



INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Todd Gunther
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: November 1, 2017

Person Interviewed: Richard Norman Shawn (Pilot Rated Passenger)

NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA012

On November 1, 2017, this investigator along with the parties to the investigation met at the Columbus County Airport to conduct a group interview with Mr. Richard Shawn who was a Pilot Rated Passenger onboard N293GC. In attendance were: Investigator-In-Charge Todd Gunther (NTSB), Inspector Clinton Festa (FAA), Inspector Corey Paczkowski (FAA), Inspector Rory T. Osborne (FAA), Inspector Mark Astin (FAA), Mr. Peter Basile (Textron Aviation), Mr. Mike Council (Continental Motors), and Mr. Richard Shawn (Pilot Rated Passenger).

The following is a summary of Mr. Shawn's statements:

- Mr. Chartress and Mr. Shawn had purchased a hangar about a month prior to the accident at Cannon Creek Airpark (15FL), Lake City, Florida, and had flown down to work on the hangar the previous Wednesday.
- Mr. Shawn was planning to fly the next leg of the trip and had filed IFR from Columbus County Airport (KCPC) to Leesburg Virginia (KJYO).
- Mr. Chartress (Pilot) and Mr. Shawn, had both checked the fuel tanks before they left Cannon Creek Airport (15FL). Fuel was 1/2 inch above the tabs in both tanks.
- Both the left and right fuel tank gauges read 5/8ths full before departing 15FL.
- They got Dunkin Donuts and at 0735 they departed 15FL.
- They had planned to fly first to Lake City, Florida for fuel, but it was closed.
- The engine would burn about 11.5 gallons per hour in cruise.
- It was a 2 hour and 20-minute flight, and they would always make sure that they switched tanks every hour.
- After about 1 hour and 25-minutes of flight (about 40 minutes from landing at KCPC), the right tank gauge kept indicating 5/8ths full, and it never went down. Mr. Chartress switched to the left tank, at that point
- They cancelled flight following with air traffic control.

- When Mr. Chartress switched to the right tank on short final, the engine quit.
- On final approach, the landing gear and 1 notch of flaps were down, and the left fuel tank gauge was indicating above 1/4 of a tank when they were on final approach. Mr. Chartress then saw that the right tank gauge was indicating 1/2 a tank and said that they would go back to the right tank as it showed more. Mr. Shawn then told him "No George it is not".
- As soon as Mr. Chartress switched to the right tank, Mr. Shawn felt the airplane pitch down and he said "George, the motor is not running". So, Mr. Chartress reached down to switch to the left tank. The last time Mr. Shawn remembered looking at the altimeter it was indicating 700 feet.
- There were no shoulder harnesses installed, and when Mr. Chartress reached down to switch to the left tank, he leaned forward against the control wheel and the airplane dove.
- When Mr. Shawn looked up, he saw trees.
- The airplane was equipped with a throw-over control wheel.
- The airplane was wings level when it hit the trees. The left wing hit the trees first. Mr. Shawn recalled that the pitch angle was lower than normal when power was lost and that everything happened fast.
- The engine did not sputter when the loss of power occurred.
- Mr. Chartress had been aware of the right fuel tank gauge problem with the airplane for some time.



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Todd Gunther
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: November 7, 2017
Person Contacted: Inspector Corey Paczkowski (FAA)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA012

According to Inspector Paczkowski, on October 31, 2017 at 11:00 am local EDT, the Greensboro FSDO was notified of an aircraft accident that occurred at the Columbus County Municipal Airport (KCPC) near Whiteville NC. The aircraft was a Beech Debonair (BE-33), N293GC, Serial Number CD-1035.

On October 31, 2017 at 4:00 pm local EDT he arrived on scene of the accident of N293GC. He was with ASI Clinton Festa, ASI Mark Astin, and ASI Rory Osborne all from the Greensboro NC FSDO, EA-39. They first went to the Columbus County Municipal airport FBO (KCPC) located in Whiteville NC. The FBO operator told them where the aircraft was located and how to get to the scene.

They then proceeded to the aircraft and were met by Sergeant Green of the NC state police, and the local fire department. Sergeant Green stated that there were 2 people onboard at the time of the accident. Pilot George Howard Chartress III was fatally injured and was taken to the local morgue. Passenger Richard Norman Shawn had been taken to the local hospital.

The airplane was located approximately a quarter mile from the approach end of runway 6 at Columbus County Municipal Airport (KCPC). The Airplane was facing a 200-degree heading. The apparent inbound heading where the aircraft clipped the trees was approximately a 030-degree heading. Extensive damage was to the left wing and forward engine cowling, and right wing near the fuselage. Magnetos were in the off position and battery and master switches were off. The throttle was in the full power position, propeller control was full in (low pitch position), mixture control was in the full rich position and the fuel boost pump switch was in the on position. Gear lever was in the down position. ASI Mark Astin was the first ASI to enter the aircraft. He proceeded to the ELT transmitter which could be seen in the back part of the aircraft on the rear shelf. He turned the ELT switch to off and unplugged the antenna. The registration was found attached to the right side of the cockpit. It was removed for photographing and then

replaced. Inside that pouch was the pilot's third-class medical certificate for Mr. George Howard Chartress. Date of examination: 2/22/2016 signed by Gary M. Bertman, MD.

Richard Norman Shawn was the passenger that survived the accident. He met them on scene on 10/31/17.

His statement to Inspector Paczkowski was as follows:

- Departed Cannon Creek Florida (15FL) at 7:35 am.
- Their destination for the fuel stop was Columbus County Airport (KCPC).
- Had planned to stop at Lake City Airport in Florida but it was closed.
- Flew on the right tank for 1 hour and 25 minutes.
- Switched to the left tank 40 minutes out from KCPC at 9:10am.
- At 700 feet on final approach George, following his landing checklist, reached down to switch tanks again, putting the fuel on the fullest tank, which was the right tank. Richard had noticed the left tank was reading $\frac{1}{4}$ full and the right tank read $\frac{1}{2}$ full. Richard told George that can't be right, we have been burning on the right tank most of the flight.
- Richard noticed the nose of the airplane drop and said to George, we are out of power. He noticed George twisting the throttle and he told George the engine is out.
- George reached down to switch the tanks back to the left tank. When he did George was pushing on the control yoke while he was reaching down to switch tanks.
- Richard noticed the nose pitch sharply down and he saw the trees approaching and yelled to George.
- George looked up right as the left wing hit the trees.
- Richard put his arms in front of him to brace himself.
- Richard came to and looked over at George slumped over the controls. He tried to move him and talk to him and he knew he was gone.
- Richard got out of the aircraft and dialed 911.
- Richard said the aircraft was burning 11.5 gallons per hour most of the flight.

While on scene, Inspector Paczkowski opened the right wing fuel cap and could not see fuel in the tank. He then opened the left wing fuel cap and noticed some fuel in the left wing. He also noted fuel underneath the engine cowling. The fuel selector appeared to be on the left wing tank but none of the ASIs moved it, so that the NTSB could investigate what position the fuel selector was actually in. After conferring with the NTSB, they were given permission to release the passenger's possessions. SGT Green had the aircraft possessions at his patrol car to keep it secure.

Richard Shawn had told them that George's Airplane Mechanic Jim Goodrich had the logbooks to the aircraft. On November 1, 2017, Inspector Paczkowski called Jim Goodrich to obtain the logbooks for the investigation. Mr. Goodrich advised him that he turned over all logbooks to aircraft N293GC to a lawyer Mr. Jeff Godley. Inspector Paczkowski advised his FLM (front line manager) Mr. John Parker of this information.



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Todd Gunther
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: November 7, 2017
Person Contacted: Inspector Clinton Festa (FAA)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA012

According to Inspector Festa, on Tuesday, October 31, 2017, his office was notified of a fatal aircraft accident in Whiteville, NC near the CPC (Columbus County) Airport.

There were two occupants of the aircraft: George Howard Chartress III and Richard Norman Shawn. Mr. Chartress was fatally injured, and Mr. Shawn received minor injuries. Mr. Shawn called 911 after the aircraft landed through the trees short of Runway 6 at CPC.

The aircraft was N293GC, a 1966 Beechcraft 35-C33, serial number CD-1035. The registered owner of the aircraft was Mr. Chartress. The aircraft had a single-yoke control station.

Inspector Festa left for CPC at 12:30 local time with fellow inspectors Mark Astin, Corey Paczkowski, and Rory Osborne. They arrived at the scene at approximately 4pm local.

The damage to the treetops indicated a steep angle for the crash. The aircraft had significant damage to the left wing, but there was still fuel remaining in it. It appeared that the left wing struck a tree, as the aircraft had spun around (the orientation of the aircraft was facing away from the runway of intended landing). The right wing appeared empty of fuel. There was small puddle of fuel in the hole under the nose left from the impact.

The passenger (Richard Shawn) came to meet them at the accident scene to describe what he remembered. Mr. Shawn stated the following:

- Mr. Chartress was pilot in command and flying the aircraft at the time.
- They departed from Cannon Creek, FL.
- They were on VFR flight following most of the flight but canceled shortly before going into CPC for a landing.
- Fuel burn rate for the flight averaged 11.5 gallons per hour.

- The weather conditions at CPC were good VFR with good visibility (greater than 10sm), clear skies, and light wind favoring Runway 6.
- They flew most of the flight using the right fuel tank.
- They were coming into land when Mr. Chartress leaned down and to his left, to switch fuel tanks from the left tank to the right tank. He did so because his checklist stated to switch to the fullest tank.
- The right tank read the same reading (about half full) the entire flight, even though the fuel calculations indicated that the left should have had more fuel. The right tank was used for 1 hour and 25 minutes that flight, and they switched to the left with about 40 minutes remaining in the flight.
- Mr. Chartress believed that the right was fullest because the gage read higher on the right.
- When Mr. Chartress switched tanks, the engine quit.
- When Mr. Chartress leaned forward and down to switch tanks, he inadvertently pushed the controls forward, creating a steep descent with an engine out.
- Because Mr. Chartress had a single-yoke control station, it was difficult to attempt to correct the steep descent from the passenger seat.
- Mr. Chartress was alerted to the aircraft attitude (by Mr. Shawn), and tried to switch back to the left tank, but did not correct in time. This sequence began at approximately 700' MSL (approximately 600' AGL).
- The gear was down and both people were wearing their safety belts. This aircraft did not have shoulder harnesses. There was one notch of flaps deployed at the time.
- Mr. Chartress did not have time to brace himself for impact.

There were no NOTAMs in effect at the airport at the time. According to the airport manager (Phil Edwards), the weather was good VFR, as Mr. Shawn stated.

The propellers were bent, but the tips were not curled.



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Todd Gunther
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: November 7, 2017
Person Contacted: Inspector Rory Osborne (FAA)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA012

On October 31, 2017, the Greensboro Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) was notified around 11 am of an accident involving a Beech BE33 Debonair, N293GC, S/N CD-1035 at Columbus County Airport (KCPC) near Whiteville NC.

Inspector Osborne was requested to go investigate the accident with Inspector Festa, Inspector Paczkowski, and Inspector Astin. they departed the FSDO around 1230 pm and arrived on scene around 4 pm local. Upon arrival they spoke with the airport manager who informed them of the approximate location of the accident site and provided them with directions to the site. The airport manager also told them that first responders and law enforcement were at the scene and were keeping the site secure awaiting their arrival. He also identified a pilot in the FBO who he said knew the accident pilot.

Inspector Osborne and inspector Paczkowski spoke to the pilot indicated, and he identified himself as Stanley Voket. He said his aircraft and the accident aircraft were travelling together from Cannon Creek Airpark (K15FL) to the northeast. He said he was ultimately destined for Conn. while the accident aircraft was ultimately headed to R.I. He stated that while receiving Flight following on Myrtle Beach approach, he heard the accident aircraft report KCPC in sight and cancel Flight Following. At this point, he said he was about 40 miles behind the accident aircraft. When they arrived at KCPC, he made a normal approach and landing, commenting to his passenger that the accident aircraft "must have made good time" because he believed they had already been refueled and departed since he did not see the accident aircraft on the airport ramp. He identified the accident aircraft as a Beechcraft Debonair and identified the accident pilot as George Chartress. He also stated that there was a pilot rated passenger in the aircraft who he identified as Ricky Shawn. He stated that Mr. Shawn had been in the FBO since the accident occurred but had recently been taken to the local hospital.

The FAA inspectors next proceeded to the accident site where they were met by Sargent Green of the North Carolina State Police as well as two other State Police Officers and first responders

from the local Fire Department. They led them a short way into a stand of trees to the accident site. The inspectors found the aircraft nose down at approximately a 45-degree angle with the tail and fuselage supported by trees. The nose of the aircraft was on the ground with substantial damage to the spinner, propeller, and cowling. The left wing had sustained substantial damage, primarily to the outer 1/3 of the span. The fuselage, tail, and the right wing were largely intact with relatively minor damage.

The first responders stated that when they arrived at the aircraft, the passenger, Richard Shawn, was walking near the aircraft. They said that he stated the aircraft had lost power when the pilot switched fuel tanks and the aircraft had hit a tree with the left wing and spun around and ended up where the inspectors saw it. The first responders stated that Mr. Shawn was intent on getting back into the aircraft to retrieve his luggage.

The first responders stated that when they arrived, they could smell raw fuel, but the smell was not very strong, and they did not see any indication of leakage or fuel pooling around the aircraft. The first responders also stated that they had removed the fire extinguisher from the aircraft, and it was on the ground in front of the aircraft.

The first responders also found the pilot, Mr. George Chartress, in the aircraft in the pilot's seat (left hand seat) with the single control yoke positioned on the pilot's side.

The aircraft had come to rest with the nose heading approximately 200 Degrees. The passenger, Mr. Shawn, stated that they were on approach for Runway 6 when the accident occurred.

During investigation of the wreckage the inspectors noted that the right fuel tank appeared empty and the left fuel tank had some fuel in it. There was also a small puddle of fuel on the ground under the spinner. The propeller was bent and had dirt caked on the back side. The engine was skewed from the aircraft center line pointing to the right of the aircraft. The left wing had a large gash in it. The left wing tip was bent upward and damaged. The right wing appeared mostly intact with most of the damage occurring to the bottom and rear of the wing. The wing flaps appeared to be at least partially extended and were damaged.

The fuselage appeared largely intact with minimal damage beyond the nose. The landing gear appeared to be fully extended. Due to the angle of the aircraft, access to the aircraft was difficult and they were unable to confirm the position of the fuel selector, but it appeared to be selected to the left tank.

While they were inspecting the wreckage, the passenger, Mr. Shawn, returned to the scene.

While on scene, Mr. Shawn stated the following:

- He and the accident pilot, Mr. Chartress, left Cannon Creek Airpark(15FL) at 0735 that morning enroute to KCPC where they intended to get fuel.
- They visually checked the fuel levels before leaving 15FL and both tanks were "one inch above the tabs".

- They left 15FL at 0735 with the fuel selector on the right tank. At 0910 they switched to the left tank.
- Mr. Shawn said “We flew for 1 hour and 25 minutes on the right tank. We were burning 11.5 gallons per hour” so we should have had plenty of fuel.
- When they were 3 miles from runway 6 at KCPC at 700 feet, the pilot, Mr. Chartress, ran a checklist that directed him to switch to the tank with more fuel. Mr. Chartress said that the right fuel gauge showed more fuel, so he was going to switch tanks.
- Mr. Shawn told the pilot that can’t be true since we know we’ve flown longer on the right tank than the left. The pilot reached down to switch tanks and Mr. Shawn asked, “what are you doing?”.

Inspector Statement

On October 31, 2017, the Greensboro Flight Standards District Office(FSDO) was notified around 11 am of an accident involving a Beech BE33 Debonair, N293GC, S/N CD-1035 at Columbus County Airport(KCPC) near Whiteville NC. I was requested to go investigate the accident with Inspector Festa, Inspector Paczkowski, and Inspector Osborne. We departed the FSDO around 1230 pm and arrived on scene around 4 pm local. Upon arriving at the airport, the airport manager directed us to the location of the down aircraft. Arriving at the scene, we were met by the local fire department and Sargent Green from the State police. The aircraft was located in a small wooded area just south of the airport less than a quarter of a mile from runway 6. Sargent Green informed us that the deceased pilot, Mr. George Chartress, had been removed and taken to the local morgue and the surviving passenger Mr. Richard Shawn, had been taken to the local hospital.

The initial inspection of the plane revealed severe damage to the left wing just outboard of the fuel tank and damage to the right wing near the fuselage. The prop and the nose portion received extensive damage as well. After determining the aircraft was safe for entry, I climbed inside and turned off the ELT and disconnected the ELT antenna. The magnetos and battery were de energized. Around 6 pm, Mr. Shawn returned from the hospital to gather his personal items. He suffered a concussion and some lacerations to his head but was able to give us a statement on the accident. He stated they left Cannon Creek Florida(15FL) around 7:35 am flying to Westerly, RI (KWST) with scheduled fuel stops at KCPC and Leesburg Va. He stated the fuel state prior to departure was 1/2 inch above the tabs in both tanks. He stated they flew 1 hour and 25 minutes with the fuel selector on the right tank burning approximately 11.5 gallons per hour and the PIC switched to the left tank and flew 40 more minutes. He stated, at approximately 3 miles from KCPC and at 700 ft agl, the PIC started going through his check list which instructed him to select the tank with the most fuel. With the right tank displaying more fuel than the left, the PIC switched the selector back to the right tank and Mr. Shawn asked the PIC what are you doing? He stated after the selector was placed on the right tank, the engine quit running. The PIC leaned forward to move the selector back to the left tank and leaned on the yoke causing the aircraft to nose over and down into the trees. Mr. Shawn stated he saw the left wing strike a tree which caused the aircraft to spin counter clockwise and came to rest backwards. The nose of the aircraft struck the ground and remained there however the tail remained upwards supported by smaller trees at approximately a 45 degree angle.

On November 1, 2017, we met with Todd Gunther from NTSB, Mike Council from Continental and Pete Basile from Textron Aviation at the airport to discuss the previous day's events. We went to the aircraft to do a further investigation. We open both fuel caps and were able to determine the right tank was empty and the left tank had fuel inside. Mr. Council removed the spark plugs and the white coloration on the electrode was consistent with a lean condition on the Champion Spark Plug chart provided by Mr. Council. In addition, we found some parts of a tree near the aircraft that were sliced in two on an angle that may suggest the prop was turning with power when the tree was cut. On November 2, 2017, the aircraft was removed from the wooded area and placed on a level surface. Both tanks were drained, the right tank produced ½ gallon of fuel while 16 gallons was removed from the left tank. Also, fuel was found in the fuel lines as well. Mr. Gunther tested the fuel transmitters in both the right and left tank. The left tank op checked good and displayed the correct readings. The right tank

transmitter op checked bad and displayed a ¾ reading at all times when the transmitter float was moved up and down. The maintenance logbooks were reviewed. The aircraft was operated under a good annual that was completed on March 4, 2017 and signed off approved for return to service by Timothy P. Howard [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The aircraft had been operated for approximately 69.55 hours since the annual inspection.

[REDACTED]

Mark Astin

Aviation Safety Inspector