

16 AUG 2017

////////////////////STATEMENT////////////////////////////////////

On 15 AUG 2017 at approximately 1630R (2030Z) I provided basic flight instruction to John Temple Frierson at KCNI. The plan for the instructional flight was to practice landings in the pattern. Mr. Frierson and I completed a preflight inspection of N2804T (Piper Cherokee PA 28-140 aircraft). After completing his checks, Mr. Frierson read the preflight checklist out-loud and we reviewed each item. Mr. Frierson had advised me that we had more fuel (above the tabs) in the left tank than the right tank (below the tabs). I advised Mr. Frierson to set the fuel for the fullest tank. We then ran the Start Checklist and started the aircraft as normal. We noted that the Number 1 Radio appeared to be inoperative. After manipulating the volume knob we were able to operate the radio. We decided to use the Number 2 Radio as our primary radio and made a communications check with UNICOM/FBO. We also completed a safety briefing and I advised Mr. Frierson that in the event of an emergency I would fly the airplane and he would run the checklist.

We received the automated weather. The weather was VFR and winds were calm. We decided to use runway 5. We taxied to a run-up position and Mr. Frierson ran the run-up checklist. Mr. Frierson read each item out-loud and we noted no discrepancy during the run-up check.

We then taxied for runway 5 and we searched the pattern for any other traffic. At that time there was an aircraft reported inbound, but was no factor. We again checked final for approaching traffic and broadcast our intentions to take runway 5 and to stay in the pattern. Mr. Frierson then taxied the aircraft into position. Mr. Frierson then applied power and stated that the aircraft felt sluggish (or words to that effect). I advised Mr. Frierson to put his heels on the floor and to ensure that he was not applying breaks. I physically looked at his feet and they were partially on the rudder pads, but also extend above the rudder pads. Mr. Frierson assured me that he was not applying brakes. I then observed the power setting and Mr. Frierson had applied some, but not all the power (approximately 50% power) on our take-off roll. I physically put my hand on the throttle and applied the rest of the power. By this time we had already started our roll some distance down the runway (note: runway length is 5001 feet). Mr. Frierson again stated that he thought the airplane was sluggish, but I believed the slower and longer take-off roll was due to slow application of full power. I called airspeed alive and we both monitored the airspeed as it increased. As we approached lift-off speed (75MPH) I advised him to rotate and we left the ground approximately half the distance (or more) down the runway. To this point in time I believed that the aircraft was performing normally.

Our climb-out appeared normal for approximately the first 200 feet. After that, Mr. Frierson said that he did not believe the aircraft was performing normally and airspeed was dropping. We had flown this aircraft several times in the recent past and as a low performance aircraft, climb performance was not as good as the Archer aircraft (note: we had also flown the Archer PA28-181 in the recent past). I advised Mr. Frierson to pitch for airspeed (85 MPH climb speed). Mr. Frierson initially decreased pitch attitude, but then almost immediately increased pitch attitude again. I announced that I had the flight controls and Mr. Frierson released the controls. I immediately checked for full power and decreased the pitch attitude. The airspeed started to increase and I believed that we would be able to continue our ascent at a lower rate of climb . . . characteristic of this airplane. After stabilizing the airplane I realized that we were not climbing, but had started to descend. It was at that time that I realized the severity of the situation. The engine did not stop, rather it did not provide sufficient power to remain airborne.

I immediately looked for a place to land and initially maintained best glide airspeed. I did not believe that we had enough altitude to return to the airport. However, continuing on course was not an option due to extremely rough and heavily wooded terrain. From this point on my attention was exclusively focused outside of the cockpit. I turned right approximately 180 degrees and observed the highway with high-power lines between the aircraft's position and the highway. We could not have landed on the highway. There was no time to run a checklist. Mr. Frierson called-out airspeed as we descended. Several times he called stall warning and I again lowered the nose of the aircraft. The terrain below remained very rough and heavily wooded. I did not believe that we would have survived a landing so I continued to turn the airplane toward the airfield knowing that it was very unlikely that I would reach the airfield. As I looked at the departure end of the runway I realized that we had already descend below the airport elevation (note: the airport is at a higher elevation than the surrounding area). I saw the perimeter fence around the airport as I approached from the southeast. I believed that our best chance for survival was to use the fence as a barricade in order to slow the airplane before the crash landing. I did not believe I had any other option except flying into the hillside or perhaps making a shallow turn and landing in the rough terrain.

We passed through the fence and the cabin did not directly impact any fence posts (note: apparently the wings sheared off when impacting the fence post/ground). The airplane then traveled up hill for a short distance before coming to rest on the fuselage left-side. I was disoriented for just a moment after the aircraft came to rest. I then released my seat belt and immediately opened the aircraft door. As I climbed out I saw that Mr. Frierson was unconscious and then saw the smoke and fire toward the aft of the aircraft. I did not realize at first that the wings had separated from the aircraft. I turned around and leaned back into the aircraft. Mr. Frierson had regained consciousness (later he stated that I had stepped on him when climbing out of the aircraft and that caused him to regain consciousness). I instructed him to release his seat belt and get out of the aircraft. He was groggy, but did release the seat belt. He retrieved our glasses before exiting the aircraft. We left the aircraft and climbed to the top of the hill and awaited first responders. Neither one of us were seriously injured.

Note:

Prior to the flight Mr. Allen (Owner of Cherokee Flight) advised me that N2804T had been in maintenance. We went to the airplane and observed a repair made to the cowling. Apparently, the propeller had made contact with the cowling on previous flight(s). I was advised that the aircraft had been returned to service by maintenance personnel. Mr. Allen and I made an extensive survey of the repair. The cowling was absolutely secure and the propeller turned freely without making any contact with the cowling. Based on that inspection and the maintenance recommendation, we determined the aircraft was safe for flight.

John C. Di Renzo Jr.

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NOTHING FOLLOWS