



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Ralph E. Hicks
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: May 13, 2018
Person Contacted: Kevin L. Smith, Pilot/Owner of N486T
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA146 – Jacksonville, AL

This investigator and Mr. Dale White/BHM FSDO interviewed Mr. Smith by telephone. He reported the following:

The pilot was interviewed by NTSB IIC Hicks and FAA Coordinator White on May 13, 2018 and he reported the following:

The flight departed 5M0 (Hartselle, Alabama) about 1924 central time. He was returning to Falcon Field in Peachtree City, where the airplane was based. He was familiar with the route and had flown it numerous times before.

VFR conditions prevailed and he flew the route at 5,500 msl. It was dusk, but he could still see the ground to navigate. At takeoff from 5M0, he had 3 hours fuel on board, or about 47 gallons. The airplane holds 62 gallons.

During the preflight he raised the cowling and checked the engine over. He added 1 quart of oil and remembered putting the oil cap back on. Everything appeared fine with the airplane and engine. He sumped the fuel and that was normal.

First indication of a problem: he started smelling smoke. Not completely sure it was from the airplane at first...could have been from outside. He continued to smell the smoke and "started turning stuff off." He kept progressing and analyzing the situation. Then the engine "sputtered and quit." He had just crossed over Talladega National Forest. He turned away from the TNF since it appeared dark there. He turned the boost pump on and established best glide. He believed that he may have recovered some power... the engine was wind milling, about 10%. He maneuvered the airplane toward a pasture near Jacksonville. It was night, VFR but he could still see the ground.

After setting up the glide to a general area, he felt a "warm heat." His daughter panicked and climbed into the rear cabin. He pulled out the fire extinguisher and shot it toward the firewall where there were now flames. He had "some luck" with the extinguisher. The smoke continued and got heavy; he had to pop the window to let some air in so he could clear the smoke and see. The flames persisted. His daughter was in the aft seat now and he does not believe that she buckled up. While crossing a ridge, the airplane hit trees and spun around and crashed. He was still in the airplane but his daughter was not. There was some fire, but "not a crazy fire." He got out of the cockpit and away from the wreckage. He found his daughter and she was hurt. He could hear a siren "right away." Then the paramedics arrived.

The fire eventually died down and burned itself out. There was no explosion. Mr. Smith provided his email address and stated that he had the maintenance records at his home in Peachtree City. He is an A&P w/IA and performed the maintenance on his airplane, including the annual inspections.