

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: August 5, 2023

Subject: WPR23FA301 / Record of Conversation

Contact: William Nelson, Friend, Flew to Airport with Accident Pilot

In an interview, Mr. Nelson provided the following:

- They flew to the Idaho City Airport (U98), Idaho City, Idaho, and arrived about 0800 local.
- They then walked into town for breakfast. The restaurant they walked to was closed so they walked to another part of town and had breakfast and coffee, then walked back to their airplanes.
- He departed in his airplane; a yellow PA-12 Piper. He was informed by a friend that his ADS-B came up at 10:05 and the accident the accident pilot's ADS-B never did come up.
- He had known the accident pilot for about ten years and that he was normal in every respect. He indicated that the accident pilot was fine physically and in good spirits, and was not complaining of anything.
- The accident pilot said nothing about his airplane and the pilot did not squawk about anything and didn't mention the airplane at their breakfast.
- The accident pilot's airplane sounded fine when it came in.
- The accident airplane started immediately, they taxied to the other end and the accident airplane was behind him.

- The only thing that seemed unusual was that he asked him if he was ready to go and he didn't think that the pilot responded.
- He departed and headed for home, because he is so much slower than the accident airplane was. He cruises about 95 MPH.
- They parked by the bridge that crosses the creek.
- They both started their takeoff at the very end, as far as you could get.
- There was an "ever so slight, barely perceptible tail wind and his takeoff distance was only about 100 ft further than where he would normally takeoff from, about 300 ft.
- He did not know if the accident pilot had set his flaps for takeoff (first notch).
- When asked about how the trip was planned, he stated that they communicate via texts.
- When asked about communication, he stated that he did try to contact the accident pilot on "229" [VHF Frequency 122.9] and on "fingers" [123.45]. He didn't get any response, but he wasn't surprised because he wasn't chatty on the radio.
- After he returned to his home airport, he went to help a friend start a brand-new engine, which took about an hour. He then went to the accident pilot's hangar and his truck was there and the hangar was locked. He started asking around and heard that there was a runway closure [at U98] and he put two and two together.
- He provided photos of the text thread regarding the flight and the accident.
- The accident pilot had no difficulties flying the airplane and he had owned it for about four years. Another person had built the airplane and that it was involved in a previous event where a propeller had failed. The engine and propeller were replaced and were basically new. He stated that the accident pilot maintained the airplane to a very high standard.

In a follow-up telephone conversation that occurred on January 25, 2024, Mr. Nelson provided additional information:

- After they arrived back to their airplanes, the accident pilot was near his airplane when he stated that he had to go to the bathroom. He immediately headed toward the weeds.
- Mr. Nelson stated something to the effect that there was a restroom nearby, to which the accident pilot stated that he would not make it. Mr. Nelson recalled that the accident pilot was gone for about 10 minutes and mentioned that someone urinating would have only been gone for about 3 to minutes. He considered investigating but didn't.

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Contact: Scott Shay / Witness

In a face-to-face interview, Mr. Nelson stated that he lived about ½ mile from the airport. He reported that when airplanes arrive and depart from the airport (Idaho City USFS Airport (U98) he can easily hear them.

He reported that on the morning of the accident he was outside on his front porch. He heard an engine power up. He then heard the engine just stop and he heard a slap or smack sound. His mother mentioned that it was possibly a car a crash on the highway, but he believed it to be an airplane engine. He got into his car and drive to the airport and saw the white tail of an airplane. He ran to the accident site and was the first person to arrive. He saw that the pilot was covered with tree branches, and he cleared the pilot of the debris. He called 911 and was present when the first responder arrived.

When asked if anything about the engine noise sounded unusual, he answered "nothing. I heard the loud sound of the engine until there was no more sound, just the slap. It never sounded like he took his hand off of the throttle."

When asked if he heard a reduction of engine noise or what sounded like a reduction in RPM's he stated "never."

When asked about hearing or seeing the yellow airplane, he stated that about ten to fifteen minutes before the accident airplane started, he heard what he thought were two airplanes depart.

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Contact: Shelly Yagues / Wife of the Pilot

In a telephone conversation with Mrs. Yagues, she mentioned that her husband received his pilot's license at a very young age, around the time that he was a senior in high school. He bought the airplane about three years prior to the accident and did not build it himself. It was a local purchase. She said that she and her husband were doing great. Their business was doing good, and the money was stable. She said that the pilot was never depressed, and he loved his Fridays when he would go flying or associate with his friends and discuss aviation interests.

She mentioned that no maintenance had been done to the airplane recently.

She mentioned the pilot had an [REDACTED] the included [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. He also had a history of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and was taking medications for those ailments. She agreed to provide his prescription to assist in the investigation. She mentioned that the pilot's father had three major heart attacks, and the pilot was aware of the potential for a heart attack.

She stated that the weekend before the accident, the pilot was pulling weeds and developed a big rash, and he eventually went to the emergency room for treatment. She said that there were times when his color looked off.

She mentioned that the pilot got sick after having breakfast immediately before the accident flight. She mentioned that Mr. Willian Nelson had more information of that issue. She recalled that the pilot and his friend were walking back to their airplanes when the accident pilot had to immediately go to the bathroom and couldn't wait to get to the airport, so he went into the trees and was gone for about 15 minutes.

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Contact: Robert Saum, Friend, Owns a similar airplane

In a face-to-face interview, Mr. Nelson stated that he has an airplane that is exactly like the accident airplane except that it has a different fixed-pitch propeller. He stated that when they take off from Idah City Airport, they use one notch of flaps because of the gravel.

In a second conversation with Mr. Saum, he explained that the accident pilot already had his seat adjusted to his liking, and that the seats for the Glastar were adjustable, but not like a Cessna, where you could lift a lever and adjust the seat. He stated that for the seats in his and the accident pilot's airplane, the seats are adjusted while the pilot is outside the airplane. An adjustment would be made and then the pilot would have to get inside to determine if the adjustment was correct. He stated that the seats do move about six inches in travel.

Mr. Saum also stated that the accident pilot had a habit of consuming multiple Monster energy drinks. He recalled that on the day before the accident the accident pilot was up late helping another friend install rivets into a kit airplane.