

Inspector's Statement

On 24 June 2019, I responded to the Walker County Airport, to investigate an off-field landing and subsequent damage to N4349C. The aircraft is a 1955 Champion S7EC and owned by Edwin Banks. Mr. Banks told me that he was occupying the rear seat of the aircraft, while Brent Wilson (Private Pilot rating) occupied the front seat. Mr. Banks explained to me that he and Mr. Wilson had flown from the Walker County Airport (KJFX) to a private field (Campbell Field). The flight was uneventful. On the return trip, aircraft power was reduced and they began a series of "s" turns to slow the aircraft and increase separation due to other aircraft in the pattern. During the final approach, engine power was again added but as the throttle was added, no power increase occurred. Mr. Banks stated he quickly checked fuel selector lever, carb heat, and magneto switches. He pumped the the throttle lever several times, the engine surged and quit completely. This occurred at approximately 500 feet. He quickly assessed where he needed to make the safest landing (understanding he was not going to reach the runway). The aircraft touched down in a grassy field short of runway 27. Mr. Banks altered his heading to ensure he would not land and continue over a roadway embankment. During the landing ground run, the aircraft encountered a small drainage ditch. The landing gear broke free of the aircraft and the aircraft slid to a stop. Both pilots exited the aircraft uninjured.

After contacting the FAA, Mr. Banks was given permission to remove his aircraft from the field. It was transported via flatbed trailer to a covered parking location on the airfield. My initial inspection of the aircraft revealed the left and right landing gear broken completely off, one blade of the prop broken mid-span, both ailerons drooping down (indicating lack of continuity). The fuel quantity of the main tank appeared to be approximately 2/3rds full of a 13-gallon tank. The aircraft has a valid STC for auto gas.

Mr. Banks later explained to me that during the morning, his preflight inspection was normal. Inspecting fuel quality, topping off the main tank with approximately 30 % of 100LL AVGAS on top of the non-ethanol auto fuel already present in the tank. He added that the carburetor heat system was functioning correctly, as he noted during the run up procedure prior to take off.

Peter Rose
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