

This report was modified on 12/11/2019. Please see the docket for this accident to view the original report.

On August 22, 2018, about 1300 central daylight time, a Piper PA-28-235, N7954W, sustained substantial damage during a forced landing after a total loss of engine power during cruise flight about 14 nautical miles (nm) southeast of Little Rock, Arkansas. The pilot and passenger received serious injuries. The airplane was owned and operated by the pilot under the provisions of Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 as a personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the flight, which was on a visual flight rules flight plan. The flight departed from the North Little Rock Municipal Airport (ORK), North Little Rock, Arkansas, about 12450 and was en route to the Pine Bluff Regional Airport Grider Field (PBF), Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

The pilot reported that he initially departed ~~Flippin~~ Marion County Regional Airport (KFLP), Flippin, Arkansas, with full fuel in the auxiliary and main tanks, a total of 84 gallons. Then he flew to Baxter County Airport (KBPK), Mountain Home, Arkansas, a distance of about 308 nautical miles (nm), to get the oil changed. From there he flew to North Little Rock Airport (KORK), North Little Rock, Arkansas, which took about 36 minutes of flight time. The pilot reported that the flight legs were all flown on the right main fuel tank.

Prior to departing for KPBF, he switched to the left main fuel tank. About 10 minutes after takeoff, the flight was about 10 miles south of Little Rock International Airport (KLIT), Little Rock, Arkansas, at 4,500 ft above mean sea level (msl), when the pilot turned off the fuel boost pump and engaged the autopilot. The pilot reported that the engine then rolled back to what the pilot perceived as idle. He immediately turned the fuel boost pump back on, but it made no difference. The pilot reported to air traffic control that the airplane was experiencing a partial loss of engine power. The air traffic controller advised the pilot that the closest airfield was a grass airstrip about 2 to 3 nm east of the pilot's position, or he could divert to KLIT.

The pilot chose to fly to KLIT. The pilot switched the fuel selector back to the right main tank, since he had flown on the right main tank without any problems. The engine then stopped producing power and he attempted an engine restart but without success. The airplane was about 1,560 ft above msl so he decided to perform a forced landing to a grass covered field on an island in the Arkansas River. During the forced landing, the airplane impacted rough terrain which resulted in substantial damage to the airplane.

The airplane wreckage was transported to an aviation recovery facility. The recovery crew reported that 22 gallons of fuel were removed from the left fuel tank and none was removed from the right fuel tank; however, the right fuel tank was compromised from impact damage. During the examination of the airplane at the aviation recovery facility, the fuel system was checked. The fuel lines from the fuel selector to the wing fuel tanks and to the engine were checked and there were no obstructions in the fuel lines. The fuel selector detents were checked and appeared normal. The fuel pump was checked, and no anomalies were noted.

The carburetor was removed and disassembled to check the float and fuel inside the body. The carburetor was half full of fuel. The fuel filters were clean. The fuel was tested for water contamination and none was found. The engine was rotated at the propeller and the drive train had continuity from the propeller to the accessory drives. All cylinders exhibited "thumb" compression. The spark plugs exhibited normal wear. Both magnetos were rotated and both produced spark to all leads. The exhaust manifold was examined and there were no preexisting anomalies. The examination of the flight controls revealed flight control continuity from the cockpit flight controls to the control surfaces.