

Elliott Simpson
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Air Safety - WPR

Subject: WPR22LA243

Contact: Jack St Marie

- Studied for private pilot's license during the pandemic.
- Took written exam in early 2021, began training out of Carlsbad CA, and passed check ride on Jan 3, 2022, in PA28-180.
- Purchased accident airplane June 25, 2022; insurance required 10 hours of dual flight, and 10 landings - which he did with two instructors and was complete July 3.
- His total time in the accident airplane is 17.4 hours, 100.4 total.
- Accident was first solo cross country in this airplane. Carlsbad to Saint Luis Obispo. He flew Carlsbad to Camarillo the week prior to the accident.
- Purchased fuel at Borrego Springs, California (L08), the day before the accident. Manually topped off to the rims at the self-serve pump then sumped the fuel tanks.
- Prior to takeoff for the accident flight, he visually checked both tanks and fuel levels were good, but he did not use a dipstick. The fuel gauge showed lower fuel in the left tank, and he estimated it contained 15 gallons.
- He decided to fly on the fuller right tank for the first part of flight, then switch tanks after reaching Camarillo.
- He noted that the fuel gauge felt stiffer than usual.
- The airplane had been signed off as airworthy during the prebuy inspection, which also included an annual inspection.
- Took off up the coast and followed highway 101 north.
- After flying over the Camarillo VOR and looking for his next heading, he looked and saw the left fuel tank at zero, and the right tank was full.
- He confirmed that he was still on the right tank, and decided it was likely a gauge issue that he could resolve on the ground, and there was still more than enough fuel to make it on right tank.
- About 1-2 mins later, the engine power dropped, and the propeller started windmilling and he noticed fuel pressure was zero.

- He was at 6,500 ft msl over Oxnard and told Mugu Approach that he lost power and was landing at Oxnard.
- He was provided a frequency by Mugu, and then pitched for 105 MPH, which is best glide speed.
- Turned towards airport, lined up for 25, and Oxnard tower stated that he could land on any runway.
- After communicating with the tower and asking for the field elevation he started going through emergency checks by memory, switched the fuel selector valve and noticed it now moved more easily, but he was not sure if that was due to adrenaline.
- After maneuvering for landing, he realized he was too low, the airplane struck the boundary fence, and landed hard.
- He noticed fuel was gushing from the right tank after impact, and the fire department arrived almost immediately.

In an email dated July 17, 2022, Mr St Marie stated:

Mr. Elliott,

Thanks for the call last Thursday. I wanted to pass along a photo I just found that might help with your investigation. Looking at the tablet in the photo, I snapped this in cruise over Dana Point on the day of the accident. Based on the flight tracker this would have been about 16 minutes after takeoff and 37 minutes before I lost power. The gauges show 6,500' altitude, 2,400rpm (which I later brought back to 2,300 around LAX), ~22" man pressure, 4psi of fuel pressure, normal temps, full fuel on the right tank, and ~68# of fuel on the left tank.

One thing I can't figure out is if I was unknowingly on the left tank how I could have burned 11 gal in just over 38 min at that power setting. The fuel consumption rates in the POH are much lower. Do you think there could have also been a fuel leak?

Jack St. Marie



Figure 1 - Photo provided by pilot in email dated July 17, 2022