

Narrative of events on and leading up to N4237N (Cessna 120) crash at KLVK on August 21, 2019
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On August 21, 2019, at approximately 11:45 pm, my employee, Mike Woolson, and I were driving in the zipper lane on the north side Livermore Airport to Beeb's restaurant for lunch. I saw Laura Woodward's (N4237N) airplane taxiing out to the runup area of runway 25L. A few moments later, I looked back and saw her plane facing the wrong direction, away from the runway. I parked my truck and as we got out of the vehicle, I saw N4237N had taken off and was airborne. When I looked back at the plane, I noticed it was still low over the east end of the runway and I commented to Mike that it didn't look like she was climbing. At that moment, the plane banked steeply to the left and was descending. I saw it impact the ground with the left-wing and cartwheel over. It then dropped out of my view. I estimate the distance between the plane and us was ~0.5 mile. I dialed 911 (11:51 AM) and reported that a small plane had just crashed south of Livermore Airport, and the dispatcher informed me of multiple calls for the same incident. I did not see any smoke from the aircraft while it was in the air nor after it came to rest. I did not hear any unusual noises coming from the plane while it was airborne.

On Aug 3, 2019, Ms. Woodward contracted Mike's AeroClassics, Inc. to perform the annual inspection of her aircraft. In my initial conversation with her about the inspection, she informed me that she had not flown at all since the last annual (~14 months) because she had lost her medical. The aircraft tachometer had elapsed 2.74 hrs since the previous annual inspection for a flight from the previous inspector's location (unknown) back to Livermore Airport. Ms. Woodward requested that we not change the oil nor oil filter due to the recent low use of the aircraft.

The annual inspection of N4237N took place during the week of Aug 13 and was completed on August 19, per the 100-hr/annual checklist in the Cessna 100-series service manual and per 14 CFR 43.13 Appendix D. Ms. Woodward was to deliver the plane to our hangar on Tue, Aug 13, with its logbooks and maintenance records, but she was unable to start the engine due to a dead battery. She requested that I come over and hand-prop the plane, but I said I wasn't comfortable doing that and offered to put a charger on it, and then bring it to my facility the following day. On Aug 14, I went to get the airplane. The hangar, aircraft, and other contents of the hangar were covered in dust.

I started the airplane, taxied it to my facility and performed a run-up check of the systems without difficulty. The magneto and ignition switch tests indicated they were functioning normally. A boroscope inspection of the cylinder interior did not reveal any unusual features of the intake or exhaust valves, cylinder walls, or top of the piston. A cylinder leak-down check showed that all four cylinders had acceptable compression values. Magneto timing was checked and both mags were found to be accurately timed to the engine. All spark plugs were cleaned, gapped and were functional when tested. The engine controls were checked and they operated properly. There were no issues of note during the inspection with respect to the firewall-forward section. An inspection of the airframe revealed the interior headliner had been previously removed. There were a few markings/placards missing that needed to be fixed. Previous repairs appeared to have been done well. All findings were documented on the Aircraft Discrepancy Record we use during maintenance and inspections. Airworthiness Directive (AD) research of the airframe, engine and propeller listed all current and recurring ADs which were complied with. Magnetos had 472.8 hrs since installed on the engine.

On Aug 14, I informed Ms. Woodward by phone of the findings so far, and that her registration was invalid as it was listed on the FAA registry as Experimental/Research and Development. She said she would take care of those items, including contacting the FAA, which she did the following day, to have the registration fixed. On Aug 15, I emailed Ms. Woodward with the status of her aircraft, including an expired transponder certification. She indicated that she could take care of the transponder recertification. I reminded her in an email on Aug 17 that the transponder check was required to fly the plane.

On Aug 16, I washed the aircraft and let it dry a few hours. I performed a post-inspection run-up, and found a rough-running magneto (left mag). I suspected a fouled spark plug, as the mag check was normal before the plugs were removed for servicing. On Aug 19, I removed all eight spark plugs and found one that had become fouled. I cleaned all the plugs again and reinstalled them using new gaskets. During my next engine run-up, the engine ran smoothly and both mags performed normally when tested with the ignition switch. I taxied the aircraft back to Ms. Woodward's hangar and parked it there on Aug 19.


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