

Jay E. Smith Statement Concerning N7337D Accident of February 14, 2022:

At 4:34 p.m. on Monday, February 14, 2022, from the cockpit of N7337D and at the run-up area of Runway 18 at 1AR9, I called AWOS at 4M3 (Carlisle Muni) to obtain current weather and altimeter settings. At 4:35 p.m., I also called AWOS at KLIT to cross check winds and altimeter before taking off for what I intended to be a single trip around the pattern. I'd previously checked my Aeroweather app for local weather and also had called 4M3 AWOS, KLIT AWOS, and ORK AWOS (3:42 p.m., 3:43 p.m., and 3:44 p.m., respectively) for wind direction and altimeter settings. Winds were approximately 8 knots out of 190; fuel on board during pre-flight was approximately 7 gallons right tank, 4 gallons left tank as best I recall. Sky conditions: broken at 7000, 10-mile visibility. After an uneventful run-up, I took off on runway 18 at 1AR9, entered the crosswind leg and then downwind leg to land on 18. This was the 7th flight around the pattern followed by a landing after N7337D had been returned to us after the annual inspection. My caution was due to two occasions of engine sputtering/misfiring prior to the annual. On both of these occasions, the engine ran very badly for 30-45 seconds and then immediately cleared up. I discussed this with Russell Jackson (A&P doing the annual which began around the middle of October, 2021).

During the annual inspection, Russell found that the muffler baffles were loose; he told me this could be the source of the engine suddenly running badly due to the baffles blocking the outlet and then moving out of the way. A muffler was ordered in October 2021 but not received until January 2022. The annual was completed on February 1, 2022. Prior to releasing the aircraft back to us, Russell flew the airplane around the pattern and noted to me that it was running great.

Even though I felt that the muffler issue probably did explain the engine sputtering and misfiring issues, I still felt anxiety flying it and was only willing to fly it in the immediate proximity of a place to land should the issue return. By doing several takeoffs and landings, I hoped to regain my confidence in the airplane which even after the annual was pretty low. Premonition?

Takeoff, crosswind turnout, and downwind during the flight preceding the crash were uneventful except that sometime after reaching the abeam the north end of Runway 18/36 point and beginning the descent and power reduction, the engine sputtering/roughness similar to what had occurred previously began again. I immediately switched from right tank to left, verified carb heat "on" and began making my base turn. It quickly became evident to me that I would not have adequate thrust to make the runway unless the engine cleared up as it previously had. At that point in the pattern, the engine was barely running and sputtering severely, at some point during this time I believe the engine stopped.

I focused my attention on maintaining a flight attitude that would prevent a stall and prepared for impact as the plane entered the treetops. I remember the sound of limbs hitting the airplane but that's all I remember about the last seconds of the flight. At 6:38 p.m. I heard my phone ring, answered it (it was my wife) and realized I'd crashed. I learned later that she'd called 4 times previously beginning at 6:17 to see if I was OK, suggesting I'd been unconscious for almost 2 hours based on my phone log.

The smell of gasoline was very strong, I told my wife I had crashed and that I would call her back, that I wanted to try to get out of the airplane before it caught fire. I tried to extricate myself but, because of my injuries, couldn't begin to do so. My wife called 911 and the Lonoke County, Arkansas Sheriff's office called me at 6:42 p.m. and requested that I call 911 so they could get a location fix, which I did at 6:44 p.m., and reported my approximate location to the sheriff's office. I remember being very cold during the wait for rescue, shivering violently and I also believe I was in and out of consciousness during this time.

I eventually was rescued and transported to UAMS in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Jay Smith