



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: July 2, 2019

Person Contacted: Mike Wilkerson, Flight Instructor

NTSB Accident Number: CEN19LA194 – Ft. Smith, Arkansas

Narrative:

Mr. Wilkerson stated that the purpose of the flight was to evaluate the skills and proficiency of a prospective student. They took off about 1040, completed a “few laps” in the traffic pattern, and then proceeded to the practice area to complete some private pilot maneuvers.

Mr. Wilkerson noted that while returning to the airport from the practice area, he switched fuel tanks; although, he did not recall which tank. He added that he uses a timer to alert him when to change tanks. He recalled activating the electric fuel boost pump before moving the fuel selector and monitoring the engine gauges afterward. All indications were normal.

Mr. Wilkerson reported that shortly after changing fuel tanks the engine “started coughing”. He took control of the airplane from the student. They were over the Arkansas River about 2,500 ft mean sea level at that time. The engine subsequently lost power completely and his efforts to restore power were not successful. Once the airplane reached 1,900 ft msl, he concentrated on setting up for the forced landing. The airplane was about 5 miles due east of the airport at that time. Open fields in the area had standing water or 8-foot tall corn in them, so he decided to set up for a road. The airplane touched down hard and the nose landing gear collapsed.

Mr. Wilkerson stated that he visually checked the fuel levels before the flight and estimated the fuel on-board was about 35 gallons. This amounted to about 3-1/2 hours flight time. The fuel gauges indicated full and the fuel samples taken during the preflight inspection were unremarkable.

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