

4-18-2014

Post Crash Interview/Investigation

Aircraft: N827D, 1988 Ultimate Aero 10-200

Pilot: Daniel F. Marcotte

Investigator: Thomas M. Anderson, Vermont Aeronautics Airport Operations Specialist/Pilot

On April 18, 2014 I was performing a flight in the state aircraft in support of ANR Rivers Program, a photo mission to assess condition of post-Irene re-construction projects. While on a fuel stop at the Hartness State Airport (KVSF), I received a phone call at 1234 from James Thompson, Vermont Aeronautics Operations Manager. He related to me that there had been a plane crash in the Swanton, VT area, with a plane down on Interstate 89. He directed me to respond ASAP, with the state aircraft. I flew the Rivers Program people back to Burlington, Vermont (KBTX), dropped them there and flew to the Franklin County Airport (KFSO), arriving there at approximately 1404. Upon arriving in the vicinity I established communications with Mr. Thompson and he directed to the site. I circled the site at 1,000' AGL and collected several photos with GEO tags to pin down the location of the site. I also performed a number of circles over the area looking for debris, unsuccessfully. Mr. Thompson directed me to perform the post accident interview with the pilot, witnesses and to gather any information possible.

I landed at KFSO and sought out Mr. Marcotte, the pilot. We stood in the hangar of the FBO, where he also works as a mechanic. He appeared clear eyed, steady, although rattled a bit he was able to clearly relate what had happened. He reported being uninjured with the exception of a couple of sore spots on his shins.

He had just recently returned from Sun & Fun in Florida, in his aircraft, N827D, and was performing a "high-level shakedown" flight, which was his common practice after a long cross country flight. Mr. Marcotte stated that "the shakedown flight is made at a higher altitude to ensure the satisfactory condition of the aircraft". He departed KFSO a little after 1200 (he reports this is his normal daily practice time) and departed the pattern to the west. He reports climbing to 3,000' MSL in an area of farm fields. He went to begin his high-level shakedown maneuvers but as he was in a "flat pitch attitude" headed approximately northeast when there was a sudden loud bang/shudder as the canopy shattered. Mr. Marcotte stated that initially he thought there was some type of catastrophic structural failure, "I thought a wing had failed". He indicated the engine stopped instantly. He reported the canopy (or the frame) "clam-shelled open and then slammed back down". He indicated that quickly he assessed that the aircraft was "un-flyable" after trying the aircraft controls, that the aircraft began to spin and he had no ability to stop it. He related that it seemed like a "car accident" loud and sudden and that it seemed the aircraft had lost a lot of forward airspeed.

He communicated to me that before every flight he practices his egress routine and demonstrated it to me. When he made the decision to leave the aircraft after determining that it was un-flyable he initiated his egress, which went well except his headset cord presented a problem. His headset jacks would not unplug easily and he ended up breaking them off. He reported it did cause him concern and a challenge to alleviate the issue. He doesn't remember his egress altitude but after exiting the aircraft the parachute deployed fully at anywhere from 700' to 1,000' MSL.

Mr. Marcotte showed me his pilot certificate, his medical and willingly shared with me a packet of information showing the recent aircraft sign-offs, his flight review, the special airworthiness certificate and registration for the aircraft (all attached).

Mr. Marcotte was professional, open and cooperative.

Two witnesses were interviewed. Both were working in the Border Air maintenance hangar at KFSO. They were both familiar with the airshow practice routine, Mr. Marcotte and his aircraft. Jerry Brown and Steve Bessette were both working in the hangar. They both related that a couple of minutes after Mr. Marcotte took off that they heard a normal engine noise followed by a "pop" or a "bang". They both stated that they ran to the open door of the hangar and looked in the area to the northwest of the airport and saw Mr. Marcotte under a fully deployed chute. They report that he was approximately 500' to 1,000 high (both admitting that was hard to judge the altitude) and above the trees. Mr. Brown stated that he could see Mr. Marcotte's orientation, that he could see "his face pointing in the direction he was traveling", north east.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Todd Gunther
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: April 19, 2014
Person Contacted: Daniel Marcotte (Pilot)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA14LA202

Mr. Marcotte, was interviewed over the telephone.

According to Mr. Marcotte, He was doing a "shakedown" flight after returning to Vermont from an airshow in Florida. He had taken off from Franklin County Airport and about 3 minutes after takeoff there was a "real loud bang," and "an extreme release" of either a part of the propeller or something else. The engine cowling and some parts left the airplane and then came back, struck the wings, tail, and the canopy, and "took off half the canopy." He ended up bailing out, as the airplane became "non-responsive" and he could not control the airplane. He came down in the parachute and ended up in the top of a tree, and was dangling there. He was "not really hurt," and firefighters came and "cut me down."

The airplane then crashed on Route 89, about 5 miles south from the Canadian border.

At the time of the accident, the propeller had about 300 hours on it. At approximately 80 hours, He discovered a hairline crack once in one of the blades in either 2011 or 2012.