

On Wednesday morning, November 2nd 2022, my friend Kathy Volpe and I left Charleston International to Summerville Airport in a Cessna 172 that we dropped off for maintenance. From there, we would pick up another Cessna 172, tail number N65615 to head to Greenville for the day. I picked up the keys from the maintenance office and did a thorough preflight inspection on the outside of the plane to include but not limited to checking the fuel and oil. When I physically checked the fuel, each side had about 12 gallons. Based on my calculations I believed this would be more than enough for the trip.

We proceeded from Summerville headed to Greenville Downtown Airport (KGMU) and then requested flight following from Columbia approach as VFR. The flight was to be about an hour and 40 minutes.

The plane was running well, as we ascended up to 4500 feet I leaned the mixture. Our airspeed averaged around 97 knots throughout the flight.

When we were transferred to Greer approach, I noticed the fuel gauges were reading low. As I periodically checked, the fuel gauges seemed to fluctuate. As we got closer to landing, the fuel gauges showed the right tank was reading more fuel. As a result, I switched the tank selector valve from both to the right, in the effort to use the fuel tank that indicated the fuel available.

While I have previously flown N65615 in the past, I have not flown this particular one in many months. Due to this aircraft being one I haven't regularly flown, I made sure to conduct a thorough preflight inspection. Even with such inspection, I was not aware whether these fuel gauges were reading right. My impression was that the fuel gauges were reading incorrectly.

Approach to KGMU was busy that day with a lot of traffic and I maintained my altitude within ten miles away from the field. Air traffic control from KGMU started vectoring me and moved me left out of the way of some traffic. During this period I continuously monitored my fuel gauges. After some minutes, ATC vectored me back to the right to set me up for a right base for runway 01 and switched me over to tower. I kept descending and added 10 degrees of flaps, at

around 3000 feet, when the engine started sputtering and got quiet. I immediately started to pitch for glide speed. While gliding the aircraft, I believe the propeller stopped around 3 miles from the airfield. We started sinking and I knew I wouldn't make it to the runway.

While Controlling my pitch, my friend and I looked for a field to be able to land in. I called to Tower and told them I had a problem, he asked what kind and I said I may be out of fuel. When Tower offered the other airport right in front of me to land, the distance was still too far away. ATC asked me if I wanted to declare an emergency and I said yes.

After declaring the emergency, I looked down and could see a short field to my left almost right under us. I knew I was going to have to make the field without having too much air speed, so I proceeded to make a wide left turn for a 180. I proceeded to glide down, while observing the short field I noticed the perimeter of the field was lined with homes and buildings. As I descended to the field, I attempted to control the airspeed and knew I didn't have enough feet left to safely stop before impacting other structures. Trying to keep the wheels down close to the ground and dodge other piles of debris, I noticed we were headed towards trees down the line. In an effort to avoid the trees and structures, I veered more left into the area of the dirt and grass mound.

Christina DuBois

Pilot Certificate 