

- **Debonair N5ML incident on 2021-07-23**

- Location: Immediately NW of Mineral Wells Airport Property, west/northwest of the intersection of MH-379 and Airport Road.
- I, William Charles Elms, a passenger and fellow licensed airplane pilot, was on board with Mr. Earl S. Fields and is making this report as requested by Mr. David T. Preston of the FAA. Mr. Fields is a friend and he also owns a construction company, The Red Team. I work with Mr. Fields doing business development and contracts, his company is dedicated to providing services to the federal government.

Preliminarily, the passenger was invited and accepted the opportunity to go on a short flight with pilot on Friday morning in a plane of which passenger had never had the chance to fly in before. This airplane was somewhat new to pilot although I don't know exactly when he bought it, he used to have a Cessna 182 that we flew in.

The passenger arrived at the pilot's home at 0655 to find the aircraft out of the hangar with pilot waiting. The pilot stated that he had done the preflight walkaround and that there was plenty of fuel to fly to Bridgeport where he planned to fuel the plane for an anticipated business flight on Monday. The passenger positively observed the fuel gauge before flight and it was at approximately 50% full during taxi out.

Upon departure to the south, the pilot turned northerly and began a modest climb. The pilot began encountering a lower ceiling than expected so turned 180 degrees. After a few minutes the pilot had climbed above the clouds and made the decision to go to Mineral Wells rather than Bridgeport due to clouds and an uncomfortable engine stumble. As we proceeded toward the west in the clear, the clouds were pretty dense below and once the pilot found a clear area back down through, he maneuvered in somewhat of a spiral or circles in order to descend through a clear area, we proceeded to the west below clouds to Mineral Wells airport.

At approximately 0740, the pilot made a radio call to local air traffic that we were inbound to from the east. The pilot turned right to enter a left downwind for landing on runway 13. Power was decreased on the downwind and the pilot extended the gear and added flaps and also made his radio call out for base.

The pilot turned left base and left final and set up for the landing, everything in the plane seemed totally normal. There was barely a south breeze so the approach was very smooth and comfortable. Then at about ½ mile out or so to the runway and maybe 300' AGL or so, the pilot stated that "I lost it". Of course, at that time I knew that the approach was smooth and stable and only a few seconds from a normal airport landing so I said "lost what" not realizing what he meant and then he yelled "we lost it, we lost power".

The pilot looked toward the runway and verbalized something like, "can we make it" or "can't make it". I strongly agreed that we could not make the field and so he chose to go for the field and at such a low altitude. From where we were at the time the engine stopped making power, there is a small but significantly clump of trees to our left and ahead that we definitely would have impacted had he carried on toward the runway. Due to the very low altitude, there was no time to do any real troubleshooting other than the pilot demonstrating the lack of power by pushing the throttle to the firewall and we definitely felt no acceleration. Unquestionably the propeller was spinning although I don't know if the engine went to idle for some mechanical/electrical issue or if the engine was actually dead and was rotating only because it was windmilling through the slipstream.

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