

Record of Interview

Name: Craig Jay Childre Pilot certificate # [REDACTED]
Address: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]
Date: 4/24/2020 approximately 3:30 pm CDT
Description: N43310, LSA Buccaneer, Experimental

On April 24, 2020 I responded to an aircraft accident in Coden, AL to assist Inspector Todd Pryor. I met Mr. Pryor at the residence of Clarence Parker, [REDACTED]. Mr. Parker was a witness to the accident. The pilot of the accident airplane, N43310, Craig Childre was at the Parker residence. Mr. Parker was coordinating and assisting in the recovery of the LSA Buccaneer N43310 which had crashed approximately ¼ mile south of the Parker residence.

Pilot Craig Childre provided me with his Private Pilot certificate and current driver's license. Mr. Childre does not hold a current medical certificate and was operating the LSA Buccaneer using his drivers license as medical qualification as allowed by 14 CFR 61.23. Mr. Childre stated that he did not have his pilot logbook or aircraft logbooks with him. He stated that he had recently completed a flight review in late 2019 and had done some seaplane training in Winter Haven, Florida where he received the flight review. Mr. Childre then stated the following story to me and provided a brief statement written a few minutes before my arrival at the request of Inspector Pryor.

Mr. Childre stated that he departed from his private grass strip in Foley, AL at approximately 9:30 am that morning. He flew across Mobile Bay in the direction of Fort Morgan, AL. He crossed the mouth of Mobile Bay, flew over Dauphin Island and continued west bound towards Mississippi and flew to the west end of Horn Island. He then turned northeast, crossed over the water towards Bayou La Batre. He stated he was approximately 800 feet when he reached the shoreline. At no time during that portion of the flight did he experience any engine problems or issues with the airplane. He was cruising northeast at about cruise power setting of 6200 RPM when the engine begin to lose power. He added full throttle with no response and the engine just kept losing power. He noted that the engine water tempterature was 140 degree so it was not overheating. He said the EGT was at 10 degrees and the CHT was at 3 degrees (gauge measurement is times 1000), all normal readings. He began descending, hit the power lines and flipped over onto the edge of the shoreline below the powerlines. At no time did he hear the engine popping, stuttering, missing, or surging. He reiterated that it just started "winding down." There was no propeller damage noted at the accident site. He was able to extricate himself from his seat belt and exited without sustaining any injuries.

Mr. Childre stated that he had departed his airstrip with a full tank of 10 gallons and had been in the air approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes when the engine quit. At the accident site, Inspector Pryor and I noted there was at least 2 gallons of fuel in the tank which was upside since the aircraft came to rest inverted. Mr. Childre stated that prior to takeoff, he added approximately 7 – 8 gallons to the tank from a fuel can containing premixed fuel for the two cycle engine. Mr. Childre stated he had purchased two ten gallons cans of fuel from the Marathon gas station near his home a few days before this day. He mixed the fuel with oil and topped off his airplane tank. He flew a little over an hour that day and had no issues. He landed with about 2 -3 gallons of fuel. On the day of the accident he added the 7 – 8 gallons of fuel from the same cans. He stated he expected to land back in Foley with 15 minutes of fuel left. He said he only needs to have a 10 minute reserve but that he likes to have extra fuel.

Mr. Pryor and I observed the aircraft recovery. Mr. Parker, with the help of a local fisherman with a small fishing barge and two crew were able to lift the airplane by its tail from the bushes and carry it to Mr. Parker's dock. The airplane was set upright on the shore without further damage. It was noted that the gear was down and the tail wheel was locked permanently in the down position with a plate that prevented the retraction arm from moving. Inspector Pryor conducted a visual examination of the engine and saw no indication of what caused the engine failure. We did not drain the fuel tank since there is no fuel sump. We noted there looked to be approximately two gallons of fuel in the tank. Mr. Pryor pulled the

propeller through three times, noting that it moved freely and showed no indication of compression loss, as best as he could tell with a two cycle engine. Inspector Pryor then removed both carburetor bowls and found fuel in both. The fuel filter appeared clean. The fuel appeared to be clean, clear automotive gas with oil added as you would expect for a two cycle engine. Inspector Pryor stated it looked normal. Inspector Pryor and I also noted continuity of the flight controls. We inspected and photographed the cockpit and cabin. Throttle position was full forward. There is no mixture control that I could identify. There were three unlabeled toggle switches on the panel. The key was in the ignition and it was turned to the "BOTH" position. Hobbs meter read 2466.1.

Mr. Childre stated that the engine had been overhauled by a company in Mississippi in Decmebr 2019. He also stated that he had originally bought the airplane for parts but decided he could get it airworthy so he had the engine overhauled and did the condition inspection himself since he is a certified A & P mechanic. He stated he was seated on the right side of the airplane during the flight because he has more experience flying a stick with his right hand and working the throttle with his left after all the time he flew in an Aeronca Champ.

Inspector Pryor then advised Mr. Childre that he could remove the wings and place the airplane on a trailer and haul it to his property in Foley, AL. We scheduled to inspect the airplane further on Monday morning at his home.

Monday April 27, 2020 9:00 am CDT

When Inspector Pryor and I arrived, the airplane was sitting on the grass with the wings removed and laying on the ground nearby. Inspector Pryor removed a spark plug and noted it looked normal, slightly brownish. While he continued to look at the engine, I reviewed Mr. Childre's pilot logbooks and flight planning documents.

Mr. Childre provided me with a New Orleans sectional map dated November 7, 2017. On the map, he had drawn a line from his grass strip to the southwest towards Horn Island on the Mississippi coast. The words "55 miles" were written above the west end of Horn Island and 85° and 265° were written midway along the line. Mr. Childre explained that he departed his strip and headed westbound towards Horn Island. He states he never climbed above 1000 feet. He flew past Fort Morgan, Dauphin Island and to Horn Island. After looking at the map for a minute, Mr. Childre changed his story and stated he may have only flown to the tip of Petit Bois Island before he turned northeast. When asked if the miles noted on the map were statute or nautical miles, he was unsure. When asked if he calculated his airspeed in knots or miles per hour, he stated knots. (His airspeed indicator is in miles per hour.) He stated that he calculated his time enroute at 60 knots per hour and 5 gallons per hour fuel burn. He also stated that he had a slight tail wind going west and would be bucking a head wind upon his return home. In anticipation, he brought 3.5 gallons of fuel strapped in a can behind the left seat. Based on his time in flight, he planned to stop at Denton Airport, Dauphin Island and add fuel before flying home across the bay. After the crash, he could not find the can at the crash site and thinks it was taken by someone. I asked why he had not mentioned this at the crash site on Friday, and he had no explanation. We then discussed the regulations requirements regarding carrying additional fuel in an auxiliary tank in the cabin of the airplane.

Mr. Childre presented 3 pilot logbooks, the most recent covered 8/24/2013 to the present. At the beginning of Logbook 3 he had entered an "amount forward" of approximately 3000 hours. Because his previous logbook did not appear to be properly added and totaled up, it was difficult to determine how accurate this number is. It appears that he logged time inconsistently, sometimes in hours and minutes and sometimes as hours and tenths of an hour. Entries are difficult to read. He did not total any columns or carry any times forward after the first few pages but he did sign every page.

The majority of his most recent flight time was acquired from 2013 – 2015 in an Aeronca Champ with the last entry in May 2015. I would approximate that Mr. Childre flew the Champ for 70 hours. There are no other entries until November 18 -26, 2019 when Mr. Childre says he went to Winter Haven, FL and flew with an instructor Scott Slay, cert # [REDACTED]. Mr. Slay endorsed Mr. Childre for a flight review on 26 Nov 2019 after 6.7 hours of dual given in an Aventura II. This training included seaplane operations in preparation for a seaplane rating. Mr. Childre stated that he had wanted to get a seaplane rating and

eventually fly the Buccaneer on its floats. It appears that Mr. Childre logged an additional 5.2 hours in the Adventura while in the Winter Haven area through 12/1/2019.

The next and final entries in his logbook show that Mr. Childre flew the Buccaneer:

4/13/2020 - 1 hour

4/22/2020 – 1 hour

4/24/2020 – 1 hour 15 min

Mr. Childre claims that he did not experience any engine trouble or issues with the airplane during those flights until the engine quit on 4/24/2020.

Based on logbook entries I reviewed and totaled, Mr. Childre has logged approximately:

3100 hours total time in airplanes

15.2 hours in last 12 months

3.3. hours in last 90 days

3.3. hours make and model

Inspector Pryor completed his engine inspection and had found no indications of engine problems. He reviewed the aircraft logbooks and noted some unconventional entries made by Mr. Childre who had completed and endorsed the condition inspection. We were unable to locate the operating limitations issued when the aircraft received its experimental airworthiness certificate 01/11/2008. Mr. Pryor asked Mr. Childre a few questions about the maintenance completed at the time of the condition inspection. Mr. Pryor then requested that Mr. Childre start the engine and see if it would run. Mr. Childre agreed and started the airplane after anchoring the tailwheel to his tractor. The airplane's engine started right up and ran for approximately 5 minutes at a low power setting. Once the temperature gauge reached 140°, Mr. Childre increased the throttle to 7000 RPM and the engine ran smoothly. After two or so minutes, he shut the engine down.

We all agreed the engine ran smoothly and showed no indication of why it had failed in flight.

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Nina A. McBride
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