

Noah Ketler's Accident Report – N5018Y

In the week leading up to the accident, I flew the Aztec on two other occasions. On Thursday, April 1st, I flew with Charles Lilly to get current in the plane and to exchange instructing techniques. The plane seemed to be running normally, though we did not feather the engines on this flight. On April 2nd, I had Jason Bredlau's initial multi-engine instruction flight. The engines ran well. We did, however, try to feather the engines unsuccessfully on this flight. Upon landing, we filled all the tanks with 100LL and parked the plane. After this flight, I asked another instructor if he had experienced the feathering issue in the Aztec. He said he had never experienced this issue. There is no formal method of squawking issues with aircraft at Highland Rim that yields attention from maintenance other than speaking with them directly. Their first response when bringing up an issue is typically to have someone else fly the plane again to ensure it was not pilot error that caused the issue.

In this same vein, I am now remembering that on the morning of April 2nd, there was another flight scheduled in the Aztec. At the time I flew the plane on the afternoon of April 2nd, all I knew was they cancelled their morning flight because they had some issues with the plane. One of the other instructors flew the plane to check the issue in the late morning and told me everything was good to go with the plane. I called Mr. Seth Lockard (the instructor who was scheduled to fly the morning of April 2nd but cancelled) this morning (April 12) to determine why he had cancelled his flight. He said the nose strut was low, and the left engine would not maintain power after starting when drawing from the inboard tanks. He was never told that a solution had been found to this issue.

On the morning of April 5th, I met Jason Bredlau for his 2nd multi-engine flight. Prior to pre-flight, we went over the factors that affect Vmc (SMACFUM) along with our plan of action for the day's flight. We planned on doing a simulated engine out on the initial take-off roll, and then departing for upper air work before returning to practice some landings.

On our pre-flight, everything seemed in order. The tanks were full, and we did not find any water or sediment during the sumping process. Engine oil was near nine quarts on both sides. During run-up, everything functioned properly, as well. The mag testing and prop cycling yielded expected results. As we taxied onto runway 22, I once again reminded Jason that I was going to be pulling power on one of the engines shortly after he went full throttle. He verbally acknowledged his understanding and said that he would immediately pull back both throttles, apply brakes, and say, "Abort, abort, abort."

As Jason applied full throttle, gauges were green. I promptly pulled back the mixture on the right engine and Jason subsequently pulled back both throttles and applied brakes. Before we lost full power on the right, I put mixture to full rich again. Jason kept solid control of the plane and got us back lined up on center line. With gauges again giving good indications and over 4400' of runway remaining, Jason applied full throttle again and we proceeded to take off.

Soon after being airborne, the left engine started losing power and the plane started yawing. I told Jason to pitch for blue line (Vyse) while I made sure all mixture, prop, and throttles were full forward, pumps were on, and mags were on. Everything was in its proper location for max power takeoff. The flaps were already up, and the gear would not raise. I was pushing hard on the right rudder, raising the left wing,

and pitching for 110 (Vyse) as I attempted to feather the engine. While the RPMs began to drop on the left engine, it would not feather. The left engine RPMs were repeatedly rising and falling, though I had throttle and prop levers in the full aft position for feathering.

At this point, we were still losing altitude and getting close to the ground – I decided to focus on landing. We were low and getting slow. I did not want to stall out or roll over, so I pushed the nose down and raised the left wing, aiming for the tree line. With our sink rate, I thought the trees would diminish a bit of our kinetic energy before impacting solid ground. Right before we hit the trees, I applied full aft pressure on the yoke. After impact, we got tossed and turned on our way through the trees. We were hanging upside down from our seatbelts and I was able to unbuckle us both. Jason was unresponsive – breathing but not speaking. I could move but was weak. I could not find a phone or a way out of the plane, so I talked to Jason until EMS arrived.

RECORD OF ☐ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☒ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 3:30pm cst	DATE 04/08/2021
NAME (S) OF PERSON (S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION		ROUTING	
		SYMBOL	INITIALS
Noah Ketler			
Phone call with J. Brett Leslie, ASI			
SUBJECT These are the notes I took while I talked with Noah Ketler three days after the			
accident.			
DIGEST			
I am going to ask you some questions – I want you to know none of this is intended to be accusatory in nature at all – my intent is to learn what happened and to just gather the facts.			
What happened?			
It was very fast, Got my MEI back In Sept with DPE Wilcox .Just my third time flying the plane – it was down for maintenance – hard to get a part. It was his second lesson with student. Went up last week (Thur) for .7 with chief flight Instructor For currency. Went up with student and had first lesson. Then went up Monday – went to take off - I let him take the plane off Full throttles Took off – just after we were in the air, Left engine started losing power – yawing to the left – I was checking him to make sure it was okay. Mix, prop, throttle all full, master, fuel pumps, mags all on, told student to pitch for blue line. We are losing power I go to Feather the prop while lifting the left wing and adding rudder It would not feather – pulled to the left prop. Still losing altitude – prop still would not feather. Started thinking about where we will touch the ground, focused on that – no time, it all happened so fast. Lifted up the left wing Pitched the nose down a little for speed for blue Tried to land it in the trees might cushion the fall Had a bad rate of decent going. Right before we hit tree pulled back on the yoke as hard as I could, Hit tree with belly of the plane down, As we went down it rolled. The Student hit his head and was on top of me I get my seatbelt off and he is out of it I get his seatbelt undone while I am trying to find my phone to call for help. He is moaning, he is breathing, but didn't know what would happen. I stopped him here – he was getting chocked up and patient care has little value to our investigation.			
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED			
DATE 04/08/2021	TITLE Aviation Safety Inspector	SIGNATURE	

Any issues with this plane in the past for you?

On the run up it was totally fine.

Flew it the Friday prior – we actually had an issue with it not feathering on that flight while at altitude.

I asked another inst. And he said he had not had that issue. It never came up in a squawk.

I have been told you took on 16-18 gal before the flight. Did you sump the tanks?

Yes, we did sump tanks – no issue with fuel sump. We had full fuel. “We did not add fuel before that flight.” He thought it was not fueled the day of the accident Noah thought it was fueled the Friday before.

Where did the engine fail?

We were airborne. Everything sounded fine rolling down runway.

Was it a slow fail or was it a bang, it all stopped?

Slow fail, coughing laboring engine. Its rpm dropped and rose some. Sputter.

As you are going down the runway – when did you make blue line?

Made blue line just fine – pitched for after the engine failed.

Engine fails – you went mix, props, throttle, flaps up, gear up?

Gear would not come up. I tried to pull it up – stopped worrying about it and flew the plane.

Did you feather the prop or did it feather its self? The left was feathered.

Noah said “It never feathered correctly. It never stopped.”

Did you ever lose power in the right engine? It looked like it was producing full power?

No power loss. It was making full power.

Did you switch tanks?

No, I did not switch tanks...

Any guess you have of what caused the left engine to fail.

I do not know...

Witnesses have said the plane was backfiring or not sounding right as it took off

I do not recall that.

Witnesses also said it took a long time for the plane to lift off

I did not feel that. However, We did a simulated engine fail via throttle pull on right engine...on the take off – for a short abort and then we continued the takeoff normal. That may have used a little bit of runway.

While on the ground it made perfect power.

yes

The gear looked down when you came down? Did you pull the emergency gear extension or just put the handle down? One wheel was locked the other wasn't.

Did not mess with the emergency gear extension – no time.

Did you enter the trees belly side down and flip as you went through the trees?

Was making a left turn into to the trees belly side down.

End the end, do you think this was a VMC role?

Classic VMC – copiloting it. After engine fail – told him to pitch to the blue line – raising the dead engine. Keeping us from rolling the plane. When prop would not feather – gear not coming up. Looking to land. Lifted left wing, pulled back as hard as I could before we touched.

I do need to ask for information from your log book and some other general information – it's kind of like a ramp inspection. What is a good email?

When you say it would not feather, would it not stop the prop? Or could you not physically get the lever full aft through the indent if there is one?

It would pull all the way back – prop would just not stop spinning

Same on previously flight – on 4/2 it would got all the way aft but the prop would not stop spinning

Do you recall how you think the prop lever would have been when you hit the trees?

Would the left prop lever been pulled back?

I think it was aft – but I'm not 100%. I broke my left wrist – I think I had my hand on prop when I hit the trees. Also have a bunch of stiches in my left hand.

Nothing follows

Brett Leslie on 4/8/2021 via Phone. Ended at approximately 4pm.