



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

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

NTSB Accident Number: WPR19LA243
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N78988; Mooney M20C
Accident Location: Reno, Nevada
Accident Date: August 26, 2019

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

Interview #1 Summary

Joseph Wydeven
Accident Pilot

Interview Date and Time: August 27, 2019; 1645 PT

Mr. Wydeven stated that his occupation is in the field of pyrotechnic safety. The purpose of the accident flight was to collect a friend and bring her back to an event he was attending in the Reno Nevada Desert known as “Burning Man.” The pilot reported that he purchased the accident airplane in February 2019.

The pilot stated that he performed a full preflight inspection of the airplane and engine run-up prior to his departure and added a quarter quart of oil. The oil reservoir was just under 6 qts when they departed. Additionally, he sumped the fuel tanks and did not observe any contamination or debris. He also departed with the fuel tanks about half full as he knew his passenger would have luggage. At the time of his departure, the right tank was slightly fuller than the left. He departed Black Rock City Airport (88NV), Black Rock City, Nevada about 2300 universal standard time and flew towards his destination airport, Reno/Stead Airport, for about 35 minutes. The pilot climbed to 8,500 ft. above ground level (agl) and then climbed to 9,500 ft agl momentarily. The

fuel tank selector was on the right fuel tank. He switched to the left fuel tank when he reached his cruise altitude.

The pilot had descended below traffic pattern altitude and entered the right base leg for runway 26. As he approached the airport, the pilot switched back to the right fuel tank and verified fuel pressure with the fuel pump engaged. However, he turned the fuel pump off and subsequently entered a turn to the final approach leg for his destination runway. As he rolled out of the turn, he observe the motor begin to sputter just before he lost all engine power. The pilot switched back to the left fuel tank and attempted to restart the engine as he configured the airplane for best glide speed. After determining that he would not reach the runway, he selected a landing spot between a road and a hill that he later referred to as a “bad decision.” The pilot banked to the left to make the landing spot, but was too focused on his airspeed indicator to prevent the airplane from stalling that he was not watching nearby obstacles. The airplane impacted a fence, turned to the right and impacted the ground.

Interview #2 Summary

Joseph Wydeven
Accident Pilot

Interview Date and Time: August 27, 2019; 1645 PT

Mr. Wydeven stated that he uses a practice where he computes his “total run time” based on a fuel consumption of 10 gph. He stated that he had just flown from Wyoming before the accident and used a fuel timer on his Garmin global positioning system that alerted him to switch tanks every 30 minutes, but it is possible that he could have become task saturated during that flight and forgot to switch tanks or switched tanks late. The pilot stated that based on his computations he had enough “runtime” to make it to his destination airport on the day of the accident; however, he further remarked that the accident was the result of fuel exhaustion as he was running it close and only had computed 1 total hour of fuel remaining for the accident flight.

The pilot stated that he had used the fuel indicators with accuracy, consistent with his fuel computation system. He stated that he should have had the total time in his head for the remainder of the flight and noticed that he had a broken gauge.