

Swift Incident on 5/14/2016
Observations by Adam Sanders



I arrived at my house approximately a half hour before the crash of the aircraft. Upon pulling into my garage I noticed the hangar opened and the nose of the Swift at the front of the hangar door. Later, while in my house I heard the engine start up. I thought it odd as there was a cold front passage underway which had brought gusty winds and rain. When the aircraft began taxiing down the runway for departure on 21, I went to the window in somewhat disbelief that Rex (former owner) or the new owners would attempt to depart. I had met the pilot and the mechanic the evening before while they were talking to Rex in his hangar on 5/13/16.

As I stood watching and listening to the plane perform a run up from the window, I watched the windsock indicate gusty winds from approximately 300 to 320, a slight quartering tailwind. The windsock would go limp to nearly straight out, and swaying back and forth. I recall thinking runway 3 was the better runway with the given winds. I considered trying to reach the aircraft on my handheld ICOMM radio but quickly realized the radio was at work. From my window, I can see McCoy's Ferry road and noticed the plane wasn't using the entire length of the runway for the planned take off. I had my phone on me and quickly started taking video as I had a "feeling" given the above mentioned factors this could end badly.

As the plane began its takeoff roll I noticed as it crested the hill it was drifting to the (my right, planes left) and was near the high grass when he rotated. This was most likely due to the crosswind and lack of proper input controls to keep the plane on the centerline. The plane was at an obvious high pitch once in the air and was likely in ground effect. For a second I thought he was going to be ok if he held it into ground effect to build airspeed but once parallel to my house he began climbing rapidly. My last visual contact of the airplane I could observe rapid aileron input while the plane swayed, a classic sign of a stall. I lost sight of the airplane when it was approximately parallel over the backyard of the yellow house with the trampoline. The engine gave no indication of cutting out, rather the very familiar sound of that airplane at full power. The plane has a distinct sound over other airplanes on the field probably from its shorter exhaust pipes. I immediately contacted 911 as I ran towards the crashed airplane. I was on the phone with them until I got to the scene, relieved to see both people out of the airplane. I let the copilot/mechanic/passenger talk to 911 himself on my phone. I did hear the pilot say he couldn't get the airplane to go left. He said something was going on with the stick. He asked to see the video I took and I showed him.

Upon close inspection of the video I had taken and looking at still shots, the plane was clearly headed toward the left side of the runway into the high grass. Its likely the pilot decided to rotate before the airplane entered the high grass. The pitch of the plane after rotation remains high while in ground effect and in the climb out. Another still shot shows the plane approximately 70ft high with the ailerons showing full right deflection with the wings level. The video captures the windsock for most of the takeoff roll and rotation.