

N3420E - March 31, 2024

On Sunday, March 31, 2024 at around 1pm, while attempting to depart from runway 15 at Whispering Pines Airpark (GA80), the climb rate of my Aeronca Chief (N3420E) was not sufficient to avoid the trees at the departure end of the runway. An attempt was made to land on the remaining runway, however there was insufficient runway remaining, and the aircraft ended up in the lake at the south end of the runway.

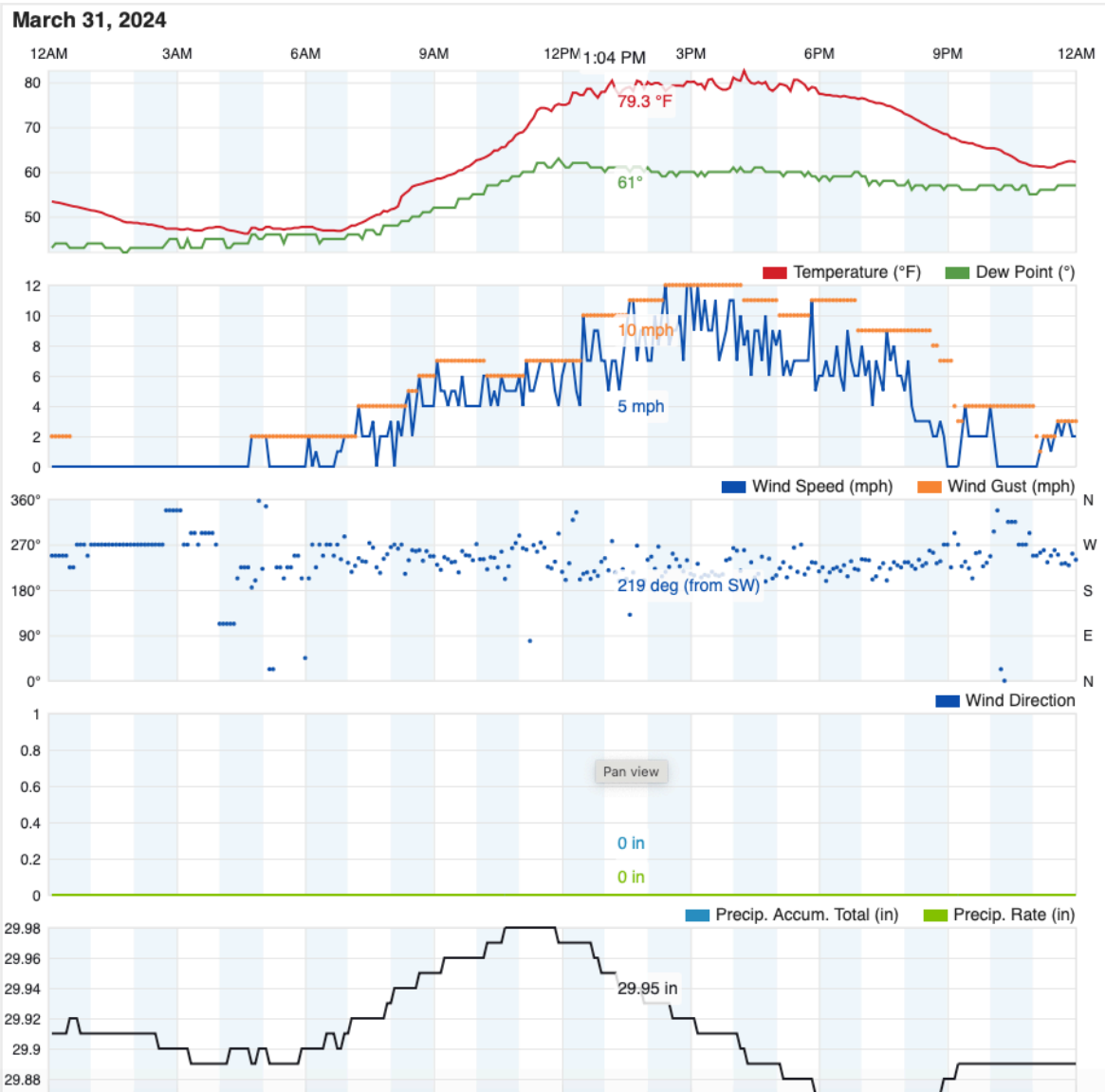
There were 2 people aboard the flight, myself (180 lbs) and my wife's aunt (130 lbs). The aircraft had 13 gallons of fuel. I did not suffer any injury, however my wife's aunt hit her head on the dashboard. Upon exiting the aircraft and getting assistance, my wife's aunt was taken to Rockdale Piedmont hospital where she was examined for injuries. The hospital decided to send her for additional evaluation at Grady hospital in Atlanta. Neither hospital found her to have any injuries worth being admitted, and she was released later that evening.

The aircraft was pulled from the lake within a couple hours of the event. Upon pulling the aircraft from the water, it was noted that the landing gear had completely collapsed due to the impact of the gear with a berm between the end of the runway and the lake. There was no damage to the empennage. The right wingtip shows signs of contacting the ground and the base of the strut of the same wing is bent. The aircraft had come to rest in about 2 feet of water, and thus the bottom of the interior of the aircraft had filled with water and mud from the lake. In order to transport the aircraft back to my hangar, the wings were removed. The aircraft is currently being stored in my hangar.

The weather at the time of the event can be seen in the diagram depicted below. The winds at the surface were 5 MPH gusting to 10 MPH from 219°. The winds above the tree line were slightly higher, but exact data is unknown. The aircraft was flown earlier that same day, around 9am, without issue.

—

Brian Michael



Source: <https://www.wunderground.com/dashboard/pws/KGACONYE8/graph/2024-03-31/2024-03-31/daily>