

Athina Holmes Narrative History of Flight: Beechcraft C-23 Sundowner N9246S Prescott, AZ

On Friday, June 17, 2016 Joyce Parker (PIC and owner of the Beechcraft C-23 sundowner) and I Athina Holmes Co-pilot departed Billard Airport (KTOP) Topeka, KS at 08:15am CT Enroute to Ernest Love Field, (KPRC) Prescott, AZ to participate in the 2016 Air Race Classic. We departed in clear weather conditions with full tanks of fuel (52 gallons usable). A cruise altitude of 6,500 feet was established. Joyce leaned the mixture for best power. Four hours was flown and we stopped at Dalhart Municipal Airport (KDHT), Dalhart, TX for fuel. Joyce was in charge of all fuel purchases, calculations and monitoring. We departed towards Tucumcari, NM. After reaching cruise altitude of 8,500 ft. Joyce leaned the mixture for best power. As soon as the adjustment was made the engine ran rough and briefly lost power. Joyce immediately added the mixture back in and turned on the fuel boost pump. Following this action, the engine adjusted and all gauges were showing accurately. We proceeded toward Albuquerque. We were informed by the ABQ center of a firefighting TFR and we had to make adjustments to our route of flight. We landed in Sandia, NM (1N1) to flight plan our route avoiding the TFR. We conferred with Flight Service 45 minutes on the ground and departed Sandia heading east. We flew a route from Sandia (1N1) to the (OTO) VOR then (CNX) VOR then on to (ONM) VOR to Socorro Airport (KONM). The route of flight was 1:25mins. Joyce monitored, calculated and added fuel. She expressed to me that the left tank was full at 26 gallons usable and the right tank was at the horizontal slot on the filler tab indicating 15 gallons usable. I observed the tab amount of fuel as I completed the walk around with a visible look inside the tank and also sumping the tank for any foreign matter during the pre-flight check. We departed KONM on the fullest tank (left). We set-out for Prescott with a 3hr flight calculation and proceeded on course northwest toward Grants-Milan (KGNT). Once we reached cruise altitude 8500ft, Joyce leaned the mixture for best power and the engine ran rough and lost power. She started applying every measure to figure out the problem (applying boost pump, adding mixture, checking gauges) and the engine recycled back to normal. At this time I expressed to Joyce that I was not comfortable with flying the a/c with the engine running that way and that she should seek assistance. We decided to land in Grants-Milan as the sun was setting and we didn't want to fly the a/c during the night and with the engine oddity. Joyce informed me that she would seek assistance with her home based (KTOP) mechanic to discuss the engine roughness. The next morning, we arrived at the airport approx. 5:45am. As Joyce checked weather along our route of flight and filed the VFR flight plan, I pre-flighted the a/c. I completed a full walk around, which included sumping, as well as visible view of both fuel tanks. The temperature dropped that night and during the morning pre-flight we both noticed that the stall warning horn did not function. Joyce spoke with her mechanic Keith about the matter and informed me that she was to follow his recommendation and procedures for density altitude, temperature conditions and possible vapor lock. Joyce followed her mechanics instructions completing a higher engine run-up rather than standard (2400rpm instead of 2200rpm). All gauges checked normal including the engine and we proceeded on course with the fuel select on the left tank as we only flew 1 hour from Socorro to Grants-Milan. Joyce completed run-up, takeoff, and climb-out. We departed Grants-Milan approx 7:15am MT with 2 hours enroute to Prescott. A cruise altitude of 10,500ft was established. Joyce monitored the fuel tank gauges, and switched tanks from left to right. We made the exchange of flight controls and I took the lead in flying the aircraft. The flight was smooth from this point all the way until cresting Mingus Mountain in the Prescott, AZ area. We had KPRC in sight, Joyce made the call to ABQ center cancelling

our flight following and requested frequency change. Joyce started the descent checklist, (obtaining ATIS Wx, contacted KPRC tower for position report and all standard approach procedures). I started to descend as I needed to lose 5,500 ft of altitude. As she started the checklist, we powered back to 1800rpm, the engine started the roughness and losing power again. Joyce started checklist emergency procedures as the engine was not coming back as the two previous anomalies. She made the call to the tower regarding the engine failing and they cleared runway 21L. The tower asked how far we were from the airport and Joyce responded 3.2 miles. As she continued with emergency procedures, I was flying the aircraft trying to hold as much airspeed and altitude as possible. We were descending approx. 700-800 fpm, I tried holding the best glide speed (85-90mph) but had to inform Joyce that from our position, It didn't look like we were going to make the airport which also required a left turn. I assured her that I had to put the a/c down straight ahead as the prop was barely spinning, it was windmilling a bit but we had no power. I touched down in the field just a few miles short of the runway. Prior to the touchdown, the stall warning horn sounded and I pitched the nose down a bit for more airspeed. As I touched down, I told Joyce we're ok, we're down. Then the a/c started sliding and as it hit the hard brush, dirt and uneven earth. This event caused the a/c to encounter another hard bounce and slam to the ground.