

Zachary Farley



February 2, 2024

Greg New
Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration
1701 Bond Street
Little Rock, AR 72202

Dear Mr. New,

Per your February 1, 2024, request, I am writing this letter to describe the events that occurred at the Conway, Arkansas, airport on January 31, 2024. Below, you will find my best recollection of the events that day.

On January 31, 2024, I was at the Conway Municipal Airport to receive flight training. My instructor was Joel Martinez, who has provided instruction to me since April 2023. Mr. Martinez and I planned to utilize a Piper Cherokee 180 (N2184T) for a regular lesson of 1-2 hours of traffic pattern practice near the airport.

At approximately 1700 hours, Mr. Martinez and I went to the open T-hangar area of the airport, where I conducted a walkaround of the aircraft and checked for any defects. Mr. Martinez contacted the airport fuel service and requested technicians be dispatched to fuel the aircraft. Once the technicians completed fueling the aircraft, we visually checked the fuel and entered the aircraft where we worked our way through the pre-flight checklist.

After completing the run-up and before takeoff portions of the checklist, we taxied onto runway 4, where we took off and entered the traffic pattern. After takeoff, I flew the aircraft in the traffic pattern and performed a touch-and-go on runway 4, once again entering the traffic pattern. As I began the downwind leg of the pattern, Mr. Martinez explained the differences between the fuel systems of the Piper Cherokee 180 and the Cessna 172. He further explained how to swap fuel tanks during flight to ensure even distribution and proper fuel levels. He had me swap the fuel source from the right tank to the left as part of the GUMPS pre-landing checklist to demonstrate this procedure. We continued the pre-landing checks and continued on the downwind leg.

Just as we got to the end of the downwind leg, and prepared to turn the base leg, I realized the throttle was not responding to my inputs. I believed the engine was still operational, as there had been no indication from the engine performance, such as sputtering or shutting down, but as I applied full power, there was no change, and I was unable to reduce our rate of descent. I immediately told Mr. Martinez we had a problem, and I had a dead throttle. Mr. Martinez immediately took control of the aircraft as we began analyzing the immediate area to determine if we would be able to make it to runway 4 or have to land in an alternate area. Mr. Martinez also radioed the airport and other pilots in the area of our emergency.

Due to our altitude, which was approximately 900-1000 feet, and our rate of descent, it became immediately clear we would not be able to make the runway successfully. Additionally, there was a tree line directly ahead, and it appeared trying to clear the treetops would have a low probability of success. Mr. Martinez turned the aircraft to a south heading to attempt a landing on Sand Gap Road, a rural two-lane road south of the airport.

As we descended to intercept the roadway, we observed powerlines near the area where we were going to land. Due to the high risk associated with the powerlines and poles, and with no other options available, Mr. Martinez attempted a soft-field landing in the open field next to the roadway. Just after touching down, the landing gear sank into the soft dirt, which caused the nose wheel to dig into the ground and become dislodged. This caused the nose of the aircraft to drop onto the ground, and we skidded for a short distance and stopped.

After coming to a stop, I performed a quick physical assessment of myself and asked Mr. Martinez if he was okay. He stated he was okay and made several radio calls to provide our location. Fearing the possibility of fuel leaks, I turned the fuel selector switch to the off position and prepared to exit the aircraft. We exited the aircraft and waited for emergency personnel to arrive. I was not injured in the incident and did not require any medical assistance.

At the time of this incident, I had approximately 13.3 total hours of flight training in the last 12 months. Of that time, approximately 1.2 hours have been in a Piper Cherokee 180.

This is my best recollection of events on Wednesday, January 31, 2024. If you have further questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Zachary Farley.

Zachary Farley

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

The purpose of this statement is intended solely for use in determining the facts, conditions and circumstances, and the probable cause of the subject accident.

Date Feb 1 2024

1. Place of accident Conway AR. Date Jan 31 2024 Hour 5:22 pm

2. What is your name? Joel Martinez Martin Age 26

3. Address [REDACTED]

4. Phone Number [REDACTED] Email [REDACTED]

5. Occupation CFI By whom employed Superior Aviation Flying Services

6. Where were you at the time of the accident? Yes

7. Weather Conditions VFR, Clear

8. Tell in your own words what you saw or heard before and at the time the accident occurred.

Zach (My student) and I intended to go up for traffic pattern lesson. We pre-flight the PA-28-180; check fuel, lights, oil etc. (checklist). Before take-off I brief why we want use carb heat to prevent carb ice. After we take-off on runway 4, we perform checklist guidelines and I began my instruction of pattern. We took off with the right tank. We did one landing before switching to the left tank on the left downwind for runway 4. Mid field we recieved the notification from our Garmin to switch selectors. Fuel pump on, and I advised to switch to left tank. Abeam the runway number 4, Mr. Zach tells me "Hey man we have a problem!" I take controls and reply "is everything ok?" But as I feel the yolk I knew I had a dead plane in my hands. Mr. Zach tells me "I think we lost our engine."

(Use reverse side of sheet for diagram and additional statement)

(Witness Signature)

Our pattern altitude is 1275 ft. When I took the controls we were closer to 1000 ft. The first thing I do is look at runway 4, and ask myself if I was ~~going~~ to make that runway. Seeing and feeling the Cherokee descend at a rapid rate than normal, There was no way I was going to turn base to final that low. My intentions were to land on a small road, but seeing trees and a powerline at my end point, gave me the last decision to land in on the field next to it.



Feb. 1, 2024