

Mr Rager,

Here is what I experienced the day of the accident at K34, Gardner Municipal Airport, June 2012.

I did not see the accident in person and actually did not know that anything had happened until almost 45 minutes after. I was sitting in my office in the flight school when I got a call from the tower chief at New Century asking if I knew anything about an airplane down around 185th and 56 highway. At that point I did not know anything at all. Just before I got the phone call I heard another aircraft, N227TW from Johnson County Executive take off from runway 8. I thought that was odd as the wind had been out of the south but checked the METAR from KIXD and noticed that it had shifted to the Northeast and was blowing 10-12kts. I got up and checked the windsock and it was showing wind from the North Northeast. That was maybe 5 or 10 minutes before getting the call from New Century.

I went back to work thinking that I did not see the accident airplane at the fuel pumps any longer. I had seen the Debonair flying in the pattern about 45 minutes before I got the first call from New Century thinking that I hope there was an instructor in that plane as the prop kept making large changes in pitch. It sounded like a student working toward a complex endorsement. I watched a landing or two and they seemed fine, I do not remember watching any takeoffs. I did see them pull up to the fuel pumps but went back in my office after they pulled up. I did not see them fuel the plane.

About 45 minutes after the first call from New Century I got a second call from the tower operator asking about an airplane down. At that point there were a couple of guys in the airport lobby that were talking about a plane down at the end of runway 17. After learning that it was the airplane they had been asking about, I went down with Claud Hobby, the former flight school owner, to see if we needed to shut down runway 17 or if the accident was far enough off the runway to keep it open. I remember thinking to myself as we went down to the accident "why was he taking off with a tailwind" as I remembered checking the windsock earlier. Pulling up to the plane I wondered why it appeared he had deployed full flaps on takeoff. We looked at the airplane, talked to the pilot and instructor a little bit, determined that the airplane was far enough off the runway that it did not need to be shut down and headed back to the flight school. The FAA personnel showed up about 30 minutes after and told us just to let arriving aircraft know that there would be men and equipment working at the approach end of runway 35. I left the airport facility about an hour after that.

Joel Beyer
Flight School Owner/Instructor
Gardner Aviation
Eagle Flight Aviation Ministries
[REDACTED]