

Gregory Tolmoff Statement regarding N21794 mishap, 11 May 19, Cackleberry Airport (2E8)

On 11 May 2019, my passenger (Leah Russo, approx 165 lbs) and I (approx 210 lbs) were going to rent a plane from Solo Aviation (located at KARB) to fly to 2E8 for a picnic. 2E8 is a grass strip with a 2113' runway. There is a slight uphill slope of runway 06 with an elevation change of 19' over the 2113' runway length. I used Foreflight and AirNav for my preflight planning in addition to KARB ATIS.

I was non current in a C172M at the time so I got into the aircraft solo and did 2 uneventful touch and go's at KARB and one full stop landing. (This aircraft has MPH on the outer ring and KIAS on the inner ring - I had rented this plane previously and was aware of this difference). Weight and balance were well within limits with fuel of approx 38 gallons at the time of the mishap and no cargo. Leah got into the airplane and we had a normal departure, climbout and cruise to 2E8. I spoke on Unicom at 2E8 advising local traffic of my intentions. We overflew the airport, determined the most suitable runway based on the windsock, verified the condition of the field (mowed, dry, no mud/ruts/grooves evident on the runway) and landed uneventfully using soft field landing procedures on runway 06. We taxied to the hangers on the SE side of the airport. We spoke with the Airport groundskeeper (Gordon Hamilton) for about 10 minutes as he was mowing the intersecting runway and stopped to say hi. We enjoyed our picnic where Leah had ~1.5 glasses of wine. I did not have any alcohol or medical-limiting medications at all that day.

After approximately 1 hour, I did a preflight and we got back into the plane to return to KARB. It was approx 1835 EDT. We taxied out and I pointed out the windsock which appeared 10 kts, directly down the runway (RWY 06). I conducted a soft field takeoff uneventfully using 10 degrees of flaps with a takeoff run of approximately 600'. At approximately 75 KIAS, I retracted the flaps and trimmed the aircraft for normal climb. We climbed uneventfully for 5-10 more seconds at 75 KIAS. My best guess is that we were 100' AGL and 2/3 of the way down the runway. The power was full and verified. Then the airspeed started to decrease rapidly. As the plane was passing ~65 KIAS, I started to nose over the aircraft so that we would not stall. Keeping the wings level and preventing a stall/spin was the #1 priority. I do not remember/did not notice if the engine RPM had decreased or the engine had failed, only that I was losing airspeed. I did not hear a stall warning horn. The aircraft kept decelerating even though we were descending rapidly. I knew we were going to hit the ground and as the aircraft was not performing the way I was expecting (even with the throttle full open, the mixture full rich, the carb heat off, and my elevators neutral/down to prevent a stall), my thought was to flare before we hit to minimize the impact. I smoothly pulled full aft on the yoke approximately 2 seconds before impact and the pitch angle did not increase. We hit the ground nose-wheel first, then engine/main gear and the aircraft flipped forward. We came to a stop, upside down about 50' to the left of the runway. We were both shaken but were able to egress the aircraft. Gordon Hamilton watched the whole takeoff and crash and was on the scene in less than a minute. He helped us out of the aircraft and called emergency services.

Enroute to the hospital in the ambulance, the paramedics offered pain relievers as my back hurt and I was in a lot of pain. I refused until I got to the hospital. I had hospital staff do a blood/urine test for alcohol so I had a baseline for the accident before receiving pain medication. The alcohol test showed a BAC of 0.00. It was then I received pain medication. I sent the test results to Randy Myers (FAA FSDO, Willow Run Airport).

I suffered two vertebrae fractures from the compression/impact, and Leah had a broken left foot. We were admitted to the hospital at the UM Medical Center for 2 days for observation/testing before we were released.