

Brian Rutt
Air Safety Investigator
AS-CEN

Date: October 15, 2025

Subject: CEN25LA387

Contact: Scott Smira - FAA Inspector

Mr. Smira had telephone conversations with both the pilot and passenger from N318JM. The following are summaries of the conversations.

The passenger stated that the airplane was in the shop in Branson for a week before the accident. She stated that the pilot told her it was there for a minor fuel leak but was unsure of what work was done. She stated that the pilot was fine with patching the leak, and he picked up plane the day of the accident and flew from Branson to Oxford with no issues. The passenger had flown with the pilot numerous times and stated that it was always a smooth takeoff and no problems. During takeoff of the accident flight, she could immediately tell something was not right. She stated that the pilot could not level the plane. According to the passenger, the pilot stated "Oh gosh, we got a fuel problem. I might have it, no I don't. We're going down" during the accident sequence. The passenger stated that the airplane seemed to be "not balanced out". She clarified this statement to mean not balanced out right to left as if the right side was dipping lower than the left.

According to the pilot, the fuel leak was initially in the right tank and the tank had been patched. The pilot stated that the mechanic who did the work has receipts or records of the work performed. On the day of the accident, after fueling the airplane, the pilot did a walk around and then performed a runup with everything looking normal. He stated that the right-wing tank was topped off with fuel, and the left-wing tank was not topped off but was not low. He stated that upon takeoff, the aircraft started drifting to the right and did not gain as much altitude as it should. He stated, "I don't think it was the airplane, I think I stalled it". The pilot tried to correct

the drifting but could not, and the aircraft came down hard and slid into the tree line. The pilot stated, "I wish I could blame it on the airplane, but I can't". ///END OF STATEMENT///