

Ryan Enders
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: December 30, 2024

Subject: ERA25LA084, Pilot Interview

Contact: Blake Raymes

Mr. Raymes was contacted via telephone on December 30, 2024, to discuss the accident of N76NN. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Raymes was asked to discuss the flight and the events that led up to the accident. He replied that they were flying back from South Carolina. The purpose of the flight was to build time in a multi-engine airplane and that they were flying VFR for the trip. Everything was operating normally, until about 7 miles north of the airport, the right engine started to lose power. Mr. Raymes commented that it had been a while since he had last flown this airplane and that the flight instructor in the right seat, Nicolas, recognized a problem and helped to secure the engine. At this point, Mr. Raymes pointed the airplane direct to the airport with the left engine operating normally. At about half of the distance from the initial problem location to the airport, the left engine started to exhibit the same problems as the right engine. Power on the left engine was cutting in and out before ceasing, so they attempted to restart it.

Mr. Raymes commented that they were losing too much altitude. The tower cleared them to land anywhere. He commented that they passed the interstate, but were getting too low, so they turned back towards the interstate to consider it as a landing option. They noticed that the interstate was congested with vehicles, and they elected to land in a large paved parking lot adjacent to the highway. As they approached the parking lot, suddenly the landing light illuminated a set of powerlines, but it was too late before they contacted them.

Mr. Raymes was asked if he was injured in the accident sequence. He replied that he had received lacerations to his face and ears. He also stated that he had bruising from

the seatbelt and a stiff neck. Mr. Raymes was experiencing lower back pain and elected to go to a hospital later that night.

Mr. Raymes was asked about his initial departure from Melbourne, Florida to Rock Hill, South Carolina and how much fuel he had onboard. He replied that they departed Melbourne with close to 100 gallons of fuel and that the tanks were not totally full, but close. He commented that each fuel tank holds 50 gallons of fuel. Mr. Raymes was asked how much fuel he had onboard when he departed Rock Hill, SC. He replied that he had 30 gallons in each tank, equating to 60 gallons total. He was asked if he received any fuel in Rock Hill before departing, to which he replied that he had received 18 gallons total to bring both fuel tanks up to the 30-gallon marks on each side. Based on his math, he felt that would be sufficient for the flight.

Mr. Raymes was asked if he declared a fuel emergency to the Melbourne tower. He replied "yes" and that the Melbourne tower had asked him if he was declaring a fuel emergency. He continued that on the initial radio call to the tower, he reported that they were only operating with one engine. He commented that he was in a "state of oh crap, what's happening" while making his radio transmissions. Mr. Raymes stated that they continued to attempt to restart the left engine because the fuel gauge showed that it had fuel remaining.

Mr. Raymes was asked if the airplane had a fuel selector valve. He replied "yes, with three different settings". He described the settings as off, on, and crossfeed. The fuel selectors were set to the "on" position.

Mr. Raymes was asked how many hours he has in this airplane. He replied that, not including the hours from the Melbourne to Rock Hill flight, he had about 17.8 hours. It would be closer to 20 hours including the Melbourne to Rock Hill flight. He was asked what his normal fuel burn in cruise flight was like in this airplane. He replied that he was using the POH numbers. In cruise, he was flying with a slightly lower manifold pressure than the chart in the POH, and that he was flying at 23" of manifold pressure at 2300rpm. This would be 1" less than the chart in the POH that he was comparing to. That chart he was using showed that the fuel consumption would be a "a little over 9.2 gallons per hour" at those settings, per engine.

Mr. Raymes was asked if he has the fuel receipt from Rock Hill. He responded with "yes". Mr. Raymes was asked if he had any questions for me, and he replied "no".

-End of conversation

Mr. Raymes was contacted on January 22, 2025, by the IIC to answer follow-up questions. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Raymes was told asked if he was available to answer additional questions regarding the investigation and he responded with "yes".

Mr. Raymes was asked why he only added enough fuel to the fuel tanks to bring the levels up to 30 gallons on each side. He replied that during his flight planning on the Foreflight application, it appeared that 30 gallons per side would be sufficient.

Mr. Raymes was asked if the flight school he was associated with had any fuel reserve requirements for cross-country flying or for nighttime flying. He replied that there are no requirements for cross-country flying, only for VFR day or night flying. He stated that there is a 30-minute reserve requirement for VFR daytime flight and 45-minute reserve requirement for VFR nighttime flying. He was asked if he factored in those flight school requirements into his flight planning and fuel calculations. He replied that he did, but the numbers in Foreflight must have been wrong or incorrect. He commented that he uses Foreflight regularly, but this is an airplane that he is not use to.

Mr. Raymes was asked why he informed the Melbourne tower that he had a fuel emergency. The IIC reminded him that on the audio he is heard contacting the tower stating that he had information Yankee and that they were running out of fuel. Mr. Raymes replied that through his training he knows that if you lose one engine, it is likely a mechanical issue with just that engine. However, if you lose one engine followed by the second engine shortly after then it would make sense that they were having a fuel problem. He continued that he kept trying to restart the left engine because the left fuel gauge showed that there was some fuel remaining. However, since it was dark and they were so low, they had to abandon the restart attempts.

Mr. Raymes was asked if it is possible that they ran out of fuel during the flight, causing the loss of engine power. He replied that it was "possible" or that they were very low on fuel pulling the "junk" from the bottom of the fuel tanks.

Mr. Raymes was asked if the fuel quantity gauges in these airplanes have been accurate to him in the past. He replied that in these airplanes they "have not been 100% accurate" but that they do enough to show if there is fuel or not. He continued by referencing the POH stating that you should not takeoff if the fuel quantity level is in the "yellow arc". He also stated that based on where the level was in relation to the yellow arc, he thought that they had about 9 gallons remaining in the left fuel tank.

-End of conversation