



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Stephen Stein
Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety – Western Pacific Region

NTSB Accident Number: WPR20LA270
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N91449; Piper PA-14
Accident Location: Susanville, California
Accident Date: August 15, 2021

Note: The following interview was documented by the Investigator –In-Charge (IIC), Stephen Stein.

Interview #1 Summary

Chad Lanier
Friend of Accident Pilot

Interview Date & Time; August 19, 2020, 1439 PT

Mr. Lanier reported that he knew what the accident pilot was doing daily as they communicated about 3-4 times per day. He stated that the accident pilot purchased the accident airplane in Alaska and ferried it down to California in 2018 with the passenger who was also involved in the accident. During this flight the oil temperature appeared to be running higher than normal and when he returned to California the airplane was always running “hot.” The accident pilot employed a mechanic in Red Bluff who discovered several discrepancies with the airplane and subsequently made repairs. This did not resolve the engine’s unusually high operating temperature, so the accident pilot had the engine rebuilt, which revealed that the crankshaft had been replaced, but never noted in the engine logbook. The rebuilt engine was installed in the accident airplane about 6 months prior to the accident, which ran cooler, but still operating at the high end of the operating range.

The pilot’s friend stated that he flew in the accident airplane a few weeks before the accident and the airplane appeared to operate normally and exhibited good performance. Mr. Lanier stated

that the pilot hadn't reported any concerns about the accident airplane's engine reaching unusually high operating temperatures in the 2 months prior to the accident and had flown multiple times since. He recounted that the accident pilot had flown to Eagle Lake the weekend before the accident and also to Auburn, California that same weekend.

Mr. Lanier stated that the accident pilot texted him about 10 minutes before the accident that they were departing Susanville, California for Eagle Lake. He was already aware that the accident pilot had planned to stay overnight at the lake. According to Mr. Lanier, the accident pilot took flying seriously and if there was a maintenance issue with the airplane he would have taken his other airplane.

Interview #2 Summary

Chad Lanier

Friend of Accident Pilot

Interview Date & Time; April 12, 2021, 1411 PT

When queried about the accident pilot's fuel habits, Mr. Lanier stated that he flew with him regularly and observed that he would usually ask the fueler to top off both fuel tanks. The accident pilot's friend reported that there is no question why he wouldn't have topped of the fuel tanks for the accident pilot. When asked how much fuel would be in the opposing wing if the accident pilot only filled one wing, Mr. Lanier stated that he would expect the opposite wing to be at or near full.

According to Mr. Lanier, the accident pilot never complained about any flight control issues with the accident airplane. He had an opportunity to manipulate the controls during a flight in the accident airplane with the pilot a couple weeks before the accident and did not observe any concerns with the flight control movements, which all felt smooth.

Mr. Lanier reported that he never observed the accident pilot depart a runway in a nose high attitude, but had heard the accident pilot had previously departed on the prop in a steep climb on one occasion.

The accident pilot's friend remarked that the pilot wanted a longer propeller with a steeper pitch and installed the propeller the airplane was equipped with at the time of the accidents about six months prior following the engine overhaul.

Mr. Lanier estimated that the accident pilot had accumulated a total of about 1,750 flight hours with 200 hours in the accident airplane at the time of the accident.

When asked who would fly the accident airplane when the accident pilot flew with the right seat passenger, Mr. Lanier stated the passenger would get some "stick time," but the accident pilot would generally fly the airplane. He further remarked that if the two of them were together, the accident pilot would have probably performed the takeoff.



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Interview #1 Summary

Eric Sawyer
Aircraft Mechanic

Interview Date & Time; September 14, 2020, 1439 PT

Mr. Sawyer stated that the accident airplane was the only PA-14 that he serviced and used the type certificate data sheet because he didn't have a maintenance manual for the airplane, but had asked the accident pilot to purchase one. The mechanic reported that he helped the accident pilot with one owner-assisted annual inspection on the accident airplane. According to Mr. Sawyer, he performed this inspection on March 12, 2020. Among some of the service items that were covered during the most recent annual inspection, the mechanic verified security of nuts and bolts, assured compliance with any airworthiness directives and they checked cylinder compression together.

According to Mr. Sawyer, the accident pilot purchased the airplane from Alaska and experienced numerous problems with the engine overheating when he returned to California. Mr. Sawyer stated that he helped the accident pilot install the recently overhauled engine by torquing the crankcase through bolts. He did not observe any unusually high oil temperatures after the new engine was installed. The mechanic reported that he observed some minor corrosion on the steel

structure and had instructed the accident pilot to prepare and prime it. He noted that the accident pilot was always “tinkering” with the airplane and that he would observed him “doing it.” He reported that the accident pilot fixed the floor of the cabin and also changed out the window on the passenger side. Mr. Sawyer stated that if there was service item that needed to be signed off, he would inspect it and then endorse the logbook.

Mr. Sawyer recalled that the airplane had a metal propeller installed during the most recent annual inspection. He heard that the pilot had later installed a composite propeller, but Mr. Sawyer did not recall if he installed it.

During the most recent annual inspection, Mr. Sawyer performed an engine run-up to 1,800 rpm and did not observe any anomalies. During run-up, Mr. Sawyer noted that the oil temperature had just reached the lower end of the green operating range. Additionally, he watched the accident pilot depart following the inspection and the pilot later informed Mr. Sawyer that the airplane was running well.



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Interview #1 Summary

Kyle Ashby
Friend of Accident Pilot and Witness

Interview Date & Time; August 16, 2020, 1051 PT

Mr. Ashby reported that the accident pilot, the accident pilot's girlfriend and he had planned to fly over burning man before proceeding to their final destination, Spaulding Airport (1Q2), on the day of the accident, where they had intended to camp for the night. Mr. Ashby departed Redding, California in his own airplane while the accident pilot and his girlfriend departed the same airport in the accident airplane about 0930. During cruise flight they decided to make an unplanned stop at Susanville Airport to eat. The accident pilot landed on the airport's dirt runway, while Mr. Ashby landed on the asphalt runway.

After lunch they returned to the airport. Mr. Ashby stated that he did not observe any unusual behavior from either the accident pilot or passenger on the day of the accident. After they boarded their separated airplanes, Mr. Ashby taxied towards the asphalt runway, while the accident pilot and passenger taxied to the dirt runway, runway 07. Mr. Ashby reported that while he was taxiing he observed the accident airplane about 350 ft above ground level out of the corner of his eye. The airplane was in a left wing low attitude (like the left wing had "dropped")

and the nose then pointed to the ground. Mr. Ashby stated that he is a Certified Flight Instructor and that the movement was consistent with an aerodynamic stall/spin. He further remarked that they did not appear to have sufficient altitude to recover the airplane.



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Interview #1 Summary

Steve Steiner
Friend of Accident Pilot

Interview Date & Time; August 17, 2020, 1231 PT

Mr. Steiner (a former airline pilot) stated that he met the accident pilot in 2004. They subsequently flew together after the accident pilot obtained his private pilot certificate. Initially the accident pilot wanted to work on the radio with Mr. Steiner, who observed the accident pilot's piloting skills change over time. Shortly after the accident pilot started flying, he was meticulous about doing performing flight tasks correctly. For example, as he became more comfortable he started selecting lower altitudes for cross country flights and many times was not consistent about holding his altitude. He also stated that the accident pilot was more conscious about density altitude several years before the accident before he became more comfortable with flying. Mr. Steiner stated that the pilot was not as cautious as his flight experience accumulated and that he knew the accident pilot was getting "adventurous" when he purchased a "cub."