



NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Date: 09/02/2022

Person Interviewed: Mr. Sanders Watson

NTSB Accident Number: ERA22LA380

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

Mr. Watson stated he was a student pilot with about 20 hours of flight experience, of which 17 hours was in the accident airplane make and model.

According to Mr. Watson, he was performing a long cross-country flight. From Pontotoc, MS to Decatur, Alabama to Tupelo, MS. He said that they had made a full-stop landing in Decatur, Alabama and fully serviced the airplane with fuel.

“There was weather there, so we diverted to Tuscaloosa, AL. We were between Decatur and Tuscaloosa when the engine lost power.”

“We were in cruise flight, and I was on the controls when the engine lost power. To me, it felt like one cylinder had quit. It didn’t vibrate like we’d broken a rod; it was more like we lost a valve. As soon as the engine changed tone, my instructor sat up straight and assumed the flight controls. He adjusted the throttle, mixture, and carb heat with no restoration of power.”

Mr. Watson explained that he had years of experience building and rebuilding engines and knew the difference between a valve malfunction and a catastrophic engine failure like a broken crankshaft or connecting rod.

Mr. Watson remembered that as the airplane descended there were no forced landing sites available. About 50 ft above the trees, his instructor identified a cutover in the trees and maneuvered the airplane into it. The forced landing resulted in substantial damage to the airplane, but no injury to Mr. Watson or his instructor.

Mr. Watson turned the fuel valve to the off position and both men egressed the airplane.