

## Interviews with Delbert Voegelé

### Investigation of N8681 aircraft accident

Interviewed by: FAA Aviation Safety Inspector Allan Thilmany

On 21 Oct 2016, and aircraft N8681 crashed into a pilots farm field near Morristown MN. The pilot was identified as Delbert Voegelé. The pilot was airlifted to hospital for his injuries.

I performed first interview via the phone shortly after the pilot was released from hospital and arrived at the rehab unit. I asked him the events of the day of the accident. He stated he did not know what happened. He got airborne at approximately 150 feet and when he reached about 100 feet AGL, the engine stopped. He turned on the electric fuel pump and switched tanks. The engine restarted momentarily but failed to keep running. He identified an emergency landing spot but due to a herd of cattle, he needed to change his landing area. When he made the turn away from the cattle, he also needed to adjust to avoid a tree. He stated his mains touched down first and due to the steepness of the hill, he came to immediate stop. He stated all three landing gear might have touched down at the same time. He did recollect that he turned the fuel selector valve to the opposite tank following engine failure. He was not sure what happened but was suspecting a vapor lock. He had just looked over the engine since he changed the oil the Sunday before the accident.

The second interview was performed in person at the rehab unit. ASI David Nelson and Mrs. Voegelé were also in attendance. I asked Mr. Voegelé to recount events again. He stated he started the aircraft up after taking it out of his hanger. He was allowing it to warm up and he received a call from his grandson who needed some help. He shut down the engine and returned about an hour later. He restarted the aircraft and taxied to the end of his private grass runway. He performed all the run-up checks and started the takeoff roll. When he got to approximately 100 feet, the engine quit. He remembers turning on the electric fuel pump and changing tanks. The engine momentarily started but did not keep running. He reiterated that he needed to avoid the cattle and the tree. Once the mains touched down, the grass slowed it down instantly and the aircraft came to an immediate stop. He tried to get out of the aircraft but he was unable. His family members immediately showed and help him out of the aircraft and called emergency response. He stated he fueled the aircraft that morning with 92-octane automotive fuel that he had purchased recently from the gas station.

When asked about what he thinks happened, he felt it was a vapor lock due to the time between the first start up and the second start and takeoff. He also stated that the engine has a safety feature that prevents it from starting if the throttle is out of the idle position. He feels that he may have gotten the engine running if he was able to bring the throttle back to idle.

Mr. Voegelé was presented with the Pilot Bill of Rights and he presented all maintenance and pilot records.

**From:** Allan Thilmany  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 22, 2016 10:26 AM  
**To:** Scott, Arnold  
**Cc:** David R. Nelson  
**Subject:** FW: Rotax 912ULS-N8681 Zenith CH-750

Arnold,  
Final interview with Mr. Voegele:

22 Nov 2016 – Did final interview with Mr. Voegele. I asked him if he had a fuel vapor return line. He said he did not. He did not believe there was a capability for one. I then asked him about the fuel he put into the aircraft. He stated he knows it was fresh fuel. He always (except maybe one time) put in 92 octane from the gas station. He put 5 gallons in the left tank that morning. The one time he put in fuel from his home tank but did not like to use it since it was a lower octane. I then asked him about the spark plugs. He stated he believes they are to be changed at 100 hours and he felt he did it on schedule and they were getting due again.

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Accident Investigation