

Stephen Stein
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Aviation Safety - Western Pacific Region

Date: May 10, 2022

Subject: WPR22FA172 - Sausalito, California - Record of Conversation

Contact: Gretchen Aubel, Witness

Ms. Aubel stated that she was a teacher at Bay Area Discovery Museum in Fort Baker. When she saw the accident airplane her classroom was sitting on parade grounds having lunch about 1215 on the day of the accident. She observed an airplane drop out of a fog bank that was overhead, the wings then rocked briefly and the airplane disappeared back into the fog. Approximately 1 minute later the airplane came back out of the fog heading straight towards them (she estimated the airplane's flight path angle was about 60° relative to the horizon). The airplane then entered a climb and disappeared back into the fog. She listened to the airplane in the fog for a bit and then decided to take her class back inside.

She reported that the visibility at the time was very low as the fog was thick. There was a fog layer directly above their heads and she was able to see across the field, but could not see anything beyond the field including the rest of Fort Baker, the city of San Francisco, or the top of the Golden Gate Bridge. Ms. Aubel stated that doesn't think she could see the top of the Marin Headlands.



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Contact: Paul Cotter, brother of passenger

Mr. Cotter reported that he found 11 photographs that the passenger had taken from the cockpit during the accident flight that all synchronized to her iPad. The photographs were submitted to the NTSB investigator-in-charge.

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Contact: Rubin Velasco, Accident Pilot's Flight Instructor

Mr. Valesco reported that the accident pilot completed his private pilot certificate with him and then returned for instrument training. He completed his private in a flight school airplane in November 2020 and wanted to do his instrument training in his personal airplane, a Vans RV10. They trained together for 40 hours at which time Mr. Valesco signed the pilot off for his check ride (about May 2021), but he never took it. The pilot then returned 2 weeks before the accident for more training.

Mr. Valesco noted that the pilot was "his own boss" and perhaps wasn't use to someone younger providing instruction and could be "a little pushy" at times. On one occasion when Mr. Valesco was flying with another student about a year prior to the accident, he heard the accident pilot obtain an IFR clearance out of Sacramento Executive Airport to either Oakland or Concord.



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Contact: Miranda Webster, Witness

Ms. Webster reported that she was with Gretchen Aubel in Fort Baker and the time was about 1210 when she heard the airplane. The conditions at the time included dense fog and she could see across the field, but no further. She observed the airplane come out of the fog towards the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge and then it turned rapidly towards her at a steep angle. The airplane pulled up rapidly and disappeared into the fog.