

This report was written and reviewed by Colton Egbert and Spencer Berns and is truthful to the best of our knowledge and remembrance.

Pre-Flight

-The flight was planned by Blaine Mathews and Spencer Berns. They wanted to fly around the Mazatzal Mountains to scout the terrain and, after meeting Colton Egbert through church and learning he was a pilot, Blaine asked if he would fly them.

-Blaine drove Colton to Falcon Field airport just before 6:00am on Friday, the 24th of January. Colton and Spencer met for the first time at the airport and the three men proceeded to the airplane, which was tied down on the tarmac.

-Colton pre-flighted the airplane, checking the fuel level, which was 30 gallons total, and adding a quart of oil to put the level at 6 quarts. The pre-flight showed no issues or signs of worry. Colton then proceeded to ask for the weight of Mr. Berns and Mathews and he calculated the weight and balance for the flight which was within limits.

-The men boarded the aircraft and reviewed the plan that Colton had made the night before using Foreflight. They agreed on where they would fly and went over the appropriate checklists before taking off.

First Flight

-The plane was wheels up around 6:30 and flew for approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes. They circled over Bartlett Reservoir until the sun came up enough to light the mountain range.

-Most of the flight was alongside the mountains and a 1000ft ground clearance was the constant goal. If we got lower than that at times, it was not for long and we were never anywhere close to where you could identify animals without the use of high powered binoculars.

-Colton flew the plane first and would only look out the window at the ground for animals if the other men had already identified some. He made it clear that he wanted to be safe and he never made the passengers feel like they were in danger.

-From the backseat, Spencer would tell Colton where he wanted to fly and Colton would accommodate. At least twice, Colton said he would have to fly circles to gain more altitude before crossing over to where Spencer wanted. Again, safety and awareness were priorities.

-The Payson weather and CTAF were being constantly monitored and the morning was a smooth and successful one for flying.

Payson

-The men landed in Payson to refuel at around 8:30. The plane had used 10GPH and the fuel purchased put the total on board at 38 gallons, or 150lbs underweight.

-There were no apparent issues when the plane was walked around and the men re-boarded and started it up again.

-They taxied to take off and set a course directly to Falcon Field. The plane took off and climbed normally and there were no performance issues.

-Shortly after starting the flight home, Spencer recommended they turn to look at one more spot in the North mountains. They all agreed and turned a more westernly heading.

-The last memory of Spencer and Colton before waking up together 5 hours later is heading towards those mountains and feeling happy and positive about the day and the flight.

Post Wreck

-Spencer has a memory of opening his eyes at some point from the creek just long enough to see the airplane on fire and then going back unconscious.

-His next memory and Colton's first is of them both really waking up sometime around 2:15.

-They both asked each other what happened and their memories in that moment have not changed now one month later.

-Colton helped Spencer up out of the creek and proceeded to try and cross over to Blaine.

-The ELT was found and manually activated.

-The cell phone was found and was used to make the 911 call at 3:12pm.

-Colton made another call after 4pm and Spencer shared gps coordinates from the watch.

-Search and rescue found them and took them to the hospital by helicopter.

Summary

After discussing and pondering all the details of the accident, all three families involved are convinced that carbon monoxide poisoning must have been the cause. Some reasons for this decision include:

-It was a 53 year old airplane, prone to exhaust or heating system leaks.

-It hadn't been flown hardly at all for two years and was suddenly subject to 50 hours of flight in a month.

-Two men, with totally different ages, backgrounds, locations in the plane, and injuries, have the exact same last and first memory of the crash. That memory was the same as soon as we both woke up, when we reported from separate rooms in the hospital, and still today.

-That memory includes no remembrance of issues or concerns, and after 4 weeks, has not grown to recall even the slightest feeling of fear, danger or worry. It is the exact same.

-With way different head injuries, we were knocked out for over 5 hours, and woke up at the same time.

-We were never anywhere close to the trees or canyon during our flight. There were no issues with the engine or weather.

-Flying thousands of feet above where we crashed, I would have called "mayday", turned on the ELT, and tried to direct the plane to a much better landing place before our final impact, anyone would have.

-We had identified many other places to land in the mountains. The obvious creek bed right alongside where we crashed would have been much better and yet I elected to not only fly through the trees instead, but to do it on a glide slope with the engine on and at a high power setting?? Absolutely not.

-If not carbon monoxide, what other occurrence would render these same results?