

November 18, 2016

The following is a summary of events leading up to the forced landing on 11-12-2016.

In mid October, Dan Mills called to asked if I could take on a student, using his aircraft. He owns a PA 28-235. I worked with Dan in this aircraft to obtained his pilot license several years back. I told him I would be glad to provide instruction in his aircraft.

I asked if everything was current and when the annual was done, his reply was that the annual was done in November of last year. I said that "I would need to see the actual log books" to see if any intermediate inspections needed to be done. Dan said that he would get them for me.

Jacob Letner called me a few days later about what was involved in obtaining a pilots license. We agreed to meet at Taylor airport around October 20, 2016 to discuss requirements and training sequence. After a couple of hours of discussions, we scheduled the first flight for October 23. 2016.

October 23, we arrived at the aircraft, and found no key, we did a couple of hours of oral. We covered aircraft operations, radio usage, basic navigation and airport operations. I also mention two books that he should obtain for reference. We agreed to meet again and fly on October 25. Again the aircraft key could not be located. I used this time to provide a couple more hours of oral instruction. I asked Jabob to request the aircraft log books, so that we could go over them together. He stated that he would asked Dave Mills for the log books.

On October 28, we met at the aircraft to fly, but the battery was dead. We called Dave and asked if we could get it charged and we re-scheduled to fly on October 30th.

Our first flight was Oct. 30, the weather was good, the flight was smooth, Jacob showed better than average abilities. The engine was harder to start than expected and had to prime it four (4) strokes. I guess that this was because the aircraft had been flown only ten (10) hours in the past year. The pre-flight included weight and balance calculations (sheets were in a/c), airspeed limitations and radio procedures. This flight lasted 1.1 hours.

The next flight was on Nov 5, and lasted for 1.5 hrs. The first two (2) lessons covered basics, flight maneuvers and included map usage orientation, VOR usage, GPS moving map functions, and radio communications. He performed better than the average student while flying. Asked again, if he would get the aircraft logbooks and we would then fly again.

On Nov 12, 2016 we met for another lesson. We completed a preflight, letting Jacob do the actual work as I directed. At this time, all lights worked, oil was ok, aircraft structure and paperwork were in order. Tip tanks were half full and gauges showed the same. The right main tank was at the tab (18 gals), the left main tank was above the tab (estimated 20 gals). Main tank gauges were a little off, indicating reverse readings (right tank slightly more than the left one). The engine was a little hard to start, needing four (4) attempts and three (3) using the primer for a total of 7 strokes). After starting the engine, operation were normal. Pre-takeoff check list was normal. The pre-takeoff discussion covered review of previous flights (coordination, trim, altitude control, turns to headings and airspeed control). I would introduce stall recognition, emergencies, and ground reference maneuvers.

After about 40 minutes, I talked about engine problems, smoke and fire emergencies. We were a little above 8000 ft msl at this time. I talked about emergency scenarios, such as smoke and/or fire inside the cabin. I told Jacob to keep a light feel on the controls and I would do the actual flying. I reduced the throttle to idle and made a gentle nose down attitude change, discussing airspeeds (best glide speed, maneuvering speed and flap operation vs rate of decent). As I was pointing out options for landing spots, flap usage and transponder codes, I sense that something seemed not quite normal. I lifted my headset up and moved the throttle forward a little. The manifold needle did not move and I asked Jacob if he thought the engine was operating. He replied with something but by this time I decided we had no power. I said I have the controls, I put the boost pump on, moved the mixture forward, and switched fuel tanks from the left to the right and saw the altimeter moving to a little above 7000ft msl. During this time I moved the throttle several times to no avail (mp gauge did not move). Since we were around 1000 feet above the ground I set up a final glide to what looked like a smooth field.

Around 100 feet above the ground I noticed that a berm was in front of us, but it was too late to change directions and I was about to start the flare. I shut off the fuel, fuel pump, master and touched down 50 -100 feet prior to the berm. We hit the berm bounced in the air and skidded for maybe 100 feet before coming to a stop. We exited the aircraft and checked to see if each of us was ok. When we got out, individuals were already appearing on the scene. Since we were okay and had been located by others on the ground, I re-entered the aircraft and shut off the ELT.

I have gone over what happened many times trying to determine if I did something wrong but can not think of anything. I have enough time in this aircraft to be familiar with its operation and have done the same procedures many times in past training sessions. The throttle lever sets high above the prop and mixture levers so its not likely to retard these controls inadvertently. I retarded the throttle slowly and smoothly, because I know that on some lycoming engines rapid throttle movements can cause problems.

Apparently, there was some confusion between Dan Mills and his son Dave as to the actual date of the annual. The day after the accident, Dan inform me that aircraft was out of it's annual. I know Dan well and he is a very straight forward well organized person, so didn't even consider that he maybe wrong and the annual might be over due.

I realized that this is a infraction of the FARs and I'm now changing my personal check list to make sure that I cover items in greater detail, so this will never happen again. I am willing to take remedial training to improve my performance.

I have been flying for over fifty (50) years, 30 of that giving instruction. Nothing like this has ever happen before.

Instruction time line

Mid October	First communications	
Oct. 20,	First meeting with Jacob	
Oct. 23,	Scheduled 1 st flight	(no key available)
Oct. 25,	"	" (no key available)
Oct. 28,	"	" (Dead battery)
Oct. 30,	First flight	(1.1 hours)
Nov. 5,	Second flight	(1.5 hours)
Nov. 11,	third flight	(.7 hours)