



Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety - Eastern Region (AS-ERA)

Date: January 5, 2023
Subject: ERA23LA097 Interview with Pilot
Contact: Jeffrey A Rothman, pilot

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Jeffrey Rothman. Mr. Rothman was interviewed by phone on January 5, 2023 at 1250 EST. He was called at [REDACTED] and provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

Mr. Rothman stated that the airplane became inverted at the very end of the descent through the trees, and they did not have shoulder harnesses. He felt very fortunate that he only had a nose fracture and stitches. He stated that they took off minutes before with 36 gallons of fuel, and he has never had anything like this happen. He has owned the airplane 23 years and he has a lot of hours in that airplane. He has had water in the fuel, but nothing has ever happened in the air. I mentioned that I noted that the magnetos had just been serviced, and he stated that they had, and although he is not a mechanic, he doesn't think it was a magneto issue. He stated that the engine seemed to power down, and there might have been a little bit of roughness (reported by the FAA inspector) but it seemed like a "power down" like the airplane went to idle. They have an EDM that was put in a year ago and the only thing he recalls seeing was about 11 inches of manifold pressure. It seemed like he was getting a little power by adding throttle but not much. He turned on fuel pump, changed fuel tanks several times; tried to restart. He turned key full right and heard a grinding noise like when you try to start an engine that is already started. Propeller never stopped. It was as if the airplane was at idle.

He was looking for easy places to land, but he could see runway 20 and thought he could make it until the last 30 seconds when he realized that he would not make the runway. The airplane pitched up as he over the trees, and he did not feel any buffeting, and then the nose went up and the airplane stalled. He was trying to

maintain the flight over the trees because there was a large field right after the trees. Until he saw the nose go up, he was thinking about how he was going to get the landing gear down after the trees in order to land in the field. Will I have enough time to get the gear down? The last thing he said was "we're going to make it" then the stall happened. He kicked open his passenger's door once he saw fuel leaking. He tried to turn the fuel to off, but he thinks because he was upside down, he went the other way. The call ended at 1319 EST.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on January 6, 2023. He responded on January 23, 2023, at 1005 EST with the statement, "The conversation record appears to be accurate." The final digest was e-mailed to him on January 23, 2023.



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Date: January 30, 2023

Subject: ERA23LA097 Follow-up interview with pilot

Contact: Jeffrey A Rothman, pilot

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Jeffrey Rothman. Mr. Rothman was interviewed by phone on January 30, 2023 at 1053 EST. He was called at [REDACTED] and provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]. The following questions were posed:

Q: Tell me more about your preflight inspection

A: I do it the same way every time and cannot say for certain if I used the checklist card. Sometimes I do if I have not done a preflight inspection in a while. I checked all four fuel tanks, and I turn on the engine management system to see if what it says matches what I see in the tanks. I got there about 20-30 minutes before the flight, and the plan had been to depart about 1 pm. I sumped the tanks from the cockpit for about 5 seconds, and the system is designed so that water should be the first fluid out (if there is water). There were no anomalies during the preflight inspection.

Q: What fuel tank were you on when you took off?

A: I do not recall. It would have been the tank that I perceived to be the most full tank as I saw it on the engine management system. As I recall, one tank had more than the other.

Q: Did you switch tanks during the flight?

A: There is a pocket to the left of the pilot's seat where the emergency checklist is, and I dropped it, but then located it. I believe I went partially through it. There was a lot going on. I recall changing fuel tanks after the emergency but cannot recall what tank I moved it to. I also recall turning on the fuel pump also and recall hearing it go on. I changed tanks after the airplane came to rest inverted. I was trying to stop the fuel flow because I smelled fuel. I had survived a plane crash and that is not how I wanted to go out. I meant to turn it off but probably went the wrong way because I was upside down. I also tried to turn off the master switch also but could not reach it.

Q: Did you switch fuel tanks before the engine lost power?

A: I have no memory of switching fuel tanks before the engine lost power. The aux tanks read zero when we took off. I think I turned it to right aux when I was upside down trying to turn it off. I don't touch the fuel tanks during the climb, and it has just leveled off. I am very much "by the book."

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on January 30, 2023. He responded on January 30, 2023, at 1140 EST with the statement, "The conversation record appears to be accurate." The final digest was e-mailed to him on January 30, 2023.