



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 13, 2016
Person Contacted: John Kennedy Hodges, Jr.
NTSB Accident Number: ERA15LA168

Narrative:

Mr. Hodges was contacted by phone on April 10, 2015, at 0948 EDT. He was originally contacted at [REDACTED] but for a better connection was called at [REDACTED]. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the phone call he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation. He indicated he did not feel representation was necessary.

He indicated that he has owned the airplane for about 1 year (FAA records show he purchased the aircraft from the previous owner on May 19, 2014). He indicated the front and rear seats are only equipped with a lapbelt; no shoulder harnesses are installed at either position.

He indicated that he has a student pilot certificate [REDACTED] issued July 24, 2013. His date of birth is [REDACTED]. He has a total time of about 49 to 50 hours, some of which were in another aircraft and some were in the accident aircraft. His instructor (William Whitley) was the only instructor he has had, and he can be reached at his cell phone of [REDACTED], or home [REDACTED], or by e-mail of [REDACTED]. While flying with Mr. Whitley, he had practiced simulated loss of engine power, and he was trained to clear the engine during the descent following the reduction of engine power.

He provided the following timeline:

March 20 or 21, 2015 – He drove to High Springs, Florida, which was the location of Mr. Whitley's airstrip, in anticipation of a Sport Pilot checkride that was planned for either March

24th, or March 25th. The checkride would be conducted by Mr. Peter M. Wallace, who is a FAA designated Light Sport Aircraft Sport Pilot Examiner (SPE).

March 23, 2015 – He obtained 1.0 hour of flight instruction with Mr. Whitely in preparation for his Sport Pilot checkride. No simulated loss of engine power was conducted during this flight.

March 24, 2015 - He obtained 1.0 hour of flight instruction with Mr. Whitely in preparation for his Sport Pilot checkride. No simulated loss of engine power was conducted during this flight. He drove to Mr. Wallace's location in Live Oak, Florida, and passed the oral portion of the examination. Because the wind had decreased, he then drove back to High Springs, Florida, where his aircraft was located. He fueled the aircraft, performed a preflight inspection, and flew solo to Mr. Wallace's location in Live Oak, Florida, where he landed uneventfully on an airstrip 50 feet south of the Wings n Sunsets LLC Airport (FL07).

Before departure for the checkride, the SPE informed him that he (Mr. Hodges) would be pilot-in-command during the flight. A preflight inspection of the aircraft was performed, and before departure an engine run-up was performed; no discrepancies were reported. He (Mr. Hodges) was in the front seat and Mr. Wallace was in the rear seat. The flight departed with "at least" 5 gallons of fresh fuel on-board that he mixed with a little more than 50:1 ratio of fuel to 2-cycle engine oil, and after takeoff about 1845, he performed maneuvers. With fields nearby while flying about 1,000 feet, the SPE informed him they would be performed emergency power off procedures, and asked him to reduce power. He did so and selected a suitable landing field spiraling down while surveying the field for condition. He set up for an actual landing in the field, and when the airplane was aligned with the field at about 50 feet above ground level (agl), the SPE said the maneuver was terminated and to add power and go-around. He immediately started turning, and then added power but reported the engine sputtered and did not respond to throttle input to go-around. The aircraft impacted trees. He indicated that at no time during the descent with the power reduced did he add power to "clear" the engine, nor did he recall the SPE advising him to "clear" the engine during the descent when the engine was at a reduced power setting. He also indicated that his mistake was turning before adding power, indicating that he could have landed OK in the field he had selected. In hindsight he feels the sputtering was related to the lack of clearing of the engine during the descent while at a reduced throttle setting. He estimated the accident occurred about 30 minutes after takeoff, or at 1915.

Following the accident he went to a hospital to suture a laceration, while Mr. Wallace was not injured. He met with the property owner, and then he, the SPE and his instructor met and discussed the circumstances of the accident. The consensus was the engine did not respond due to the lack of clearing during the descent while at a reduced power setting.

Postaccident, fuel leakage was noted from the fuel vent, and one blade of the three bladed composite propeller was damaged. The vent line was cut and then re-positioned to stop the leakage. The aircraft was repositioned to Mr. Whitely's location. While there, a FAA inspector added fuel to the fuel tank, and without a propeller installed, the engine was started and found to idle OK. The aircraft is still presently at Mr. Whitely's airstrip.

He indicated that he was previously unfamiliar with the SPE, and did not specifically discuss his (SPE's) time in weight shift aircraft; however, he (Mr. Hodges) got the sense that he was experienced in all aspects of aviation. Mr. Hodges was asked what was the outcome of the checkride, and he indicated that was given a letter of discontinuance, and needed 3 or 4 flights more before he would re-do the checkride.

He indicated he was not sure if the aircraft was repairable, and is currently taking a repairman inspection course.

His (Mr. Hodges's) injuries include cuts and scratches but no broken bones. He confirmed he was wearing glasses at the time of the accident, and was using his drivers license.

Postaccident he made a written statement and gave that to the FAA inspector.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on April 10, 2015, about 1305 EDT, and he replied on April 13, 2015, at 1440 EDT, with, "We checked times and found the flight started at approximately 6:45PM and ended at approximately 7:15PM, which puts the accident about 30 minutes after takeoff. Your summary is correct with these modifications... Thanks, John." These comments were incorporated into the narrative.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: February 5, 2016
Person Contacted: Peter Wallace
NTSB Accident Number: ERA15LA168

Narrative:

Mr. Peter Wallace was contacted by phone on April 10, 2015, at 1310 EDT. He was called to [REDACTED]. He was in a retail store and agreed to call back later. He called back the same day at 1427 EDT.

At the beginning of the phone call he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation. He indicated he did not need representation. He indicated that he has made a written statement about the circumstances of the accident and provided that to the FAA inspector. He also gave the FAA inspector pictures of the aircraft at the accident site.

He indicated that he has a private pilot certificate with airplane single engine land, and weight shift control land ratings; his certificate number is [REDACTED] and was issued on November 1, 2010, by the issuance of weight shift control land rating. He has a Sport Pilot certificate with powered parachute and weight shift sea ratings. He is also a Sport Flight Instructor with weight shift control, powered parachute, and airplane single engine ratings. His date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED], and his driver's license is current. He was issued a 3rd class medical certificate on January 12, 2014, with a limitation that he, "must have available glasses for near vision." He estimated his total flight time to date is 2,500 hours, and 1,500 hours in weight shift land. He indicated that he has been a Weight Shift Control examiner since 2005, and the accident was the "1st time he was unable to salvage the situation."

He indicated the aircraft had dual controls, and he did have his hands on the controls at the time of the accident. He indicated it had a Cosmos 16 wing. He knows the builder personally. He has flown this type of weight shift control previously. The aircraft has a "C box" gearbox or clutch, and 24J is the nearest weather reporting station.

He provided the following timeline:

March 24, 2015 - The owner flew his airplane from High Springs, Florida, into his (Peter Wallace's) airstrip. After landing they did a thorough preflight inspection of the aircraft. He (Peter Wallace) was in the rear seat, and was wearing the lapbelt. He indicated he was not sure if the aircraft was equipped with shoulder harnesses, but if it had, he does not wear it typically with this type of aircraft so he can manipulate the wing from the rear seat. The flight departed with approximately 8 gallons of fuel from his airstrip between 1840 and 1845 EDT, and the applicant proceeded on the planned cross-country to O'Brien airfield, which is southwest of his airstrip. At the first checkpoint, he informed the applicant there was a line of thunderstorms between their current position and the destination airfield, and informed him to fly heading 300 degrees. The flight proceeded over an area of open fields, and when flying between 1,000 and 1,200 feet, the applicant performed clearing turns in advance of maneuvers for the PTS. The applicant first performed a steep turn of 360 degrees, followed by slow flight in a northerly direction, and then a power-off stall; all maneuvers were satisfactory. After the power-off stall, he informed the applicant to come to a heading of 090 degrees, and as the right turn was started, he informed the applicant to reduce the throttle to idle to simulate an engine failure, and asked the applicant to designate an emergency landing field. The applicant indicated the field below them was suitable, and spiraled down. The field below consisted of flat grassland with cows, and small isolated groves of trees. He indicated it was a 1.5 square mile area of cattle farm, and that area was chosen because it was open. During the spiral descent he did not recall the applicant "clearing the engine", and in, "hindsight says should he have-yeah." At 200 feet, he informed the applicant to "throttle up go-around go-around." It appeared to him that when the applicant added power, the engine died. His hands were on the controls, and what was a simulated loss of engine power became a real thing. The intended field was ahead, but the aircraft went to the left and began to climb immediately. He attempted to recover, but the aircraft fell off to the left and hit trees no taller than 15 to 20 feet. The aircraft impacted the ground at an estimated speed of 30 mph. He estimated they were airborne between 15 and 20 minutes. They both got out of the aircraft, and as it turned out he did not have his cell phone with him, but that did not matter because the cell phone reception was poor in that area. They walked between $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 mile to a nearby house, and asked the owner where were they at. While there he called his wife and informed her he was in an accident but both were OK. The address where they walked to was the east end of [REDACTED] Live Oak, Florida. This location was about 1 mile NW of his airstrip.

He further indicated that he does train students to clear the engine during a descent, and thinks the idle may have been a little low, and/or the applicant may have added power to go-around a little fast and the engine was not able to respond. At the end of the flight, he indicated it might have tip stall, and the event occurred very quickly.

He indicated that he has given hundreds of checkrides, and this is the first accident he has been involved in. Since the accident he has considered the circumstances, and thinks the aircraft did stall to the left, but when he tried to recover, it was too late, he was unable.

He continued that the compound factor to the accident was: 1) When the engine failed he did not react immediately thinking that a suitable landing area was directly ahead and simulated just became real.

He pulled up Google Earth while on the phone call and verified the accident site was located at 30.264712 degrees North latitude and -82.935580 degrees West longitude. That location was plotted during the phone call and determined to be 1.08 nautical miles and 328.27 degrees from the center of the departure airstrip.

In hindsight, he indicated that the engine not responding could have possibly been avoided by clearing the engine, but in his experience the engine failure was not consistent with cold seizing. He also indicated that he was not familiar with the clutch mechanism.

His injuries included bruises and minor lacerations.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on April 13, 2015, about 1040 EDT, and he replied on April 14, 2015, at 0921 EDT, with, "Tim Monville,

1) page 2, bottom of 1st paragraph address was "[REDACTED]"

2) page 2, please replace the last sentence with "When the engine failed he did not react immediately thinking that a suitable landing area was directly ahead and simulated just became real" Peter M. Wallace". These changes were incorporated into the narrative.