



Record of Conversation

Dan Baker
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: 01/19/2023

Subject: WPR23FA092 Witness Interview

Person Interviewed: Shane Cooper, Precision Aircraft Services Owner

Mr. Cooper owned Precision Aircraft Services, which had completed the most recent annual inspection on a Cessna 414, N4768G. He interacted with the pilot of N4768G on the morning of January 18, 2023, when the pilot was picking up his airplane. Mr. Cooper stated that the pilot seemed befuddled and somewhat nervous however he also said this was his normal demeanor. He said the pilot didn't fly very much and he thought he had had previous airplane accidents.

Mr. Cooper said the airplane was in possession of his company about one month. It had arrived on November 14th and been signed off on January 4th. The airplane was started up and ran two to three times before the pilot took it as part of the annual inspections. He said the engines were relatively low time engines due to a prior propeller strike. The airplane was equipped with Garmin 530 avionics and the pilot flew with an older style David Clark headset. He said he often needed to talk up a little louder during normal conversation with the pilot.

Mr. Cooper observed the airplane depart from the airport. He said it was a normal departure with a right turnout from the traffic pattern, but he did not see the airplane return. He said his business partner Paul did see the airplane return.



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Person Interviewed: Eric Epylant, Mercy 32 Flight Nurse

Mr. Epylant was a flight nurse on an air medical helicopter, call sign Mercy 32, when he witnessed an airplane accident involving a Cessna 414, N4768G, on January 18, 2023. Mr. Epylant stated he was a fixed wing private pilot with about 550 flight hours.

Mr. Epylant said they had just departed Memorial Medical Center and he said it the radio was busy and it sounded like the Modesto tower was working a lot of IFR departures. He heard an older pilot calling Modesto tower checking to see if tower could hear him. He heard the pilot asking to land and the pilot also asking if the tower controller could hear him and he heard the tower controller asking the pilot if he had the runway in sight.

Mr. Epylant saw an airplane flying what he thought was an extended left downwind. He saw the airplane bank towards the runway and then make a hard bank turn to the right. He saw the airplane then make a hard left turn and watched the nose climb. He said the airplane was going to spin, and then he saw it spin.

Mr. Epylant said he thought the pilot sounded distracted or task saturated. He said when the pilot spoke on the radio he heard a sound in the background, like a gear warning horn.



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Person Interviewed: Jake Harkson, Mercy 32 Pilot

Mr. Harkson was a pilot on an air medical helicopter, call sign Mercy 32, when he witnessed an airplane accident involving a Cessna 414, N4768G, on January 18, 2023.

Mr. Harkson said they had just departed Memorial Medical Center and he heard a lot of radio traffic. He heard a pilot calling Modesto tower as if tower could not hear him. He heard the pilot asking to land and the pilot also asking if the tower controller could hear him. The tower controller responded that they heard him the whole time.

Mr. Harkson saw an airplane flying on downwind on the opposite side of the runway $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away. He said the airplane appeared to be flying "weird maneuvers" like S turns. He saw the airplane over-turn in his direction and heard the flight nurse on board his helicopter say that the airplane was going to stall. About 20 seconds later the airplane flipped over and dove towards the ground. He said he was eye level with the airplane and he could see the underside of the wings and belly of the airplane as the airplane banked and pitched up and down before it stalled.

Mr. Harkson said he was flying the helicopter on the east side of the runway 800 to 1100 feet above the ground, perpendicular to the runway threshold, and opposite direction of the airplane when he witnessed the accident.



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Person Interviewed: Paul Kline, Precision Aircraft Services Owner

Mr. Kline observed N4765G when it departed the airport and when it approached the airfield to land and subsequently crashed on January 18, 2023.

Mr. Klein said the airplane took off from runway 10L and then made a right turn to the West. He then returned to putting aircraft away in a hanger. He later heard the airplane returning and looked out to see it in a low, left turn for runway 28L. He saw the airplane make a sharp left turn. He said he heard the engines "rev" up just as the airplane went out of sight about a mile away. He said the engines sounded the same as when the airplane departed. It was not running rough or cutting out.