

## **2019 Mishap**

Early morning July 2<sup>nd</sup> Gob and I flew Big Foot from Johnson Creek Idaho, where we were camped to Stanley Idaho for breakfast! We followed Russ and Carolyn over, as they were much faster in his Barron!

After a very nice breakfast at the Bakery Restaurant, while sitting in the sun on the deck, we walked up the hill to the airport. Russ departed first. Then it was my turn. I did my checks and run-up, then moved onto the rather narrow paved portion of the runway.

### **The Airport**

The airport is located on top of a steep bluff above town. The runway is rather long for the Back Country of Idaho at 4,300 ft. and runs downhill at a fair gradient. This is good, since the elevation is 6,403 ft. From the paved run-up pad, there is a 1,000 ft. or so of pavement, then the rest is fairly smooth dirt/gravel. The airport information lists the runway width at 150 ft. However, the paved portion is only maybe 40 to 50 ft.

I moved onto the paved portion of the runway, did my normal last minute items, and asked if Gob was ready to go? When she said yes, I added power and started to roll briskly down the runway. The take off roll seemed completely normal. At about 45 to 50 Kts (tail not up yet), with tail wheel locked, there was a sudden strong lurch to the right. My first thought was a blown right main gear tire! I immediately overcorrected to the left. Then as I pulled the power off, I overcorrected back to the right, then once again back to the left! Each of these swerves, was larger and stronger than the previous one. By this time I was hard on the brakes!

This last swerve put my left main tire approximately one foot off of the pavement. The dirt there was smooth and fairly hard. The heavy braking dragged that tire in the dirt leaving about 10-15 ft small trench (3-5 inches deep) in the dirt. Then apparently the tire hit something very solid and stopped! However, the aircraft didn't stop! It went up on it's nose, then very very slowly went all the way over onto it's back.

This left us hanging upside down in our seats. Fortunately, I have (had) a very good seatbelt/shoulder harness system and this prevented any injuries to either of us!

First of all we tried opening the doors. Very confusing. Which way do you push the handle, when you are upside down?!?! The doors both opened, So we released the belts and immediately fell on our heads.....then we scrambled over the underside of the wings and away from the aircraft. In seconds I determined that there was no fire, so climbed back in and shut off the master and turned the mags off. I also checked the tires and wheels. They all had good air pressure and spun easily.....No blown tire! And no locked brake.

Both the sheriff and an ambulance were on the scene within 15 minutes. The ambulance people checked us over, found nothing wrong with Gob, but found a tiny scratch on my right wrist and a bit larger one on my left shin. (These are the kind of injuries that I get every time I either load or unload Big Foot.) My skin is like parchment paper and I bleed anytime anything scrapes me! I assume that I got these two injuries as we scrambled out of the aircraft. The nice nurse put a band aid on both and released me as, Good to Go! Meanwhile the Sheriff took a report with all information from me, and called all of the proper authorities.

Soon the Sheriff got a call from an NTSB agent and handed the phone over to me to again repeat all of the information to the agent. The Sheriff finally said that everything was covered and in order. And everyone went away.

This all happened at 10:23 local time (Mountain Daylight). And the rest of the day was rather chaotic and frustrating, with many telephone calls to government agencies, insurance companies, claims agents, aircraft retrieval companies, and friends. Also got calls from the Air force SAR people trying to determine why my "406 ELT" was going off. Of course they called the people who I had listed on my "information list" telling them that my ELT was going off. And of course they were all upset! I sat at the tiny airport shack and warned aircraft arriving that the airport was closed, with my hand held radio.

Finely late in the afternoon Kyle from S P Aircraft Charter in Boise showed up with his crew, snuck in and landed on what was left of the runway. They quickly organized an effort to turn the aircraft back over and tow it up the runway and park and tie it down on a parking spot. Where it sits today, waiting for a claims adjuster from AIG to determine what is to be done with it.

So I called Russ, back at Johnson Creek to see if he could come and pick us up. But since it was raining and very windy there, he didn't think that flying was a good idea. So our only option was to get a room in this tiny village (population of less than 200). This is a very touristy little village and there were several thousand people in town, as it was a 4<sup>th</sup> of July 4 day weekend!

I got lucky and got the very last room at the Mountain Village Resort. Went across the street to the only grocery store and bought tooth brushes and tooth paste, some drinking water and coke for Gob, and a 6 pack of Alaskan Amber. Then sat down and wrote down all of the details of the day, which I'm sure will come in handy for future reports that I will have file. After a burger and and a (free) beer at the Hotel associated Bar/Restaurant next door, we went to bed for a totally sleepless night! The next morning, after a fuel stop at Cascade, Russ arrived to pick us, and all the personal gear out of Big Foot, up and fly us back into Johnson Creek. We spent the entire day breaking camp, packing up and organizing things, some of which would go home with us, but most would be stored there at the camp ground. Then early morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>, we loaded in Russ' Barron and flew back home. Once again Russ came to my rescue!

As to the cause of the accident, I still cannot say what caused the violent swerve to the right. Several of the pilots there on the field said that there are many times very strong wind gusts there on that bluff. I have to say though, that when we started our take off roll the wind was calm, and when we crawled out of the airplane it was still calm. I just don't know!

Ho Chi Tim