

After the high sierra flyin I flew the sky wagon up to meet Eric, my mechanic at Lake California airpark in the central valley near Redding on Oct 28. I was planning on installing an external oil filter and door sturats. It took me an hour and a half to get it started at Yolo airport that morning. I had trouble starting it a week earlier in Sierraville on a cold morning also. So the first priority was to figure out why it was hard to start. We pulled the plugs and found lead beads had accumulated in the base of the lower plugs which can short them out. Mag checks on the flight up didn't show any RPM drops or roughness. We started working on the oil filter installation but ran out of time. On the flight back to Palo Alto I stopped in Byron and filled the tanks (65 gallons). The flight back to Palo Alto is only 15 minutes so I landed with about 60 gallons.

A week later on Tuesday 10/30 I left Palo Alto at about 8am to fly up back to Lake California to resume work on the projects. It is an hour and a half flight, so it takes about 18 gallons of fuel. With 60 gallons in the tanks I was not worried about fuel. I did not open the tanks and measure the fuel level. At Eric's suggestion for cold starting I squirted a primer shot in the engine, did my preflight and then pushed another primer shot while I cranked it. I didn't have any problem starting the plane. .

I had a 35mph headwind so I flew at 3500' to stay under stronger winds. I lined up for a straight in approach about 4 miles out and added 20 degrees of flaps. I could feel a right cross wind so I kept some power in to fly a shallow approach at 65mph. About a mile and half from the threshold the engine stopped making power.

I checked the mixture to make sure it was all the way in and then cycled the magnetos. Nothing. The runway is on a bluff so I knew there was no way to make it to the runway. I was just over the Sacramento River. I could see a grass field running left to right in front of the hill but there were power lines between me and the field. I decided to go over the power lines instead of trying to get under them. I glanced at the airspeed indicator and it was only 40mph. The next thing I knew I was on the ground skidding to a stop. I felt an excruciating pain in my lower back. I knew I had stalled and pancaked in. I think it was less and 30 seconds from loss of power to impact.



The left gear collapsed so my side of the plane was on the ground. The right door had popped off and the right seat popped out of its track so it was mostly detached. I turned off the

power and climbed out the passenger side and laid on my back. I could hear voices so I knew help was coming. My phone was on the passenger seat so I crawled back to the right door and reached into the floor in front of the seat and fished it out. I called Eric and told him what happened.

Two men were there in about a minute and I heard them call 911. I told them how to turn off the fuel because I had not done so before I got out. I was shaking violently so Eric got me a sleeping bag out of his truck to keep me warm.



Eric stayed at the crash while the ambulance carted me off to the ER. There was no aviation fuel smell after the crash. Eric checked for leaks or blue fuel

stains on the fuselage and didn't find anything suspicious. With the fire fighters, he drained the fuel tanks. Since the left gear collapsed so that= wing tank was a lot lower than the other. They found 7 gallons in the downhill tank and 2 gallons in the uphill tank. There is a cross-feed between the tanks in the wings, so it makes sense that most of the remaining fuel ran downhill. The skywagon has 10 gallons of unusable fuel, so now we knew why the engine quit. I ran out of fuel. One mile from the runway. But we didn't really know : "why" I ran out of fuel. The NTSB investigator and Eric were convinced someone siphoned fuel out of my tanks in palo alto. The NTSB investigator knew of another instance of fuel theft that let to an off-field landing recently. I didn't buy it. Pilots in palo alto are not desperate enough to steal fuel.

Eric also checked for fuel stains everywhere he could see. If there was a leak, it would show up as a blue residue where the wind blew it backwards. He didn't find any fuel stains, but could check the belly of the plane.

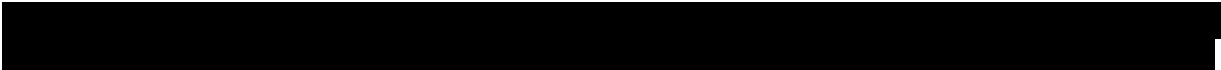
Eric met me in the ER. He called the NTSB and answered a bunch of questions but they wanted to talk to me too. They wanted to know where I took off, the last place and time I fueled the plane.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



The Redding news story is [here](#).

Eric helped the salvage company take the wings off. They found 27 gallons in one of the wings, so now I know I didn't run out of fuel. We still don't know what caused the engine failure. The NTSB has picked up the engine and is investigating.

Here you can see how low the power lines were.



Now I know why I didn't try to fly under them. The staff in the hospital were all interested in the story of the plane crash. I told them all that I flew over the power lines and lost so much airspeed that I stalled and pancaked in. When my brother Joel returned to the site to help Eric with disassembling the plane he told me that I actually hit the ground before the power lines and then slid about one plane length under them.



