



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: September 2, 2020
Person Contacted: Ronald D. Redmon
NTSB Accident Number: ERA20LA245

Narrative:

Mr. Ronald D. Redmon contacted NTSB by phone on August 28, 2020, at 0849 EDT. He called from [REDACTED] He confirmed his e-mail address is [REDACTED]

At the beginning of the interview he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

At the beginning of the call he indicated that he had been working on the NTSB Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident/Incident Report but asked me to resend.¹

He indicated that he has about 254 hours total flight time, and have flown Cessna 172, 177 (which he owns), and a Piper Warrior (PA-28). He has about 116 hours in a Cessna 177.

He was asked the following questions as background before asking him to discuss the accident flight:

Explain his relationship with the airplane owner-

He indicated that the airplane had been owned by a friend of his (James P. Greer), who has a hangar near his. Mr. Greer asked him to fly the airplane to Clermont County/Sporty's Airport (I69), Batavia, Ohio, for the new owner (Craig P. Weikel) who was a student pilot. Mr. Greer put him in touch with the new owner.

¹ It was e-mailed to him and the airplane owner on August 28, 2020, at 1025 EDT.

Questions Continued -

Was he paid for the flight?

He was not paid to make the flight. He was doing it as a favor for Mr. Greer whose wife had recently had heart surgery and he couldn't leave her.

He was asked to provide details about the flight-

On Friday (July 3rd), he talked with Mr. Weikel about flying the airplane. One week later, or Sunday July 12th he was able to make the flight. He arrived at the Addington Field Airport (EKX) between 1030 and 1045. When he arrived, an employee pulled the airplane from the hangar and he mentioned that an annual inspection had just been completed. He checked the logs, and did an extensive preflight inspection of the airplane, which included a check of the fuel. He found a fuel dipstick behind the pilot seat in the airplane and used it to determine the fuel level. He was asked at that time if he has a fuel dipstick for his Cessna 177 and he said he does. When he measured the fuel in each fuel tank based on the graduation markings, each fuel tank had about 12.5 gallons of fuel, which was plenty for the intended flight.

Also as part of his preflight inspection he sumped the fuel tanks and the fuel strainer and did not detect any contamination. After starting the engine, he taxied to the run-up area and did a complete engine run-up which included a check of the magnetos. He reported the magneto drops were good, the auxiliary fuel pump checked good, the oil pressure and temperature were good, all engine instruments, flight instruments, and flight controls were good. He verified the elevator trim tab was in the proper position, and texted Mr. Weikel at 1125 advising that he would be departing. He announced his takeoff intention on the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF) and departed. He reported that after takeoff the flight was going along well but it was bumpy. About 40 to 45 minutes into the flight while flying at 3,000 ft mean sea level (msl), he noticed a slight drop of engine rpm which he thought was attributed to be from carburetor ice. He applied carburetor heat which restored the engine rpm, and about 3 to 4 minutes later, he noted the engine rpm had "quite a bit more rpm decrease, and the engine then quit." He set to maintain best glide airspeed, and checked the ignition, mixture, and verified the fuel selector was on the both position. He began looking for a place to land, and noted he was near rolling hills with trees around him. He selected a cow pasture and flew a short right base leg where he extended the flaps. In anticipation of the forced landing he turned off the master switch, cracked open his door, and touched down on downsloping terrain of the pasture. Due to bumpy terrain the airplane bounced, he flared, and then touched down on upsloping terrain. While slowing the airplane nosed over. He then exited the airplane and was not injured. He noted a person nearby, who called the fire department and responded.

He was asked the following questions-

How many dipsticks were there in the airplane?

He found 1 at the time of his preflight and used it. After the accident while inverted he noted a total of 3 or 4.²

² Postaccident a total of 3 wooden annotated dipsticks were located and photographed.

Questions Continued -

Describe the one he used?

It was wood and was marked with permanent marker every 5 gallons. The one he uses on his airplane is aluminum with etched markings/gradiants.

With respect to the dipstick he used, did he ask the previous owner if it was calibrated?

No, he didn't. After the accident Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspector Ronald "Doug" Killingsworth told him that the previous owner (Mr. Greer) had them but never used them.

Did you visually check the fuel tanks and if so, describe what you did and saw?

He did get a ladder from the airport fuel truck and looked in each tank. He could see fuel. With the wood dipstick in hand, he placed it to the bottom of each tank and noted the fuel level was a little past the 2nd "5" mark, which he thought was about 12.5 gallons.

Was that level noted in each fuel tank?

Yes.

Did the fuel gauges agree with the dipstick reading?

He doesn't rely on the gauges because they are never accurate. With electrical power on the fuel level was just below 1/2 tank on both sides.

How deep was the fuel level in each fuel tank?

He remembered looking in each tank and guessed it was about 3 inches, adding that would be just a guess.

Describe the position of the fuel selector for takeoff and the whole flight?

It was on both the entire time.

Describe the position of the mixture control for taxi, takeoff, and the flight?

It was on full rich the entire time. Because he was flying at 3,000 ft msl, he did not lean the fuel to air ratio.

Why 3,000 ft msl?

That was not answered.

What was the planned flight duration?

1.1 hours. But the actual flight duration was 40-45 minutes.³

³ Based on ADS-B data, the first ADS-B target was at 1128:44, when the flight was about 1,721 ft from the approach end of runway 23. And the last ADS-B target at 1223:16, was about 99 ft and 292° from the approximate resting position of the airplane.

Questions Continued -

Describe the 1st rpm drop and how much?

It was 200 to 300 rpm.

Described what happened when the engine quit?

The engine rpm decreased again 200 to 300 ft, then 1 or 2 seconds later “everything went away.”

He didn’t check the tachometer but did know the engine was windmilling.

What was the flap setting for the forced landing?

20°.

Describe the restraint he was wearing?

He was wearing the lapbelt only. There was no shoulder harness.

Did he notice any fuel leakage postaccident?

He couldn’t see anything leaking. He could smell a little fuel. When the fire department arrived, they too checked for fuel leaks.

Any idea what occurred?

No. FAA inspector Killingsworth indicated he would attempt to run the engine to see if it was OK. He suspected fuel starvation.

Did he meet the FAA at the accident site?

Yes.

At that point of the conversation he was given an update and advised that NTSB had arranged to have the engine operated with a fuel supply plumbed into the left and right wing roots.

Do you recall who made the fuel dipstick?

He did not think the previous owner made them because he had only owned the airplane for about 1 year.

Do you recall what the fuel gauges were reading when the engine lost power?

No. He did not look at them, he was busy trying to find a place to land.

Do you have any questions for NTSB?

I can’t think of anything right now.

Why weren’t the fuel tanks filled?

Looking back he wish he had. He knew there was 12.5 gallons in each tank based on the reading on the wood fuel dipstick that he used, which was enough to make the intended flight. And the winds were favorable for the flight.

The call ended at 0937 EDT.

On the same day at 1031 EDT, Mr. Redmon was e-mailed 2 pictures of the three wooden fuel dipsticks found in the airplane and asked to clarify which dipstick he used. He was also asked in an e-mail on March 10, 2021, to clarify what photograph and dipstick he used. He replied by e-mail on March 11, 2021 at 0507 EST by attaching a single photograph captioned, "Photo Taken by Chris F 8 25 2020 Same as Acc Site Pic by FAA[1848].jpg" with verbiage, "Good morning Timothy, Attached is the photo I was referring to. I believe the dipstick on the bottom of this photo was the one I used. The only one I found in the pocket in the back of the pilots seat during my pre-flight. Ron Redmon."



Figure 1: Photograph provided by Pilot March 11, 2021 and labeled, "Photo Taken by Chris F 8 25 2020 Same as Acc Site Pic by FAA[1848].jpg"

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on September 2, 2020. He replied on September 9, 2020, at 1925 EDT with, "Tim, I reviewed the conversation and don't have any further comments or concerns other than the fuel dipstick I "believed" I used was the one on the bottom of the other photo labeled "FAA[1848].jpg." Ron Redmon" The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on March 11, 2021.