



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Del Deatherage - FAA

Date: August 1, 2017

Subject: – CEN17LA293

Mr. Cocker had not flown this airplane prior to the accident flight.

The aircraft owner stated that Mr. Crocker liked flying airplanes with sticks rather than yokes.

He checked the flight controls and verified control continuity.

There was no fuel in the fuel tank, however the fuel tank was upside down and the fuel cap was off. There was fuel in the lines going to the engine.

Removed the spark plugs and was able to turn the engine through by hand.

Pamela S Sullivan
National Transportation Safety Board
Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Gene Frost – Part Owner

Date: August 1, 2017

Subject: – CEN17LA293

Stan had been wanting to fly the airplane for some time because he had never flown a T-Bird. He had a lot of experience with flying ultralights and had built a couple airplanes. He estimated that Stan had about 200 – 400 hours of flight time and stated that Stan was probably a better pilot than he was.

He called Stan and asked if he wanted to fly the airplane. They met for breakfast and talked about the airplane. Once at the airport, they walked around the airplane and he pointed the airspeed, trim

Stan got into the airplane and it was a cramped fit. Stan is a big guy, 6'1" and about 250 pounds. It was a tight fit for him in the cockpit and he mentioned that maybe he shouldn't fly it. Gene then adjusted the rudder pedals and Stan was more comfortable. Gene stated the yoke was contacting Stan's leg when he turned it to the left, but it didn't contact his leg when he turned it to the right. Stan liked flying airplanes with sticks instead of yokes.

He told Stan that the wing tends to drop when you are in a turn so you have to be cognizant when turning and be ready to recover quickly. The airplane was little "squirrely" to handle.

He has a cheat sheet with the airspeeds on it and he and Stan went over the speeds before the flight. Stall speed is 35 mph.

Stan started the airplane and taxied. He sat for a while holding the brakes with the airplane running.

When taking off on runway 02, the traffic pattern is a right pattern because of the nearby prison. Stan's takeoff on runway 02 was "beautiful", as was the initial climb. It looked like he was traveling about 50 mph during the takeoff run. He walked around the hangar and looked back over his shoulder at the airplane. The airplane was in a crosswind turn. The right wing was

low and the airplane never leveled off. The bank looked like it got steeper then it “fell over on the wing.” He estimated the altitude was about 150 ft agl when he saw the airplane in the bank.

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National Transportation Safety Board
Air Safety Investigator



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Central Region

Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Gene Frost

Date: August 10, 2017

Subject: – CEN17LA293

Teleconference with Gene Frost, Del Deatherage, and Steve Regan.

Mr. Frost stated the following during the conversation:

- Arthur bought the airplane, but discovered he didn't like flying a taildragger. He asked Gene if he could modify the airplane for tricycle gear. Gene checked to see if there was a kit for the modification. He found a kit, but it was several thousand dollars. He then found the drawings for the modification in the paperwork that came with the airplane. He told Arthur that instead of buying the kit for several thousand dollars, he could modify the landing gear and put a suspension on it for a couple hundred dollars. The plans called for the gear to be mounted to the bottom longerons with 6 bolts without any suspension. He modified the gear and put 4" travel coil shocks on the gear. Arthur flew the airplane after he modified the gear and said he "loved" flying it. This was within the first to year and a half that he owned the airplane.
- He installed new brakes. The old ones wouldn't hold at 2,300 rpm. The new ones would hold it at 6,600 rpm.
- He modified the plastic fuel tank that was flatter and broader so that it didn't contact the back of the seats.
- He put in fiberglass seats which he raised up 4".
- He modified the steering assembly.
- Arthur asked him if he could make a flap and aileron system instead of the flaperons so that it would look like a real airplane. This was about 2 years prior to the accident. Found a place in Florida that was putting flaps on the Challenger aircraft. He watched a website that showed how they were doing this. He stated they didn't worry about weight as long as the CG was within limits. He made a template which he used for the aluminum ribs. He used aluminum tubing for the flaps and used 5-ply plywood for the trailing edge. He used clamps for the hinges as he did not want to drill primary structure. He used an automotive electric window actuator for the flaps. It was an older type that was flatter in design.

- He flew the airplane once by accident. He was high speed taxiing it down the runway and next he knew he was about 200 ft above ground level air so he flew it around the traffic pattern and landed. The airplane flew great. Arthur flew the airplane twice and the first time it scared him because it was so light. He stated it sure didn't feel like a Cessna 172 or 150.
- The airplane seemed squirrely because it reacts quickly to control inputs. You had to stay ahead of the airplane or it would "bite you." You needed to "stay well about 50 mph and 6,000 rpm." He said he didn't like it because it was 2,000 lbs lighter than anything he had ever flown.
- The accident flight was the 4th time the airplane had flown since the modification. Stan had been wanting to fly the airplane since they did the modification. He had a lot of time in ultralights. Stan built 4 ultralights and a couple experimental airplanes. He was the past president of an EAA chapter so they figured he knew about ultralights.
- He called Stan on Sunday and told him to come on down if he wanted to fly the airplane. Stan had difficulty getting into the airplane because the cockpit area was tight and Stan is a big guy. He had to help him get his feet in the cockpit. He adjusted the pedals forward. When he turned the control wheel to the left it hit his leg. He told Stan that he needed to keep the power in and keep ahead of the airplane because it was so light and responsive. They discussed whether he should fly it because he was so tight in the cockpit. Stan told him that he was going to fly it.
- Stan ran up the engine and taxied to the end of the runway. He didn't remember him checking the "coils". He lined up on the runway and made a nice smooth takeoff. No wind. He got about 50 ft over runway and was about 200 ft above the ground because of the terrain drop off. It looked like Stan completed the crosswind turn and it was a nice turn. He walked around the hangar and looked at the airplane again. The right wing was down and the airplane was descending straight in.
- They did not do any test flying or aerodynamic performance calculations either before or after the modifications. They did not know what if any changes there would have been in the stall speed.

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