

History of Flight

Cessna Conquest N441NC was flown to Houston, Texas the morning of January 10, 1980 for routine maintenance. Included in this maintenance was compliance with Cessna Service Letter PJ79-33. This letter required inspection of the diaphragm retention ring on the outflow and safety valves of the pressurization system. The rings were inspected by a mechanic at Cruse Aviation and found to be free of defect. Some other minor maintenance was done on the aircraft, 75 gallons of fuel were added to the 700 pounds of fuel already in each wing in accordance with the pilot's request, and the aircraft was released for flight.

The aircraft departed Houston at approximately 2030 CST on an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan to Shreveport, Louisiana. The purpose of the flight was to pick up the head football coach at Louisiana State University and transport him back to Baton Rouge following his recruiting trip to the Shreveport area. The aircraft cruised to Shreveport at Flight Level (FL) 210, and the air traffic control tapes revealed only routine handling. After landing at Shreveport the pilot commented to the line boy how well the aircraft was operating.

A single passenger, the head football coach, boarded the aircraft at Shreveport. The football coach had flown in the Nichols Construction Conquest before. According to the pilot who had flown these trips, the coach declined invitations to sit in the co-pilot's seat and elected to ride in the passenger compartment. Also, the pilot of this flight had a reputation for not allowing anyone except designated flight crew to sit in the co-pilot's seat.

An assistant football coach accompanied the head coach on the recruiting trip. He drove the coach to the Shreveport Airport but was not scheduled to fly back to Baton Rouge with him. According to the assistant, the coach was an accomplished "cat napper" who could and did fall asleep for short periods of time whenever the opportunity arose. The assistant coach felt that it was highly probable the coach was asleep by the time the aircraft was airborne. He also stated, however, that it was unusual for the coach to remain asleep for extended periods of time, and he felt that it was unlikely the coach would have slept for the entire duration of the Conquest flight.

The aircraft departed Shreveport on an IFR flight plan at 2132 CST. The pilot was cleared initially direct Baton Rouge. The clearance was changed after the aircraft became airborne because of adverse weather along the pilot's original route of flight. The amended clearance issued by Fort Worth Center cleared N441NC direct Monroe, direct Vicksburg, direct McComb, direct Baton Rouge.

The pilot had filed for FL 210 but changed his requested altitude to FL 250 after becoming airborne. Fort Worth Center cleared the Conquest initially to FL 230 and shortly thereafter to FL 250. The pilot acknowledged his clearance to the higher altitude and reported passing FL 220. This was the last radio contact any ground station had with Conquest N441NC.

SEP- 81 000014

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF PERTINENT FACTS, CONDITIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES Continued

At approximately 2140 CST, 8 minutes after the last transmission from N441NC, Center tried to contact the aircraft. When repeated efforts failed, Fort Worth asked an airborne Pan American aircraft to attempt to contact the Cessna. The Pan American crew was unable to contact N441NC on the en route frequency but was able to contact the aircraft on emergency frequency 121.5. They instructed the Conquest pilot to contact Fort Worth Center on the assigned en route frequency. The Conquest pilot acknowledged the transmission in a loud and clear voice and read back the frequency. The Pan American crew subsequently heard the Conquest pilot attempt to check in with Fort Worth Center on the assigned frequency, but they reported his transmission was very weak and barely readable. Fort Worth Center did not receive the transmission at all. According to the Pan American pilot who communicated with N441NC, he could not detect any noticeable abnormal voice characteristic in the Conquest pilot's transmission.

Fort Worth Center's altitude readout on the Cessna indicated the pilot had climbed through his assigned altitude of FL 250 and had climbed to FL 280 by the time the Pan American crew managed to contact him. Also, the aircraft did not turn to a southerly heading to proceed toward Baton Rouge but instead continued on a northeasterly heading. As the aircraft passed out of Fort Worth Center airspace, the altitude readout was 32,200 feet. Groundspeed was computed to be 335 knots.

Review of the Fort Worth Center computer data revealed that the aircraft departed Shreveport on a 125 degree heading, turned to 090 shortly after take off, then stabilized on a heading of about 075 degrees. He maintained this heading, plus or minus several degrees, through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and out into the Atlantic Ocean. The altitude readout from the transponder revealed that the aircraft did not stop climbing from the time it left 12,000 feet until it reached its absolute altitude around 40,000 feet.

F-4 aircraft from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base were scrambled to intercept the aircraft as it flew into the North Carolina area. They were able to obtain visual contact on the aircraft's lights, but were not able to fly close enough to make out any detail. An F-106 from Langley AFB was scrambled to pursue the aircraft as it approached the coast of Virginia. The F-106 pilot reported that the aircraft was stabilized at 40,500 feet on a magnetic heading of 075 degrees. The aircraft strobe light and navigation lights were on. The F-106 had a considerable speed advantage on the Cessna. The pilot could not slow down enough to fly formation on the 441 and give the aircraft a detailed visual inspection. The pilot could not make out any detail within the cockpit as he flew by, but he reported seeing a glow from lights in the cockpit. He also reported that the windscreen and side panels were not iced over or frosted, and the aircraft appeared to be intact structurally. He noticed no holes or damage to the fuselage, windscreen or other structural areas. He did not notice the door specifically but he did indicate that there was no obvious opening in the fuselage such as would exist if the door had blown out.

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Monroe, LA, ATC Tower


January 14, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to aircraft N441NC at approximately 100 miles east of Norfolk, Virginia, January 11, 1980, at approximately 0620 GMT.

My name is Eugene R. Farrell, Jr. (BY). I am employed as an Air Traffic Control Specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration at the Monroe Airport Traffic Control Tower, Monroe, Louisiana.

During the period 2030 GMT January 10, 1980, to 0430 GMT January 11, 1980, I was on duty in the Monroe ATC Tower. I was working position radar approach control from 0211 GMT to 0359 GMT.

At approximately 0345 GMT, I heard Clipper One attempt contact with November 441NC. Several attempts were made, and twice it sounded as though Clipper One had communication with N441NC. Clipper One advised N441NC that Fort Worth Center was trying to contact him on one three five point five. I did not hear a reply from N441NC at any time. At approximately 0358 GMT, Jetstar 22RB attempted contact with N441NC. I did not hear N441NC reply to Jetstar 22RB.


EUGENE R. FARRELL, JR.
Monroe ATC Tower

SEP-81 000074

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Monroe, LA, ATC Tower

January 14, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to aircraft N441NC at approximately 100 miles east of Norfolk, Virginia, January 11, 1980, at approximately 0620 GMT.

My name is Bobby G. Swanner (BG). I am employed as a Supervisory Air Traffic Control Specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration at the Monroe Airport Traffic Control Tower, Monroe, Louisiana.

During the period 2030 GMT January 10, 1980, to 0430 GMT January 11, 1980, I was on duty in the Monroe ATC Tower. I was not working a control position.

I heard Clipper One attempt to contact Cessna 441NC from approximately 0343 GMT to 0347 GMT on frequency 121.5. Although I did not hear Cessna 441NC answer Clipper One, it sounded as if on one attempt contact was made. Later during the watch, I heard Jetstar 22RB attempt to contact Cessna 441NC twice. It sounded as if he were unsuccessful.

Bobby G. Swanner
BOBBY C. SWANNER
Monroe ATC Tower

SEP-21 000075

PERSONAL STATEMENT

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Fort Worth Air Route Traffic Control Center

January 11, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to aircraft N441NC approximately 100 miles east of Norfolk, Virginia, January 11, 1980 at 0620 GMT.

My name is Thomas E. Beveridge. My operating initials are TI 7. I am employed as an air traffic control specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration at the Fort Worth Air Route Traffic Control Center at Euless, Texas.

During the period 2000 GMT January 10, 1980 and 0400 GMT January 11, 1980, I was on duty in the Ft. Worth Air Route Traffic Control Center. I was working Shreveport high radar/PAXTO high radar positions combined from 0301 GMT to 0336 GMT.

At approximately 0331Z N441NC called on my frequency, 135.1, and advised that he was climbing to FL 230. I acknowledged N441NC and issued clearance to climb to FL 250. N441NC acknowledged the clearance to FL 250.

At approximately 0338Z I observed the Mode "C" altitude on the data block of N441NC indicating an altitude of 25.4. I continued to observe the data block for several seconds to determine whether N441NC would continue climbing or descend back to his assigned altitude. At approximately 0338:52, the data block Mode "C" indicated that N441NC was still climbing and I attempted to contact N441NC on 135.1 with no response. I attempted several more times to contact N441NC with no response and at approximately 0340:15, I requested PA001 (clipper 1) to attempt to contact N441NC on frequency 135.1. At approximately 0344:56 PA001 advised that he had made contact with N441NC on frequency 121.5 and that N441NC would return to 135.1.

At approximately 0345:52 I requested PA001 to verify that he had made contact with N441NC. PA001 advised that he had talked to N441NC on 121.5 and that N441NC was very weak.

At approximately 0348:23, I switched EA668 to frequency 135.1 and requested that EA668 attempt to contact N441NC since EA668 was in closer proximity to N441NC. EA668 made several attempts to contact N441NC on 135.1, but with no success.

I reserve the right to change this statement should additional facts be forthcoming.

THOMAS E. BEVERIDGE,

SEP- 81 000077

PERSONNEL STATEMENT

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Memphis Air Route Traffic Control Center

January 16, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to N441NC 100 nautical miles east of Norfolk, Virginia, January 11, 1980, at 0620 GMT.

My name is Chuck Hilliard, (SF). I am employed as an Air Traffic Control Specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration at the Memphis Air Route Traffic Control Center, Memphis, Tennessee.

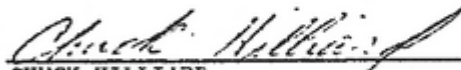
During the period 2048 GMT, January 10, 1980, to 0448 GMT, January 11, 1980, I was on duty at Memphis ARTCC. I was working the position R-65 from 0325 GMT to 0420 GMT.

At approximately 0340 GMT, I received a pointout from Fort Worth Center on N441NC and was told that the aircraft was assigned FL-250, but was climbing above the assigned altitude. I was also informed that the aircraft was a radio failure. At approximately 0343 GMT, I accepted a radar handoff on N441NC and was again informed that the aircraft was a radio failure and was still climbing above its assigned altitude.

I made several attempts to establish two-way communications with N441NC as the aircraft proceeded through the Vicksburg high sector. I also observed the Vicksburg high manual controller request the Jackson and Greenwood flight service stations to attempt to contact N441NC on all available frequencies. After several attempts to establish communications failed, I informed the South Area Supervisor of the situation.

At approximately 0356 GMT, I gave a radar pointout to the R-46 and R-31 controllers and informed them of the status of N441NC. I gave a radar handoff to the R-46 controller on N441NC prior to the aircraft entering the Meridian high sector.

I reserve the right to change this statement in the event new facts are forthcoming.


CHUCK HILLIARD
Memphis Air Route Traffic Control Center

SEP-81 000081

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

ATLANTA ARTC CENTER
299 Woolsey Road
Hampton, Georgia 30228

PERSONNEL STATEMENT

January 22, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to aircraft N441NC at approximately 100 NM East of Norfolk, VA, January 11, 1980 at 0620 GMT.

My name is Lloyd Moore. I am employed as a Supervisory Air Traffic Control Specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration at the Atlanta ARTC Center, Hampton, Georgia.

During the period 2045, January 10, 1980 to 0459 GMT, January 11, 1980, I was on duty in the Atlanta Center. I was working as Area Supervisor of the West area.

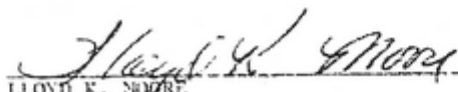
At approximately 0428 GMT, I was informed of the limited data block and possible problems with N441NC. At this time the aircraft was approximately 65 miles northwest of Vulcan VORTAC, approximately 25 miles inside of Memphis ARTC Center's airspace and at an altitude of approximately FL384. N441NC was tracking on a heading of approximately 070°.

N441NC crossed Atlanta Center boundary at approximately 0432 GMT at a point approximately 40 NM northwest of Vulcan VORTAC. I remained after completion of my shift and observed the aircraft pass approximately ten miles south of Sugarloaf Mtn. VORTAC and exit Atlanta Center's airspace approximately 20 NM south/southeast of Greensboro VORTAC at approximately 0536 GMT.

As N441NC traversed the Gadsden sector's airspace, I instructed my crew to start a track on the aircraft and to attempt to establish contact with the aircraft on 121.5 MHz. We later received the frequency on which the aircraft was last worked (135.1) and attempted contact on that frequency.

The aircraft entered Atlanta Center's airspace at an altitude of FL38.9 or FL390 and continued to climb slowly, departing Atlanta Center's airspace at an altitude of approximately FL40.3. The aircraft appeared to be climbing as fuel (weight) was burned off.

I also observed the interception of N441NC by Seymour Johnson AFB fighters (F4's) as the aircraft entered Washington's airspace.


LLOYD K. MOORE
Atlanta ARTC Center

SEP-81 000082

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON ARTC CENTER
Leesburg, Virginia 22075



PERSONNEL STATEMENT

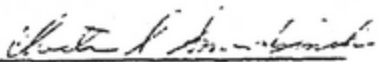
January 21, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to aircraft N441NC on January 11, 1980, at approximately 0623 GMT.

My name is Chester S. Smerdzinski and my operating initials are CS. I am employed as a Supervisory Air Traffic Control Specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration at the Washington Air Route Traffic Control Center, Leesburg, Virginia.

During the period 0400 GMT, January 11, 1980, and 1200 GMT, January 11, 1980, I was on duty in the Washington ARTC Center. I was working as the Acting Assistant Chief In Charge.

At approximately 0503 GMT, January 11, 1980, Aerospace Defense Command advised they were scrambling two aircraft from Goldsboro. I copied the information and advised the controllers at the Seymour sector. A few minutes later SATCS Kelly advised me that the scramble was initiated to intercept N441NC. For the next two hours I relayed information and coordinated with a number of facilities including Aerospace Defense Command, Atlanta ARTC Center, New York ARTC Center, etc. At approximately 0626 GMT, I was informed by Aerospace Defense Command that N441NC crashed in the ocean. I then made the necessary accident notifications and prepared the preliminary accident notice in accordance with FAA Order 8020.11.


SATCS, CHESTER S. SMERDZINSKI
Washington ARTC Center

SEP-81 0000084

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON ARTC CENTER
Leesburg, Virginia 22075



PERSONNEL STATEMENT

January 11, 1980

The following is a report concerning the accident to aircraft N441NC on January 11, 1980, at approximately 0623 GMT.

My name is Ronnie J. McClanahan and my operating initials are NU. I am employed as an Air Traffic Control Specialist by the Federal Aviation Administration in the "F" area of specialization at the Washington Air Route Traffic Control Center, Leesburg, Virginia.

During the period 0400 GMT, January 11, 1980, and 1200 GMT, January 11, 1980, I was on duty in the Washington ARTC Center. I was working the R26 position from 0515 GMT to 0545 GMT.

JL02 and JL06 were assigned to me to intercept N441NC, a derelict aircraft tracking eastbound at FL400. I began working the JL flight at approximately 0522 on a discrete UHF frequency and vectored them to intercept N441NC. They intercepted N441NC at approximately 0529 and reported no signs of life on board and no response from the pilot. I continued to work the JL flight and monitor the track of N441NC until approximately 0542, at which time I handed the flights off to sector 23.


RONNIE J. MCCLANAHAN, ATCS
Washington ARTC Center

SEP-91 000087