



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Stephen Stein
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety – Western Pacific Region

NTSB Accident Number: WPR19LA108
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N120EJ; Europa XS
Accident Location: Winters, California
Accident Date: April 13, 2019

Note: The following interviews were documented by the Investigator-In-Charge (IIC), Stephen Stein.

Interview #1 Summary

Richard Stockton
Accident Pilot

Interview Date and Time: April 15, 2019; 1203 PT

The accident pilot/builder reported that he sustained a crack in his C2 cervical vertebra and a cracked chest. According to his recount he had not flown the accident airplane since September 2018. As the mechanic for the accident airplane he removed all the spark plugs a few days before the accident pilot to spray oil in each cylinder. Days later, he performed a compression check on the engine and did not observe any change in the result from the most recent conditional inspection, which was accomplished the year prior. At the time of the accident, the airplane had accrued a total of about 4 flight hours since its most recent conditional inspection. He had difficulty starting the engine so it removed the battery, charged it, and the engine started up immediately after he reinstalled the battery and added ether to the induction system. The pilot/builder ran the engine up on the ground for about 40 minutes at 1,500 rpm, but elected not to fly the airplane due to excessive wind.

The following morning, the airplane started uneventfully. He taxied the airplane out, allowed it to warm up momentarily and performed a magneto check at 2,000 rpm and did not observe any

anomalies. He subsequently departed and started a climb at 78 mph and 900 fpm. As the airplane reached 3,000 ft mean sea level, the pilot turned to the west at which point he observed the exhaust gas temperature (EGT) on cylinder no. 3 begin to rise. He lowered the nose and then observed the EGT from cylinder no. 5 begin reaching a high temperature, so he retarded the throttle control. The pilot then advanced the throttle to 2,950 rpm and the EGTs appeared normal about 688° C. Immediately after, he heard a loud “bang” sound, and retarded the throttle as he turned the airplane towards the town of Davis, California. At this time he noticed that cylinder no. 5 was cooling with a decreasing EGT. He subsequently added power and observed a rise in each EGT with the exception of the no. 5 cylinder.

He added that fuel was leaking from a nozzle continuously after the accident while he was waiting for first responder assistance for 40 minutes following the accident.

Interview #2 Summary

Richard Stockton
Accident Pilot

Interview Date and Time: May 1, 2019; 1130 PT

Mr. Stockton stated that an oil analysis about a year prior to June 2018 indicated that the rocker arm shaft bushings were deteriorating, so subsequently replaced the push rods to each cylinder and reinstalled the no. 5 piston. The following year another oil analysis showed bronze, so he removed the no. 5 cylinder and observed evidence of bronze coming out of the valve cover. He removed the bronze bushing from the no. 5 cylinder and observed wear on the rocker arm shaft, so he replaced the bushings and rocker shaft simultaneously. To perform this work he removed cylinder nos. 3 and 5. At the time he installed bushings and rocker arms shafts, but did not note the work in the aircraft logbook. When reinstalling the no. 5 piston, he surmised that he may have installed the “C” clamp incorrectly.