



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Instructor, Owner and Passenger Interview

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Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: May 13, 2021; 1500 EDT
Persons interviewed: Harold Lee, Cody Lee, Jason Garrick
Microsoft Teams Meeting
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA192

Narrative:

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred via an online interview.

At the beginning of the interview, the instructor (Jason Garrick), passenger (Cody Lee) and airplane owner (Harold Lee) were 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. They were also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; They agreed to the interview with the representation of their attorney, Mr. John Hodge, who was also in the online meeting.

Mr. Garrick explained that it was a sightseeing flight even though he has instructed Cody previously in the accident airplane. Cody stated he has about 4 hours of flight instruction from Mr. Garrick and that they had had lessons the week prior but, on that day, he just wanted to fly and enjoy the airplane.

Mr. Garrick explained that they departed Clemson and flew west toward Westminster and then navigated toward Cody's house. Once they got flew past Cody's house, they started to fly toward his house. Cody stated that they had flown some low approaches over some fields to survey them. Mr. Garrick explained that they were looking for fields that maybe had the ability to serve as landing areas. They would fly to 1500-2000ft agl between fields; then descend to about 500 feet above the field and look for power lines, stumps, etc, while determining if the field was long enough, and then would climb back up to look for another field to survey. He said that the engine had been running smoothly the whole flight.

Mr. Garrick stated that it was after looking at the third field and then beginning their climbout that the engine quit about 600-625 feet above ground level. The propeller began to windmill. The engine was making no noise and he could tell that they were descending. He set the airplane up for best glide and turned toward a field. His next instinct was to turn on the electric fuel pump. The engine sputtered for about 10 seconds then stopped producing power again. At that point he knew they were going to make a forced landing and he pulled the throttle out to the OFF position and all his attention was outside. He stated that they could not reach the field and he had to make

the forced landing into the trees. He attempted to maneuver the airplane in such a way as to have the trees take out the wings; however, once they hit the trees, he had little additional ability to control their path.

I asked about the fuel system on the airplane, and the owner explained that the airplane was equipped with two gravity-fed wing tanks that fed to the bubble tank that held about 1.5 gallons of fuel. Each wing held 13 gallons in each wing for a total of 26 gallons, and the demarcations on the fuel level indicator were 2-4-6-8-10-12-13 for each tank. He stated that the fuel indicator had seemed accurate when they had previously filled up the tanks.

Mr. Garrick outlined that the first flight of the day with the owner, there were 6 gallons in each tank, and that he landed with 4 gallons in each tank; and on the second flight (the accident flight), there were 4 gallons in each tank when they departed Clemson. He stated that two minutes before the forced landing he noted over 2 gallons in each tank so he estimated that he had a little more than 4 gallons left at the time. He indicated that the aircraft's normal fuel burn was approximately 4 gallons per hour. It had been his intention to return to Clemson, which was about 17 nm away, after this last low pass.

I inquired as to what kind of fuel was used in the airplane and the owner responded that they used 100LL. I inquired if they used any additives in the fuel and they responded "No." The owner explained that there was fuel in the bubble tank after the accident and the accident site smelled of fuel. He further explained that in order to avoid the fuel surcharge at the Clemson airport, he owns a 100-gallon steel portable tank with an aluminum nozzle that he uses to purchase fuel at the Clemson airport. He hangers the airplane in his back yard and would fuel the airplane at his home then trailer the airplane to the Clemson airport to fly. He stated that although the fuel in that steel tank seemed to be a greenish color, the fuel in the airplane's bubble tank looked light blue. I explained that the Federal Aviation Administration had collected fuel samples from both the portable tank and the airplane's bubble tank for testing.

I inquired as to whether the airplane was equipped with carburetor, and the owner responded, "No." He added that the mechanic who examined the airplane after the accident noted that he looked up the carburetor and stated that it should have had carburetor heat installed with it.

The digest was e-mailed to Mr. Hodge for the group to review on May 17, 2021 at 8:27 EDT. He replied on June 3, 2021, at 1108 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on June 4, 2021.