

Joshua Cawthra
Deputy Regional Chief
Western Pacific Region

Date: 10/9/2024

Subject: WPR24FA298

Contact: Frank Hoogammer, pilot

During a telephone conversation with Mr. Hoogammer, he stated that he and Ms. Littlefield each flew to Toledo for gas. Mr. Paulson was ahead of them and landed first. They went to the fuel pumps and topped off. Mr. Paulson departed first, while he and Ms. Littlefield each waited for the jump airplane to land. They then saw Mr. Paulson over Silver Lake heading south, while they were over I-5. They caught up to Mr. Paulson somewhere near Longview/Kelso and flew together for a bit. At some point, Mr. Paulson told Mr. Hoogammer to go ahead so his passenger could take photos. As they rounded the area near Woodland or Battleground, they started turning left and Mr. Paulson said, "see that cut to the left, go through that." Mr. Hoogammer was ahead of him and in the meantime, Ms. Littlefield said she wasn't comfortable going that way and proceeded south, to go up the Columbia River.

About 5 to 10 minutes later, going through the cut, Mr. Hoogammer started drifting to the right, as terrain was a little bit better. Mr. Paulson then told Mr. Hoogammer "left turn Clyde" which was the last time Mr. Hoogammer heard from Mr. Paulson. At the time, Mr. Hoogammer did not look to see where Mr. Paulson was, as he figured he was behind him.

As they continued, Mr. Hoogammer saw the ridge, added power, saw his ground speed decrease, wasn't climbing, and decided to add additional power. He did not see Mr. Paulson and assumed he was still behind him. He realized he wasn't going to clear the ridge and did a 360° turn to the left. He didn't clearly see Mr. Paulson but recalled a glance which could have been his airplane. He then did another 360° turn, and began looking for Mr. Paulson further, but didn't see him. Mr. Hoogammer stated that he tried to reach Mr. Paulson on the radio, unsuccessfully. Upon reaching the

altitude he needed to clear the ridge, he performed a couple of S turns, looking for Mr. Paulson. It wasn't too smooth out, and with the difficulty gaining altitude, he decided not to descend back into the canyon.

Mr. Hoogammer vaguely recalled possibly seeing yellow in the trees but didn't see any damaged trees and felt it was a "false image" in his head. Mr. Hoogammer continued to Hood River, north of Cascade Locks, and the smoke was getting "more intense", but he was still able to see the ground. A few minutes later he saw a biplane, increased power to catch up to them, and it turned out to be Ms. Littlefield, not Mr. Paulson. They landed at Hood River, tried to call Mr. Paulson, and got no response. About 30 to 45 minutes later, they ran into someone, pulled up Mr. Paulson's flight track, and made a call to Tom Peterson. One of their friends then departed Hood River and flew back to the area to listen for an ELT.

Mr. Hoogammer said that the turn up the "cut" had not been discussed while the group was on the ground at Toledo. He recalled that it is a box canyon and that he got caught in it a couple of years ago.