

From: davidbunin [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 10:41 AM
To: Scott Arnold [REDACTED] acweaver [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Accident at Lakeview, AR

On Sunday, May 31, 2020 I was concluding a visit to Gaston's White River Resort in northern Arkansas. The airport designator is 3M0. There were five families travelling in four aircraft in my group. The first two aircraft had been on site for two nights, Adrian's aircraft and mine had been there for one night. The five pilots had discussed the runway condition at some length (due to recent rains) and a few of us even walked the length of the field the evening prior.

Gaston's runway is unpaved with general well-maintained grass. Due to rain in the preceding week, there was a muddy area along the centerline of the runway at the west end. The muddy area was identified with two orange traffic cones, roughly designating the start and end of the muddy patch.

Operations at Gaston's typically land to the west and depart to the east due to the local topography and the power lines found west of the resort. Also, the parking area is at the west end and there are no taxiways.

As a result of our discussions, our pilots had decided that the best way to depart would be to line up on the right edge (south) of the runway rather than the centerline. Then, once past the muddy area to migrate on to the runway centerline and complete a normal takeoff.

One of our group departed shortly after breakfast. I later learned that we have a video of this departure, and the maneuver to migrate and capture the runway centerline is evident in the footage.

A few hours later, I was preparing to depart with my wife and one other passenger. Adrian and his wife and daughter were walking to a fishing pond that was north of the east end of the runway. They were walking along the left (north) edge of the runway near the tree line.

After loading my baggage, and just before I accomplished my preflight inspection, an aircraft that was not part of our group taxied for takeoff and I walked from the parking area to the runway to observe.

This pilot appeared to be using the same technique our pilots had discussed (he was not privy to our conversations, as far as I know). His aircraft was lined up south of centerline, at the right edge of the runway. As he began his takeoff roll, the pilot maintained up-elevator control input. This is a proper technique, typical to reduce nosewheel loads for the single-engine Cessna aircraft. His takeoff roll was migrating the aircraft from the right edge to the centerline. The aircraft rolled nose-high and bounced a bit as the field is not perfectly flat. On one bounce the tail came near to touching the ground. This nose-high attitude can limit the immediate forward view from the pilot's seat of a 172.

As the airplane achieved a runway centerline position, I expected the pilot to make a rudder input to capture and track along the centerline, but motion continued towards the left treeline. The aircraft continued in a linear fashion until the trees along the left edge of the runway blocked my view of it's path. I heard the engine power decrease and I began running towards the last place I saw the airplane.

As I proceeded down the runway, the aircraft tail came into view. The airplane was roughly perpendicular to the runway, pointed north, tail south at the runway edge. I saw Adrian's wife and daughter coming out of the trees and brush where they had sought shelter from the approaching aircraft. They said the wingtip missed them by about five feet.

When I arrived at the aircraft, the pilot was out of the airplane. I asked if he was okay, and he indicated that he was fine. I asked to look around the aircraft and he said yes.

I observed damage to several small trees in the area, at levels consistent with the 172 wing and tail leading edges. I observed three tracks in the grass approaching the aircraft, indicating that the nose wheel was rolling on the ground in addition to the main gear (which is different from what I observed for most of the takeoff run). Also the five-foot wingtip miss reported by Adrian's family appeared to be consistent with the distance I observed between the tire tracks and the location where they had dropped their fishing gear and dove into the trees.

Rolling nose gear and decreased engine sounds are consistent with an attempt to abort the takeoff.

On the aircraft there was damage to the leading edges of both wings, more severe on the left wing which had impacted the trees first. The damage to the horizontal stabilizer was more significant on the right side. I observed the left door was unlatched, but not open. The right door was open, and Adrian indicated the pilot exited the aircraft through that door because the left door was jammed.

I have some pictures of the aircraft as it was where it came to rest, and I have the video of the airplane that departed earlier in the morning. I am happy to provide these files to you.

I am somewhat familiar with NTSB procedures and accident investigation, as I am a member of the Emergency Response "Go Team" for Southwest Airlines.

David Bunin
A&P/IA, PPL+I

Adrian Weaver [REDACTED]

To: Scott Arnold [REDACTED]

Cc: David Bunin [REDACTED]

I concur with David's statement on the above accident only to add my perspective. I was walking with my wife and daughter along the north tree line of the runway towards the "pond". We were approximately between 400 and 500 feet from the start of the runway. The three of us heard the plane and looked toward the west part of the runway where the pilot was beginning to take off. I noted that he had begun his take off on the southwest corner of the runway and the plane was at an angle directly facing us. Due to the angle I gave my wife and daughter a heads up that if that plane starts coming toward us to run into the trees for cover. The plane looked and sounded normal on his takeoff roll other than the fact that it was not correcting for the direction of the runway. I did notice he had the elevator up and the pressure off the nosewheel, the plane bounced slightly after going over a small dip in the runway. Approximately 100 feet from us he released some elevator pressure, but still never corrected direction, in fact swerved slightly toward us then back toward where he ended up. We ran a bit west along the tree line to escape, I kept sight of him, 20 feet from us he pulled power to idle, passed by us about 5 feet from the wing tip at approximately 50 mph and went into the trees. I dropped my back pack chair and ran toward the plane, attempted to open the pilot side door but it was stuck. I asked the pilot if he was ok, he said he was, I then asked him if he could get out of the passenger door or if I needed to force the pilot door open. He responded that he would try and exit through the passenger door and was successful. I asked the pilot what happened. He said "I just couldn't get any lift".

Thank you,

Adrian Weaver

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