



INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Interview Date: July 8, 2020
Person Contacted: Mr. Dale Harlan (Witness)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR20LA215

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation Mr. Harlan stated the following:

- He is a retired airline pilot.
- He was inside a trailer on the west side at the southern end of runway 02 at Vaughan Ranch Airfield, when he heard the typical “wind” sound of an airplane on the final stages of approach for landing.
- When he looked outside of the window, the airplane appeared to be in what he described as an unstabilized, high, and fast approach to the northern (02) runway.
- He stated that Vaughan Ranch is a one-way airport, with landings limited to the north runway (uphill) and takeoffs south. The uphill slope is steep, and the runway is surrounded by trees, with terrain rising to the east. He opined that go-arounds in all but high-performance aircraft, are ill advised, and often not possible. The airport has very tight margins, and pilots must be, “on point” to land. The north end of the runway is 50 ft higher than the south end.
- The airplane continued to descend, and passed behind a berm that parallels the west side of the runway. At this point the airplane was still airborne, about 1/4 of the runway length beyond the landing threshold.
- He could not see if it had landed, but a few seconds later, about 1/3 down the runway, the airplane came back into view, now at about 30 ft agl. The engine was now producing a sound that he described as “full power”, and he could see that the flaps were extended.
- He presumed the pilot was performing a go around, and was concerned that the flaps were still extended, and that the airplane, being a Cessna 150, did not have enough available performance to outclimb the rising terrain and trees.
- At no time was the airplane emitting smoke or vapors, and the engine appeared to be operating at a high power setting throughout.

- He ran outside, and continued to watch as the airplane flew over the runway and out of his view behind the trees. He continued to listen, and could still hear the engine, so presumed the airplane had managed to successfully depart, however, a few seconds later he heard the sound of an impact.
- He then ran to the accident site. By the time he arrived, first responders were also arriving at the scene. It appeared neighbors were helping the pilot.
- He did not know the pilot, but in discussion with the other airport residents, it is his understanding that the airplane has landed there before.



Figure 1: Mr. Harlan's location in relation to the accident site

END.



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Interview Date: July 8, 2020
Person Contacted: Mike Dunlap (Witness)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR20LA215

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation Mr. Dunlap stated the following:

- He is a pilot and was sitting outside his residence at the far north end of Vaughan Ranch Airfield.
- He observed a high wing Cessna airplane approach from the east, and fly crosswind over the north end of the runway in what he considered to be an appropriate entry to the left traffic pattern, at an appropriate altitude.
- The airplane then joined the left downwind traffic pattern for runway 02, and he assumed it was planning to land.
- From his location, he is unable to see the runway 02 landing touchdown point.
- He continued to watch as the airplane flew out of his view on the downwind leg.
- A short time later, he could hear the sound of an engine producing, "full power" and was surprised as the airplane came back into view, but this time flying north directly over 02 runway at an altitude of about 40 ft agl.
- The engine continued to produce a high power sound, and he assumed the pilot was performing a go-around. He was concerned, because go-arounds were ill advised, and not performed at the airport. The airplane was not emitting smoke or vapors, and was not climbing.
- The airplane appeared to be flying slowly, in a manner that he described as, "hanging onto a stall". He could not ascertain the position of the flaps, but opined that the airplane appeared to have the look of one that was struggling to climb with the flaps still extended.
- The airplane then began to bank right as it reached the end of the runway, which caused him concern because of rising terrain and trees.
- The angle of bank increased, concurrent with the underside of the airplane striking trees in what he described as a "knife edge" attitude, before dropping to the ground. He stated that the trees slowed down the airplane such that the final impact into the ground appeared relatively benign.

- He immediately ran to the accident site, and was able to provide assistance to the pilot, while attempting to put out a fire that had erupted in the engine compartment.
- He did not recognize the pilot or airplane.



Figure 1: Mr. Dunlap's location in relation to the accident site

END.