



Ryan Enders
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: March 27, 2024
Subject: ERA24LA151 Pilot Interview
Contact: Todd Gillis

Mr. Gillis was contacted via telephone on March 27, 2024, to discuss the accident circumstances of N3505W. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Gillis stated that he did not have a flight planned, but that he just wanted to fly from "Twin Airpark (8NC2) to Rutherford (KFQD)" to perform touch-and-go landings before getting fuel and going back to Twin Airpark. The pilot commented that this was not a complicated flight and was approximately 12 miles. After an uneventful flight to KFQD, the pilot flew back to 8NC2 and performed a landing. However, he decided that he had additional time, so he took off again to do 1 more touch-and-go. He commented that the flight time was an hour and a half total.

He took off to the north and entered the downwind "by the school close to pattern altitude", but as he pulled the power back, the engine quit. He stated that he was west of the airfield and he "B-lined" right back to the airfield while simultaneously attempting to restart the engine. With the electric fuel pump turned on, he was able to get the engine to turn over, but it would not start. Mr. Gillis commented that he also attempted to "choke" the engine to start it, but that was also unsuccessful. Mr. Gillis stated that he realized he was too high over the south end of the airfield, so he proceeded to the north end of the airfield and began a slow banking turn to the right. As he turned to the right, there was a north wind that caused the airplane to "drift". He commented that he looked back to the south towards the airport hangars and houses with a potential landing location. He ultimately elected to land in a field "in front of his hangar". He commented that it was a field adjacent to solar panels. Mr. Gillis commented that as he touched down, the front gear collapsed.

Mr. Gillis commented that he then removed the airplane back to his hangar and spoke to the FAA. He placed the airplane on supports and removed the cowling for a visual examination. He had concerns about the fuel that he had received at KFQD because the fuel hose found on the ground that morning when he went to get fuel. He commented that he took on 15 gallons of fuel and that the airplane had 3-4 gallons remaining in the fuel tank. He did not see any water in the fuel.

Mr. Gillis removed the carburetor bowl and he "removed the jets with no plugs or obstructions" noted. He did notice that the "needles on the carb are broken" but commented that he was not sure if that was from the impact.

Mr. Gillis commented that the airplane engine just quit and that there was no banging or clunking.

Mr. Gillis was asked how many hours the airplane has. He commented that it has approximately 380 hours and the engine had the same amount of time.

-End of conversation

Mr. Gillis was contacted via telephone on June 20, 2024, to discuss the findings of the mechanic and FAA examination. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Gillis was aware that the mechanic noted that the ignition system was not producing spark. He was asked to describe the ignition system. He replied that there are "two switches on the engine". He was asked if you need batter power for the ignition system to function. He replied "yes" and that he had the battery power turned on. During the examination, the power was turned on and no spark was produced when the engine was rotated.

Mr. Gillis was asked how much fuel he had at the time of the accident. He replied that it only took him 10-15 minutes to fly back from Rutherford. He landed, taxied, and took off again from Twin Airpark. He was asked how many gallons he normally burns an hour. He replied that he burned 4-5 gallons an hour and that there were 14 gallons of fuel remaining in the tank behind him.

-End of conversation