

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: November 29, 2023

Subject: WPR24FA040 / Record of Conversation

Contact: Brenda Sanchez / Mother of Pilot

In conversations with Mr. Sanchez, she confirmed that the pilot and passengers had flown to Las Cruces, New Mexico to attend a family Thanksgiving get-together. The pilot provided local flights on the following Friday. The mother and father of the pilot drove the occupants to the airport on Saturday. She said that the pilot knew that front tire needed air because it had a very slow leak, and he hadn't had to air it up in a while.

She stated that the maintenance logbooks were in the pilot's safe in San Antonio. She and her husband will travel back to San Antonio and secure the logbooks for the investigation.

In a follow-up conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez, that occurred on May 29, 2024, she stated that they got a call from the pilot while he was at Pecos Municipal Airport (PEQ) Pecos, Texas and that they knew the pilot was going to stop there for gas. Mr. Snachez recalled that the pilot did not mention anything about the weather at that time.

Mr. Sanchez recalled that they also got a call from the pilot while at one of the other airports, but he could not recall what airport it was. He stated that the last thing the pilot, or his wife stated was that they were going and were afraid that they were going to get "boxed in" meaning boxed in because of the weather. He said that they came back and a guy in a helicopter came back to the airport because of the weather. Mr. Sanchez recalled that the pilot's wife mentioned that he [the pilot] was looking for another route now.

Mr. Sanchez stated that the pilot put a tracker app on his cell phone so that the parents could track the movement of the airplane. Mrs. Sanchez stated that they kept up with them on the tracker until late in the evening. She stated that he always call and when he didn't call, she went onto the tracker and saw where it had stopped. They began to make phone calls and around 3:00 in the morning, Mrs. Sanchez called the Sheriff's Department who received the coordinates from Mrs. Sanchez. The county employee confirmed that the coordinates were in the next County, Irion County and passed Mrs. Sanchez to that county Sheriff. She gave the Sheriff deputy the coordinates from the tracker. This was around 0500 in the morning.

Mr. Sanchez stated that he knew something was wrong because his son always calls when he arrives to a destination. Mr. Sanchez also sent a text telling the pilot to call no matter what time. He called the pilot's daughter, who had stayed at home, to check to see if the family had returned home and she confirmed that they had not arrive home.

At that point the two departed their home, not knowing exactly where they were heading. Sometime after they passed through the border check they received a text from the Sheriff's department in Mertzson. The couple arrived in Mertzson and spoke with the Sheriff and were notified of the condition of their family members.

When asked about the pilot or his wife needing to get back for work or anything like that, Mr. Sanchez stated no, but the pilot believed that the weather was going to be worse on Sunday, so they left on Saturday. Mr. Sanchez recalled that the pilot mentioned that it was going to be a little bit cloudy, but that they were good to go.

After the conversation, Mrs. Sanchez sent a copy of a text message conversation where the wife of the pilot stated that they had to turn around and were heading to Ft. Stockton, and that the weather was not good.

The pilot's wife later sent another text message stating that they were leaving Ft. Stockton, and the pilot had a new route.

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Contact: Robert "Andy" Smith, FAA, Lubbock, TX

In conversations with Mr. Smith, he stated the following.

- While at the accident scene on Sunday, he did not detect the smell of fuel. He stated that both fuel tanks had been breached.
- He saw indications of a low angle, high speed impact with terrain.

On Tuesday, he spoke with a family member who stated:

- The pilot and his family had travelled to Las Cruces, New Mexico for Thanksgiving.
- On Friday the pilot gave airplane rides to family members.
- On Saturday, they departed Las Cruces for their home in Southwestern San Antonio.
- The pilot landed at Big Lake Airport (E41) and was there for 3 hours.
- The pilot was trying to find a way around weather.

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Contact: Michael Gordon, Flight Instructor, Anderson Aviation, Part 161 Flight School

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Gordon, he stated that he was employed as a flight instructor for Anderson Aviation for [private and commercial certificates]. Anderson Aviation is a Part 61 flight school located in Bulverde, Texas. He received his flight instructor certificate in September 2022 and has been employed with Anderson Aviation since March of 2023. He operated the Piper Cherokee, PA-28-140, 160, and 180 series single engine land airplanes. He stated that the accident pilot came to the school for flight training and had already brought the airplane to the Bulverde Airport and had flown the airplane back with a flight instructor (later identified as Ms. Rebecca Carol). He was assigned the accident pilot as a student due to his available schedule. He thought that the pilot had little training before he started training him. He recalled that when the pilot bought the airplane, he hired an instructor to fly back with him so that he could start his flight training. He believed that the airplane came from Virginia. He stated that he did not have any information on the airplane's previous owner.

Mr. Gordon stated that the pilot already had the airplane at the airport. He said that the airplane was in great condition. He thought that it was very nice and in good shape. The previous owner had taken very good care of it. He said that it did have older radios and no GPS. He said that it flew, handled, and performed great.

When discussing the flight school training, he stated that the flight training went well and that the pilot progressed normally. He indicated that prior to soloing, he progressed slower than what he expected but after soloing, he progressed at a greater than average pace. He said that his solo flight and his cross-country training

flights went very well. He recalled that for his standard cross country, the pilot flew to Burnet Municipal Airport/Kate Craddock Field (BMQ) Burnet, Texas and back. For his long cross country, he went to BMQ to Kerrville Municipal Airport / Louis Schreiner Field (ERV) Kerrville, Texas and back. He did that one twice. When asked, he stated that the pilot did not make any flights to Las Cruces International Airport (LRU) Las Cruces, New Mexico during the training, but he recalled that the accident flight was likely his second trip to LRU since purchasing the airplane.



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Contact: Justin O. Miller, Line Service Manager, Francis Aviation Los Cruces,
NM, KLRU

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Miller, the IIC explained that he had found Mr. Miller's business card in the pilot's wallet. Mr. Miller explained that he had discussion with the pilot. He said that the pilot and passengers arrived on Wednesday afternoon. He tied the airplane down and the family came to pick him up. When they spoke, the pilot stated that they had recently purchased the airplane and that he had a private pilot certificate. He said that the pilot was given instructions on how to access the airplane on Friday so that he could provide flights for his family. On Saturday they bought fuel (26.3 gallons), and topped off the airplane, then departed around 0900.



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Contact: Raul Mairata, Line Tech Supervisor, Francis Aviation Los Cruces, NM,
KLRU

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Mairata, he stated that they topped off the airplane and advised the pilot that the nose landing gear was low. They brought over their compressor and aired up the tire. He stated that the family arrived and picked up the occupants. He stated that everything was normal except for the front tire pressure. On the day that they left, they removed the chocks and the airplane departed. He restated that everything was normal.