

Statement of Chad Wall
Re: September 16, 2021 Aircraft Accident On Orcas Island, WA

Summary of background/flight experience:

I started ATP Flight School in December 2018. I finished July 21, 2020, with 300.1 total hours. During this time I received my Private Pilot, Instrument Rating Add-On, Commercial Pilot, CFI, CFII, Commercial ME Add-On, and MEI. Before finishing the program through ATP, I was hired as a flight instructor at Northway Aviation on May 22, 2020. I had 829 flight hours when I started at Fly Guys. I had 529.8 dual given, 707.9 PIC, and 780.2 SEL. My students have successfully passed Private, Instrument, Commercial, and CFII check rides.

Last medical exam:

September 13, 2021, Passed Medical Exam for First Class Medical Certificate.

Hiring process at Fly Guys/ hours with Jim Robertson:

I responded to an advertisement for a pilot on a Facebook page called FATPNW I sent my resume to the number listed on advertisement on September 5, 2021.. Austin Reese, owner of "Fly Guys," a construction and roofing company, replied and set up a phone interview for September 6, 2021. We mutually agreed to meet September 8, 2021. I had a one-hour long interview with Austin and was then asked to stick around to meet Jim Robertson. Jim interviewed me later that evening.

I took an observation flight on the evening of Tuesday September 14th with Jim around 7pm, which included three laps in the pattern doing touch and go's KBLI- Bellingham Airport. After the observation flight, Jim offered me the opportunity to fly with him down to KUAO- Aurora State the next morning on the 15th at about 9am. The plane was going to be looked at for an avionics upgrade. After spending a couple hours there, we flew back to KBLI. Jim and I then went and got food together, then came back to the airport to do a quick round trip flight to pick up Fly Guy's crew members from KORS- Orcas Island and bring them back to KBLI. Jim had told me I was his recommendation to Austin. On my way home that night, I received a confirmation call from Jim offering me the position at Fly Guys, which began employment that day.

Flight Hours - Initial flying phase:

9/14 - .4 (two touch and goes and full stop landings in the traffic pattern at KBLI) w/ Jim
9/15 - 2.1 (KBLI to KUAO), 2.1 (KUAO to KBLI), .3 (KBLI to KORS), .3 (KORS to KBLI) w/ Jim

Flight Hours on 9.16:

9/16 - .3 (KBLI to KORS), .3 (KORS to KFHR), .4 (KFHR to KBLI) w/ Jim
KBLI to KORS (touch and go) to KFHR (full stop to pick up Ryan) w/ Austin – (I don't know the exact time for these last two flights, but they were less than half an hour each)

Narrative for accident on Thursday September 16, 2021:

I was offered, and I accepted a pilot position with Fly Guys, a construction/roofing company in Bellingham, Washington on September 15, 2021. On the afternoon of September 16th, Austin Reese, owner of Fly Guys directed me to pre-flight the company's Piper Cherokee Six that was parked at Bellingham Air Services for a flight out to observe some construction projects and pick up a Fly Guys' employee named Ryan from Friday Harbor and return back to Bellingham. The Weather was clear with at least 10 miles visibility, with light winds. I preformed the preflight as directed by the aircraft checklist and added additional safety items that I perform on each flight. Austin Reese accompanied me on this flight.

After performing a weight and balance and completing the checklist we taxied out and preformed an engine run up prior to departure. We took off from KBLI and I flew out toward Orcas Island, where we were going to do one touch and go and then continue to fly over current or future roofing projects located on Orcas Island. After the uneventful touch and go at Orcas, and during climb out, Austin and I both observed a substance spray onto the windshield. We both thought it could be oil. Instead of continuing on as planned around Orcas Island, we flew directly toward Friday Harbor and landed without incident. During the flight, we were both monitoring all engine parameters and all parameters appeared to be operating as normal and in normal ranges.

I landed the airplane in Friday Harbor and parked the aircraft in the transient parking area. Upon exiting the plane, we saw oil streaming over the cowling. I removed the top portion of the engine cowling, and we saw more oil leakage around the prop hub and dripping down into the bottom cowling and on the engine. Austin then called, Command Aviation and they said a couple of mechanics would fly over from Bellingham to look at the plane. I then waited at the plane for the mechanics to arrive.

The mechanics arrived after about an hour in a white C172, that had a blue and red stripes down the sides. They first cleaned off the engine with AvGas/100LL in an attempt to see where the oil leak was coming from. I was then instructed to start the aircraft and give it a run up. I complied and during the run up I cycled the prop several times to see if we could reenact the problem. This lasted a couple minutes, I then shut down the engine, and the mechanics said they saw no oil leaks. They said they had suspicions on where the original oil leak could have come from, but did not know for sure. The mechanics did not think it was the hub seal, and at that point one of the mechanics said it was good to fly the aircraft back to Bellingham where they would further inspect the engine, which seemed to be the consensus of both mechanics. I then helped the mechanics secure the cowling.

Ryan, Austin, and I boarded the airplane and after completing the appropriate checklists, we taxied down to the end of the runway 34. After another engine runup, we departed for the return flight to Bellingham. We took off to the North from Friday Harbor. We climbed out on a northeast heading toward Bellingham, and on the climb out Austin and I both noticed the oil

pressure was in the yellow. I decided to level off the aircraft at 2000 ft. After leveling off and pulling back the throttle and prop to 22/2300, I observed all normal engine parameters, and all engine readings were in the green arc. Just after passing the southeast horseshoe side of Orcas Island, we were over water and heading straight toward the mid-point of Lummi Island, when we experienced a hesitation in the airplane engine, and I confirmed with Austin that he heard it too. Within seconds, the engine quit.

At that point I remembered seeing a field to my left on Orcas Island that we had just flown past located on the southern part of the island. I immediately turned to the right in an attempt to make the field as it was the only suitable place to attempt a forced landing, unless we put down on the water. (A left turn would have taken us toward rising elevation.) I maintained altitude in the turn to obtain the best glide distance and I slowed to the best glide speed of 85 knots. I maintained, as best I could, best glide speed until clearing a row of trees adjacent to the field where I attempted to land. While in the turn, I remember turning on the auxiliary fuel pump, and also turning the fuel selector knob from the left tank to the right tank. I also believe I made two radio calls on the traffic frequency of 128.25, one of which was a mayday call. While I was piloting the aircraft, Austin, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, was emphatically giving directions on where to fly and what to avoid including the trees and adjacent to the landing site. Austin was visibly and verbally distraught, and was giving orders which was distracting.

As we crossed from the water to land, there was a sputter of the engine, a second high rev, and then it quit again. During the descent, the mixture was full forward, I had moved the prop to full forward, and was manipulating the throttle to see if I could get any response from the engine. At that time, I believed that the best course of action was to slow the plane to descend at a slower speed and that would increase the rate of descent. The field was short, with a house and trees at the end of it, and I had to get the plane on the ground. I attempted to keep the plane as coordinated as possible as to not enter a spin, stall, or lose control before hitting the ground. I advised the passengers that we were coming in for a hard landing, and to get ready for it. The next thing I remember we hit the ground and we evacuated the plane as quickly as possible through the back cargo door.