

Accident N711JA

[REDACTED]
Tue 5/12/2020 10:22 AM

To: 'Mark Keefer' [REDACTED]

Cc: Keith Carver [REDACTED]

Mark:

On 5/12/2020 at 11:23 am, I observed the following aircraft N711JA:

Bonanza A-33 N711JA taxied over the run up area off the end of runway 32. Performed pre take off runup, in my opinion, everything sounded fine. Aircraft lined up on runway 32 for take-off. Upon reaching what seemed to be full power, the engine began to run very lean or indication of lean (after firing). The pilot then pulled the power back and aborted take-off. N711JA taxied out to runway 14 apron. Performed pre take off runup, in my opinion, everything sounded fine again. Aircraft lined up on runway 14 for take-off. Upon reaching what seemed to be full power, the engine began to run very lean or indication of lean (after firing). The pilot then pulled the power back and aborted take-off again. N711JA taxied over the run up area off the end of runway 32. Performed pre take off runup, in my opinion, everything sounded fine. Aircraft lined up on runway 32 for take-off. Upon reaching what seemed to be full power, the engine began to run very lean or indication of lean (after firing). At this time, the pilot did not abort take off. As the aircraft began to rotate over half way down the runway, I noticed his rate of climb was insufficient and watched him barely clear the trees and make a left turn going out of my sight. Then I observed a black cloud of smoke. At which time I had one of my employees drop me off at the crash site and assisted emergency services in every way I could.

Keith Carver

Tampa North Flight Center

[REDACTED]
Lutz, FL 33559
[REDACTED]

February 13, 2020
Tom Watson

Lot 2, FL 33557

Father →

On May 12, 2020 at approximately 11:25
am I was in my garage and heard a
normal run-up followed by an attempted
departure, however the engine sounded
abnormal/rough. The pilot aborted his
takeoff, which I observed at this
point. The pilot then performed another
successful run-up, and in my opinion, I heard
a sound. ~~He then attempted to take off~~
He ~~Restarted~~ 32 again & tried back for
runway 32, & performed a third
run-up which sounded normal to me. Then
the pilot ~~attempted~~ took off runway 32
however did not sound like he had full
power & seemed to be slow a speed. *
My son joined me at this time
& contacted him on radio to tell him he
had a rough running ^{engine} radio. The pilot
said ya, returning, that that was it.
He then said "goin down".

* Tim stated engine sounded
rough on takeoff.

05-13-20

This document transcribes the witness statement that I documented for Mr. Tom & Tim Watson on 05-13-20, taken at X39 airport. Their residence is [REDACTED] Lutz, FL 33559. Neither gentleman wanted to provide an email address.

Tom Watson [REDACTED]

Tim Watson [REDACTED]

The handwritten statement states the following:

On May 12, 2020 at approximately 11:15 am I (Tom speaking) was in my garage and heard a normal run-up followed by an attempted departure, however the engine sounded abnormal/rough. The pilot aborted his takeoff, which I observed at this point. The pilot then performed another successful runup, in my opinion, based on sound. He taxied back for runway 32 and performed a third runup which sounded normal to. Then the pilot took off runway 32 however did not sound like he had full power and seemed to be slow on speed. Tim stated the engine sounded rough on all takeoffs. (Tom speaking) My son joined me at this time and contacted him on the radio to tell him he had a rough running engine. The pilot said ya, returning, then that was it. He then said "Going down".

This document was signed by both Tom Watson and Tim Watson


[REDACTED]
Mark V. Keefer

Aviation Safety Inspector

May 13, 2020

Date: May 14, 2020
To: Mark Keefer
From: Vincent Probst
Subject: Witness to the event for N711JA

As per our phone conversation this morning, this is my written statement to the events leading up to the final flight of N711JA. On Tuesday morning May 12, 2020 I went to my personal aircraft to wash it and clean up the interior. My plane is located at X39 behind the address of [REDACTED]. This location is approximately half the distance down runway 14 / 32. As I arrived at my airplane, I heard an aircraft overhead entering the pattern for runway 14. Shortly after, I watched N711JA roll out past me down 14 towards the FBO. I noted to myself that I had seen that particular aircraft at this airport several times over the past month or so because I frequently walk to the FBO during the evening with my son in the evening time. The time was approximately 1025 hrs. I continued to go about my business of washing my plane. On or around 20 or so minutes later I heard an aircraft engine running down by the hangar area of the FBO. I did not see anything because that part of the airport is obstructed by trees toward the South East. I did not think anything of it because I live at an airport and that is a normal everyday occurrence. About another 10 minutes went by and N711JA went by my position where I was still located at my plane at a higher than normal speed heading down runway 32. I thought that he was performing a high-speed taxi because I noted that the engine sounded like it was mis-firing. Shortly after this the aircraft again taxied back toward the FBO once again at a higher than normal taxi speed. I do not recall as to if the aircraft was mis-firing at that time as it was back taxing down 32. I then climbed up onto my wing to enter my plane to look at several things and the N711JA once again went by a high rate of speed. This time I was a bit more curious. I figured that since this is the 3rd time the aircraft completed this type of movement perhaps the pilot was trying to trouble shoot an issue. I said to myself I am pretty sure that aircraft has had maintenance of some sort here at X39 because as I previously stated I have seen it parked at the FBO on several occasions. I thought perhaps maybe the A/P was with aircraft trying to trouble shoot a problem with the plane because I did hear it mis-fire on an earlier pass. I stepped down from my plane and walked towards the West on the taxiway that leads to 14/32 so I can see because my view was obstructed by a

large Oak tree that sits behind another residence on the runway to watch what N711JA was doing. At this time the plane had completed a 180 degree turn and was facing me towards the Southeast. I could see that the aircraft was stopped on the departure end of 32 near the run-up area. The plane was there for approximately 3-5 minutes at a high rpm. Due to its distance of about 2000 feet or so plus the fact that from my vantage point I could not see exactly what the pilot was doing. I assumed he was doing a run-up for take-off down 14 or something else. I do not recall the prop being cycled or any unusual sounds just the high rpm. I wondered if he was going to depart down 14 as I just stated. I tried to look towards the hangar at the FBO for the wind sock on top of it because I was curious as to the wind direction. The secondary wind sock which would have been easier to see which sits on the Northwest corner of the T-hangars has been missing for 2 months. Once again, I was curious. I am a licensed private pilot and like most pilot was just curious to see what was going on and if the plane was going to depart down 14. After several more minutes went by, I walked back to my aircraft. 711JA taxied back towards the FBO. As more time went by maybe 10 minutes or so I was standing on my right wing again and heard a plane throttle up. Due to my line of sight being blocked by the trees to the Southeast I did not see the Bonanza but heard its distinct engine sound until it came into view. I thought to myself as it went past me as I was watching the whole time, hey this guy is not at a full power setting! I immediately thought okay another high-speed pass. I watched in disbelief knowing the engine did not sound as if it was developing full thrust. As the aircraft rotated about another 500 or so feet, I had an uneasy feeling. I know from experience that some planes have a longer take-off roll but this did not look right to me. My view of his lift off was obstructed by the afore mentioned large Oak tree and it was not until 10 seconds later did, I see N711JA. I was surprised to say the least to see that he cleared the 35-foot trees that lie across State Road 54 on the departure end of 32. I felt that the plane barely had enough airspeed as he went by me on his take-off run to even fly. With that stated the plane when I saw it again was in about a 20-degree bank if I had to guess as it turned left towards the WNW. I can also see that it was a higher angle of attack as it was not accelerating as a plane of that make should. His altitude was no more than 200 to 300 ft. AGL. As I continued to watch and hope that it would can altitude and speed, I thought maybe he is attempting the "impossible turn". Shortly after this thought I lost sight of N711JA due to the

warehouses across from my location and the tree line in the distance. I witnessed the typical large cloud from the fuel ignition. I looked at my watch and it was 1121 hrs. The fuel smoke plume was consumed in about 3 minutes before the smoke column changed color and shape. I know about smoke as well as flammable liquids. I have been a fire officer and in the fire service as a fireman and instructor for 28 years. Some closing thoughts. I could not see or do I remember the aircraft's gear retraction. It ended up about 1-mile WNW of me and with the obstructions of the tree by the runway it was obstructed after the plane departed. In hind sight with all of the as I wrote high speed taxiing, maybe I witnessed a couple of rejected take-offs. That is hard for me to say as I have never flown a Bonanza. Secondly, I think wind was out of the SSW or so. Was a tailwind a contributing factor to the long ground roll? It is not for me to say or speculate. Lastly, I did not see any separation of any flight surface components prior to the smoke plume. The airplane was in a bank with a high AOA in what appeared to me as a close to imminent stall condition as one could imagine if not flying an airplane. I hope this statement will assist in your investigation. I did my best to recall the events as I witnessed them and remember. I hope this will aid in the overall outcome to this investigation and aid in training pilots based upon the final conclusion. Overall, it is another sad day for the aviation community and in the end, I hope we can learn from it. Please do not hesitate to contact me now or in the future of this crash investigation. It is the least I can do to assist for your agency and pilots as well. Vincent Probst