

From: [Russ Van](#)
To: [Nixon Albert](#)
Subject: BD-5 Crash in Camarillo CA - Witness
Date: Tuesday, October 15, 2019 12:46:56 PM

Hello Mr. Nixon

I was told you were the person to contact regarding the BD-5 crash in Camarillo last week.

My name is Russell Van Ruitenbeek and I've worked line service at Camarillo airport at Channel Islands Aviation for the last 3 years. I was out on the ramp at the time the BD-5 crashed and saw it go down.

To start, I am a commercially licensed pilot and have flown into and out of Camarillo for most of my flying experience and have obviously seen planes flying the pattern here for years while working on the ramp.

The morning of the accident I saw the pilot fuel his plane using a red 5 gallon fuel tank prior to taking off. The next time I saw him was when he was in the air on the left downwind for runway 26. He was roughly abeam the Air7 FBO (abeam taxiway A), but it caught my attention because he was much lower than usual and I believe he was tighter in the pattern than you would expect (but his lateral distance from the airport is harder to judge from my perspective on the ramp).

The next thing I noticed was his plane was unusually quiet. I think his engine must have been off or have failed. That being said, I could not see his propeller, so I suppose it is possible he was simply idling.

Given how close he was to the airport, I suspect his initial reaction was to fly a tight left pattern and return to Camarillo, but he appeared to hesitate and change his mind. He made a shallow left bank toward the runway, then changed his mind and made a slightly steeper right turn to the south away from the runway. At this point he was abeam the Confederate Air Force hangar (taxiway G3).

By the time I lost sight of him behind trees and hangars, he had turned only about 10-20 degrees, and was roughly abeam myself on the ramp and taxiway G2. I assumed he was going to try to land on either Pleasant Valley Rd or Las Posas Rd.

I also noticed that he appeared to have a much higher ground speed than I would expect for someone making an emergency landing. I would estimate about 80 knots. This might not be unusual given his airplane's characteristics and I'm guessing it probably does not glide very well.

One final thing I want to note about his plane. I have had the pleasure of personally dealing with the pilot in the past. I do not believe he ever ordered fuel from us, but he has asked us to tow his plane off the runway multiple times in the past. While he was assembling the plane about a year ago, he would do high speed taxi tests along the runway, I think to get the propeller pitch adjusted correctly if I recall correctly. While doing these test, he would experience some malfunction or engine failure and be unable to taxi back to his hangar. I personally went out to the runway on two or three occasions over the span of a month to tow

him back. I believe a couple of my co-workers may have done the same thing during that time. That being said, I have seen the BD-5 fly in the pattern as recently as a month or two ago, so the pilot must have thought he resolved any issues he had with the plane.

If there is anything else you need to know, anything I have missed, or anything you need clarified, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always available to call at (408) 253-1111.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you,
Russell