



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Pilot Statement

Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: July 21, 2022
Person Contacted: Alan Greg Pixley
Contact # [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22LA323

Narrative:

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the individual named above:

Mr. Greg Pixley called me to discuss the accident on July 21, 2022. He provided a phone number of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [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.

Mr. Pixley stated that it was the first flight after he spent the last 10 months overhauling the engine. The manual calls for 30-minute ground runs and during six of those, he had problems. The last engine run he had both ignition sources in idle and he was happy with that fact that the engine could run on idle at the ground. He had run the engine 3-4 times that day and let it cool down. The day of the accident, the airplane had sat outside, and he noted condensation on the instrument panel and when he took off something dripped on him. He smelled it and it smelled like gas and so he brought the airplane around to land. He stated that with the dripping and what he thought was the smell of fuel, he lost confidence, so he did not continue to climb up to pattern altitude of 1200 ft. He only climbed to 900 ft and when he pulled the throttle back to idle to descend, the engine quit. He put the fuel pump on in case it was a pressure issue and made two attempts to restart and nothing fired when he had the throttle to mid-range. He had no more time to mess with it and his airspeed was 70. He tried to get to a patch short of the runway because he knew he was not going to make the runway, and the right wing clipped a tree just on the edge of highway 189. He thinks a tree limb hit power lines that started to set transformers off and caused power outage.

I called Mr. Pixley back on July 22, 2022, to discuss the investigation and he stated that he was going to try to figure out what happened to the engine, and he would let me know so that we might share any safety information.

CHANGE ONE 20 Jul 22

After going back to the crash site for the first time and looking at the aircraft, I need to make changes regarding what I came in contact with before the ground. no power pole was impacted by 347CX even though the accident did somehow cause it to break. Changes to the narrative are in **bold**.

N347CX Accident on 16 July 22. The following is a narrative of actions and events leading up to the loss of N347CX.

I woke up at 0230 that morning. My plan was to drive the 45 minutes to my hangar in Baker, work on odd projects and conduct a first flight on my recently completed VW overhaul. On the drive to the hangar the window regulator in my car failed, so I pulled 347CX out of the hangar, put the car in and began working on it. After a few hours of work, the sun was up and I switched my focus to the early morning flight.

After being outside for three hours, the canopy was all fogged over and it took some effort to dry that off. I checked ForeFlight for the weather conditions at the surrounding airports and was surprised to see some reporting marginal IFR and some VFR. Baker looked scattered with good visibility. Since my plan was to takeoff, climb overhead and do engine break-in at 70%, WX was not a concern.

Engine History: On last flights prior to overhaul, oil pressure dropped below spec value and in order to regain confidence in the motor, I made the decision to overhaul it. The process took almost 10 months due to parts and conflicting priorities. The first attempt resulted in the case leaking oil so I repeated the process and the second time got the Loctite 518 to seal correctly. Six ground runs were conducted during July chasing mag and secondary timing. Engine started on mid throttle setting, not idle. It was not until the last engine run that I got it to run smoothly in idle on both, single ignition sources (L/R). The day that test point occurred was after multiple runs and the oil was warm.

Preflight: The plane had almost full fuel (9.5/10.5g), preflight was normal, gascolator had no water in the fuel, and oil was full.

Engine start on was normal but hit a rough spot at one point on taxi and low RPM. That should have been a concern but I proceeded on because I figured it wasn't warmed up yet. Mag check at 2500 RPM was less than 50 RPM.

Takeoff from RW09 was normal power/3400 RPM. Climb-out started my first distraction. Liquid started dripping on my legs and I immediately went to fuel leak. I've always had the plane indoors with exception of a few airshows and condensation never occurred to me. I tried to smell the fluid but the inside of that

plane smells like gas all the time so I made the decision to abort this flight until I could check it out. Potential fire in the cockpit overcame the number one risk which was owner overhauled engine and I flew a low pattern (900 vs 1200'). Next mistake was pulling power where I normally would at 1200', and then the motor stopped.

I honestly don't remember the exact sequence of engine restart and turn towards final. Did I do them together or were they two events? I don't know. I remember engaging the backup fuel pump and advancing the throttle to get the carb out of the idle circuit. I hit the starter twice, got nothing and made the decision it was time to just fly the airplane. Airspeed was 70 mph which was 10 mph too slow and the hardest thing I ever did was push forward. Stretched glide as far as I could knowing I was not going to make the field I was aiming for, just short of RW09. The Thatcher CX-4 doesn't really stall like most A/C, it does a controllable mush so I kept pulling back on the stick to stay above the trees.

As I came into the tree line on the edge of HWY 189, the left wing impacted a ***tree just above the power lines***, absorbing energy and starting some rotation. The right wing impacted the ground next, followed by the nose into dirt.

Aluminum from the leading edge of the left wing was found in the yard on the west side of HWY 189 and returned by neighbors. When I impacted the ground the cockpit was facing southwest and I remember watching the wires shake, transformers blow, and two of the four orange runway balls drop from the electrical wires.

There were Angles flying with me that morning. With a broken collarbone and deep lacerations to one knee, I could not get out of the plane. Fortunately there were vacation travelers heading home who stopped, pulled me out, and called 911.

Allan G. Pixley
N347CX