

Inspector's Statement

Accident Investigation: PA-34, N294AB,
Accident occurred: 7/7/2018, 9:20 CDT
Location: 2 nm of KJKA, Jack Edwards Airport, Gulf Shores, AL
030°18'19.92"N/ 087°38'5.02"W

On 7/7/2018 at approximately 17:30 CDT, Inspector Todd Pryor and I went to wreckage site of PA-34, N294AB. Mr. Pryor had been to the wreckage site earlier in the day but had left when a major thunderstorm moved into the area. Site is located in a swampy area with dense underbrush. An officer from the Orange Beach police department gave us a ride in an ATV to the site.

A portion of the right wing tip was lodged in a tree approximately 40 yards SSE of the main wreckage. Portions of the left wing tip and horizontal stabilizer were laying on the ground south of the main wreckage.

The fuselage, engines and inboard portions of both wings were still intact and constituted the main wreckage site. The main wreckage was oriented on a 061° heading. The right engine propeller blades were still attached to the right engine. Approximately 5 inches of one blade tip was bent aft approximately 20°. The other right propeller blade was bent aft from within 3 inches of the propeller hub and at a nearly 90° angle.

Due to dense underbrush and swampy area on the left side of the aircraft, it was not possible to see the condition of the propeller blades on the left engine. Due to damage to both wings, the fuel tanks had been breached. No sheen from a fuel spill was noted in the swamp near or around the wreckage.

Both inspectors were able to access the cabin through the rear passenger door. The main cabin was mostly intact. Pictures of the instrument panel and cockpit were taken. It was noted that the gear handle was in the up position, the flap handle was in the up position, and the fuel selectors were in the off position. Elevator trim was set at slightly aft of neutral. Throttle levers were set at full forward or fully open, propeller levers were nearly full forward in the increase position with the left lever slight forward of the right lever, and the mixture controls were set at a midpoint on the quadrant. (See photos of cockpit). An engine monitor, JPI EDM 760 was noted and removed from the panel by Inspector Pryor. All electrical switches were noted to be in the off position, including the aux fuel pumps. These rocker switches were in the center position. Both ELT switches, one on the left pilot side wall and one on the top right side of the instrument panel, were in the armed position.

Inspector McBride and Pryor departed the site at approximately 18:45 CDT to interview the pilot and flight school owner.

On 7/8/2018 Inspector McBride returned to the site with Continental Motors Investigator Kurt Gibson. They arrived at the wreckage at 14:30 CDT. Michael O'Shea of Florida Air Recovery and his helper, Hunter were at the wreckage and had cleared brush to gain access to the right engine. Mr. Gibson removed the cowlings from the right engine and was able to access the fuel line leading from the fuel tank to the engine. He did not have anything available to catch the fuel but we noted that approximately ¼ cup drained from the line. Mr. Gibson noted that this

seemed to be a normal amount to drain from the line. The recovery crew continued to clear brush and eventually we were able to access the left engine cowling. Mr. Gibson and I returned to my vehicle to retrieve a jar in which to catch any more drained fuel. As we returned to the wreckage site, Mr. O'Shea was dragging and carrying Hunter towards the road and yelling to call 911 because Hunter was experiencing heat exhaustion. Medical personnel arrived and cared for Hunter. Mr. Gibson and I returned to the site to collect some gear and see if we could access the left engine fuel line. Mr. Gibson was able to open the line and approximately a tablespoon of fuel was drained from the left fuel line. Mr. Gibson added a testing compound to the fuel collected so as to determine if there was any water in the fuel. He noted that it did not indicate there was any water in the fuel drained from the left engine. Mr. Gibson and departed the site at approximately 17:45 CDT. I did not take pictures of the left engine or propeller ☹

Mr. O'Shea elected to return to the site the next day with another helper.

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