360 and tried to see if I could see anyone on the ground but the smoke was too heavy so I decided it would be best to return to 12ID the Flying B to get the rescue coordination underway.

After landing at 12ID Kelly Waetzig the Flying B Ranch manager met me and transported me up to the ranch. Kelly made some initial calls to report the accident while I tried for about 15 minutes to get a good sat signal to call flight service.

I finally got a hold of flight service and reported the accident. In my opinion the FSS was the most ill equipped organization to handle a post crash call when minutes counted.

We remained on site at the Flying B ID12 till about 15:00 MDT after waiting for the extraction teams to get the 2 survivors out of the area and on their way to the hospital. N786JP then departed for RTB at KMYL and landed around 15:35

End Of Report. Written 22 August 2018

JP Richardson

[REDACTED]
Springfield, Illinois 62704
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

← Favorites
Private - 4 places

N 84C CRASH SITE $\approx$ 2.3 mile Flight X

$44^{\circ} 59' 28.1''$ N $114^{\circ} 44' 52.2''$ W

- Followed AC to landing in trees
- AC appeared intact after coming to a stop
- Did 1st 360 & saw Fire on left side AC.
- Circled 2 more times but couldn't see any survivors

Comm By Memory

122.9

① 786 JP - Where are you going?

84CP In Going Down

② 786 JP Down Stream?

84CP Crashing

786 JP MAY DAY MAY DAY

NW Bernand AC Down!

121.5

Tried Center Next

BUT FELT Blocked

RTB

ID12

Flying B Ranch
Landing Strip

N 84CP #1

N 786JP #2

45 sec in Trail

TO $\approx$ 11:30

8/18/18

N



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