

INTERVIEW STATEMENT: 01/31/2018

NAME: David Brainerd

ADDRESS: [REDACTED], Mena, AR

PHONE: [REDACTED]

INTERVIEW TYPE: phone

INTERVIEWER: Inspector Viteritto

Mr. Brainerd stated he performed an Annual Inspection on aircraft N900L on Thurs 01/25/2018 prior to the accident. He stated he put about 10 gal ea in the aux tanks and about 95-100 gal total and divided equally in each center tank mostly to check for leaks. Mr. Brainerd stated he and Mike did several high-speed run-ups and Mr. Brainerd checked the oil and screens and all checked good.

Mr. Brainerd did not hear or see the accident, but was present on Saturday afternoon sometime around 3-4 he thinks, when Mike Shepard started the engines on the aircraft. Mr. Brainerd stated he was at the airport and was either in the hangar or outside smoking his pipe when the Mike left with the aircraft.

Mr. Brainerd stated Mike Shepard was doing familiarization flights for currency and that this was not the first flight of the day, but Mr. Brainerd did not know how many prior flights Mike had completed.

Mr. Brainerd said he did not get a call from anyone regarding the accident, but thought something was wrong, so he headed out to the runway and saw Mike Shepard standing outside the aircraft uninjured and coherent. Mr. Brainerd stated he went inside the aircraft to get Mikes headset and heard a high pitch noise, so he disconnected the aircraft battery, removed it from the aircraft and put it in the truck. Mr. Brainerd also stated he removed a small tool bag and paperwork (logbooks) for a spare engine from the aircraft.

Mr. Brainerd stated that during the Annual Inspection, the ELT was not working and that it need a new battery, which he did not have, so he annotated it in the aircraft log.

Mr. Brainerd stated he remembers seeing Mr. Persky the day of the accident, before and after, but he didn't remember where or exactly when.

Record of Telephone Conversation

Name: David Brainerd, mechanic
Address:
Phone: [REDACTED]
Date: 2/1/2018; 9:20 a.m. CST
Description: Discussion of work performed on N900L and subsequent accident
1/27/2018

Mr. Brainerd stated that he went to Lapine, AL on January 8, 2018 for three days. He was doing a cursory pre-buy inspection on N900L. While he was in Lapine, AL, he ran the engines and looked the airplane over to determine its value since Mike Shepard was considering buying it. Brainerd returned to Mena, AR and then came back to Lapine on January 19th. He took tires, tubes, nitrogen, oil filters, tools etc to work on the airplane. He was there for a week working on the airplane.

Mr. Brainerd then stated on Friday January 26th, he and the owner, Art Persky ran the engines, did some high speed taxiing, brake and steering checks, discussed engine operation and gauge indications, and things of those nature.

Mr. Brainerd stated that on January 27th, he arrived around mid-morning and went through a preflight inspection with Mike Shepard. They discussed engine operating parameters, gauge indications, explained numbers listed in the POH. They also discussed how to use the power steering. Mr. Brainerd said that Mr. Shepard had experience with power steering because he flies a DC-3. They spent about an hour doing this discussion. After the discussion, they got out of the airplane for a while.

Mr. Brainerd explained that the airplane has power steering and power brakes to use while taxiing. To use the power steering, you press the top part of the rudder pedals and the first part of travel controls the nose wheel. Increased pressure on the top of the pedal activates the brakes.

Mr. Brainerd said that he had fueled 100 gallons into center tank and then put some in the aux tanks to make sure they were not leaking. He said he did this on the second day he was in Lapine. He had brought an empty drum with him and borrowed a drum from Art Persky. He got fuel from Greenville Airport.

Mr. Brainerd said that he was aware that Mike Shepard has experience with geared engines.

When Mr. Shepard went to fly the airplane, Mr. Brainerd was in the hangar gathering his tools. He heard the engines and everything sounded good. At some point he heard the airplane taxi back and then he heard the engine come up on power. Then it abruptly got quiet. He felt like something was wrong so he got in his truck and drove down the runway. He saw Mr. Shepard standing by the edge of the runway. Shepard said the left engine lost power and the airplane went left.

Mr. Brainerd went into the airplane and retrieved Mr. Shepard's headset as well as some paperwork related to an engine that was part of the aircraft purchase. He heard a buzzing noise and decided to remove the aircraft battery in case a spark might cause a fire.

After gathering up the rest of his tools, he and Mike Shepard drove back to Mena, Arkansas. After the shock of the accident was over, he thinks Mike Shepard reported the accident to the NTSB.

Mr. Brainerd stated that Les Perryman had been in Lapine the day before (Friday) but Brainerd does not remember seeing him on Saturday, the day of the accident. Mr. Brainerd did not see anyone Friday evening. When he left the airport, he bought fast food on the way to the hotel and went right to bed.

Mr. Brainerd stated that he has flown with Mr. Shepard for 100s of hours and knows him to be a very competent pilot. Mr. Brainerd does not believe there was any water in the fuel causing the engine to not maintain power. The engine did not make a different sound, it just went from running to making no sound at all. He was in the hangar when the crash happened and was not really paying a lot of attention, except that the engines sounded normal until he didn't hear the engines at all.

Nina A. McBride
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS
AL/NW Florida FSDO, SO-09