



WITNESS STATEMENT

Josh Cawthra
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: October 5, 2018
Person Contacted: Fabian Salazar (Air Safety Investigator, NTSB)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA001

Narrative:

The following is a synopsis of the information provided by Mr. Salazar.

“On October 1, 2018, about 1100: I had arrived at the Brackett Field Airport (POC) to investigate an airplane accident that had occurred on September 30, 2018 (WPR18FA279). The site was located in a nursery on the north west end of the airport. On that morning, I had just introduced myself to the four first-responders to this accident and was preparing to interview them. I heard what sounded like something moving through bushes. The sound came from behind me. I turn my head towards the area where the sound came from and noticed a Beechcraft V-tailed Bonanza flying past a stand of trees. This airplane was below the tops of the trees, pitching nose down, in a descent, on a heading of about 250° to 240° magnetic and rolling to the left. The plane continued to pitch down, descend and roll until it went behind a stand of small trees, about 10 feet tall, that were in the nursery. The attitude of the plane just before disappearing behind the small trees was pitch about 45°, Roll about 80°. I heard the impact and muffled explosion. I saw a large fireball rise from the trees and realized the airplane had struck the ground and exploded. I grabbed my phone and videotaped 19 second of this event. I noted the time as 1148 Pacific daylight time. I then called my supervisor, Dennis Hogenson, and reported a second accident had just occurred. He verified what I had just said and told me to focus on my accident investigation and he would assign the second accident to another Investigator. I walked over to the second accident site and captured some photographs for that Investigator. After that I informed the Airport Authority that the NTSB was aware of the accident and was dispatching a second Investigator to the second accident. I then walked the flight path of the second accident airplane alongside the Lycoming Engines Party member for the first accident. He and I discovered two separate tree branches that looked as if they had been freshly broken with fresh leaves. There were no trees around these branches except for the trees where the Bonanza flew past.

I also recall the following. While in the air, the Bonanza sounded like it was at engine idle. I also recall the sound of

the engine rolling down to idle. This occurred after the tree strike and about 25 to 30 feet above the ground. You could clearly hear the engine idling and the propeller spinning as it descended. There were no other noises besides some of the witnesses talking in disbelief of what they were seeing.

The airplane was whole and symmetrical. I could see the entire top of the airplane. The ailerons appeared level and the flaps appeared to not be down at all. The ailerons and flaps looked like the trailing edges were equal distance from each other as if the flaps were up and the ailerons were not displaced. The rudders appeared equal as well. My view of this entire event lasted only 5 to 8 seconds and the view of the top of the airplane was only about 2 to 3 seconds. The fire ball was huge and there was a secondary explosion that occurred about 20 seconds after the initial explosion. I did not feel the heat coming from the explosion as I heard another person saying.

There were other witnesses. Mark Platt from Lycoming Engines, and members of the La Verne Fire Department. The La Verne Fire department had the four fire fighter/first-responders report to me for interviews. They all witnessed this event. They can be reached through Mr. Robert Russell, Battalion Chief, [REDACTED]. I believe Mr. Russell is a witness to.

These are the events as I recall them
Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board”

Mr. Josh Cawthra
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region
National Transportation Safety Board

Oct 04, 2018

RE: aircraft accident, N7997M, Beech Bonanza, October 01, 2018, Brackett Field (KPOC), La Verne, California.

Mr., Cawthra,

My name is Mark Platt. I have been actively employed as Sr. Air Safety Investigator for the last 23 years by Lycoming Engines, Williamsport, PA.

At the time of this accident (~1145 am) I was actively engaged assisting the NTSB in an accident investigation that occurred the previous day at Brackett Field (POC), La Verne, California. The NTSB-IIC, Mr. Fabian Salazar and I were within 20 feet of each other when the Bonanza accident occurred.



I was facing generally east when suddenly I heard a noise emanating from my right that drew my attention in that direction. As I turned to my right I observed a white, low wing, single engine aircraft banking left. As I watched, the left bank angle rapidly increased to a near 90 degrees to the ground and the nose of the aircraft began dropping. The subject aircraft continued in this attitude until it impacted the ground in a left wing tip first, nose low attitude. The aircraft tail continued to swing around vertically across my view from my right to left. During this time I could see a large encompassing cloudy mist, I assumed to be fuel. Shortly (within seconds) a large post impact fire ensued. I immediately ran toward the accident site and first to arrive, hoping I could do something: however, the accident was obviously not survivable.

As I stated earlier, at the time of this accident I was actively engaged documenting the previous day's accident. I had my camera in its tether harness, and when I arrived at the Bonanza accident I instinctively started to photograph the site. I have included these photos (attached) for your file.



I can say that prior to hearing the aircraft collide with trees, I did not hear the engine accelerate, nor did I hear any engine noises consistent with acceleration after the tree strike. I heard no unusual engine sounds and observed no smoke emanating from the aircraft. When the aircraft was banked left to its extreme angle I could see a distinctive symmetrical outline of the aircraft with respect to wings, tail and primary flight control surfaces.

I can say I knew the subject aircraft had collided with the trees due to the sound I heard. I have heard this distinct sound hundreds of times during the recovery process of previous accident aircraft while being dragged across trees and brush. Additionally, I visualized tree branches on the ground in-line with the aircraft energy path.

The winds at the time very light from the east. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time.

If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Thank You,

Mark W. Platt
Sr Air Safety Investigator
Lycoming Engines, a div. of Avco Corporation

