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Aviation Safety - Western Pacific Region

Date: May 10, 2023

Subject: Record of Conversation

Contact: Michael Beckett, Passenger on Accident Flight

Mr. Beckett reported that he was on Dilaudid and Oxycodone at the time of the interview, but that his memory was sharp, and he felt he could provide factual information about the accident.

According to Mr. Beckett, the accident pilot (a friend of his) had recently purchased the accident airplane and had planned to adjust the idle mixture on it and then go for a pleasure flight. The pilot told Mr. Beckett he had a total of about 50 hours on floats. Mr. Beckett holds a private pilot certificate and is a certificated airframe and powerplant mechanic. They departed from Olympia, Washington and flew locally before they turned north and transitioned through McChord. They landed uneventfully on American Lake. Mr. Beckett recalled they had obtained weather from either Tacoma Narrows or McChord and noted that the wind conditions were very light based on the ripples in the water. After a normal, uneventful takeoff, they flew north to Steilacoom Lake in a landing pattern and the pilot gave the checklist to Mr. Beckett who read off each item. Both occupants had double checked that the landing gear was up for the water landing. The pilot elected to approach the lake from the north and land south. They double checked the landing gear position again. When the airplane was about 2-3 ft above the water, they heard an aural warning to "check gear" (the system didn't give them an aural warning when they landed on American Lake). They both looked outside and verified that the gear was up.

Mr. Beckett stated that the pilot was not speaking out loud but decided to go-around. He added power and started to climb. About this time the pilot asked the passenger if he felt they were going to clear the trees and Mr. Beckett said "yes" out of blind confidence but didn't think they were going to clear them. Mr. Beckett reported that

the safest path at this point was towards the trees. The stall warning had gone off (airspeed was about 59-60) and Mr. Beckett told the pilot to "keep the nose down." About 50 ft from the trees the pilot asked again if they were going to collide with the trees and the passenger said, "of course not." They subsequently impacted several trees with the left float and the airplane impacted and rapidly descended to the ground.

Mr. Beckett reported that they impacted trees and that there were no preimpact mechanical failures or anomalies with the airplane.

Follow-up Conversation: May 16, 2023

Mr. Beckett reported they were close to gross weight and had a half tank of gas. He believes they approached the lake about 200 ft above the pilots house on the shoreline. He remembers white buoys used for waterskiing races as the approximate point they began the go-around. He couldn't remember clearly, but believed the pilot went from flaps 30 to flaps 20 according to procedure.

Follow-up Conversation: July 19, 2023

Mr. Beckett corrected the preliminary report published, which stated the accident flight was going to be the third water landing of the flight. They only landed once in American Lake.