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Subject: ERA22LA382

Contact: Gary Debaun, Terre Haute, IN

Mr. Debaun was interviewed via telephone. Mr. Debaun stated that he is very familiar with the make and model tailwheel as he has over 8,000 hours of flight experience in tailwheel airplanes and has been an IA for over 50 years. Mr. Debaun further stated that the make and model tailwheel locking mechanism tends to wear after 500 to 700 hours. After it is worn, although the tailwheel is supposed to follow the rudder, the tailwheel may stay deflected to one side after the rudder is returned to neutral.

Mr. Debaun examined the accident tailwheel in December 2022, but did not disassemble it further as he could tell it was worn from external examination and had seen this issue several times in the past. Mr. Debaun added that after he replaced the old Maule tailwheel with a new API tailwheel, the pilot noticed a significant improvement in the ground steering of the airplane.