



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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

NTSB Accident Number: WPR22LA271
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N300BH; Piper PA-32-301
Accident Location: San Jose, California
Accident Date: July 22, 2022

Note: The following interview was documented by the Investigator –In-Charge (IIC), Stephen Stein.

Interview #1 Summary

Craig Cameron
Green Valley Corporation

Interview Date & Time; November 16, 2022; 0800 PT

Mr. Cameron stated that he is both owner of the accident airplane and Green Valley Corporation and that the accident pilot is an employee of his company. They used the accident airplane to fly to different locations and to look at properties. The accident pilot had planned to collect the airplane after it had been in the shop for 2 months and fly it back to its hangar at San Jose Mineta Airport.



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Interview #1 Summary

Andrew Fragala
Mechanic, Nik's Aircraft

Interview Date & Time; November 15, 2022; 1447 PT

Mr. Fragala stated that he is an airframe and powerplant mechanic employed by Nik's Aircraft. He added that he had assisted with the annual inspection of the accident airplane. When the airplane arrived for its annual inspection it had approximately 15 gallons of fuel in each wing. Mr. Fragala stated that the cockpit fuel gauge appeared to function normally as it reflected the quantity in each wing (these observations were noted when the airplane was on level ground). He also inspected the fuel in each wing tank using a flashlight and noted that the color was blue. They did not deposit or remove any fuel from the wing tanks while the airplane was in their possession.

After the airplane was serviced, they performed an engine run at full throttle and full manifold pressure for 45 minutes to 1 hour while they made adjustments to the propeller governor. The fuel selector was drawing fuel from the left tank during the entire engine run. Mr. Fragala noted that they switched tanks briefly for a moment and then immediately switched back to the left tank and noted that the fuel delivery was stable.

On the day of the accident the pilot arrived in the afternoon and was by himself. He talked with Mr. Fragala for about 5 minutes in the hangar; none of the conversation was about the maintenance the airplane had received or about the fuel level. Mr. Fragala noted that within 5 minutes of ending the conversation the accident pilot had started the airplane.

According to Mr. Fragala, the maintenance company's new policy is to discuss fuel levels with its customers and to sump the fuel tanks for contaminants before the airplane leaves the hangar after service.

Interview #1 Summary

Andrew Fragala
Mechanic, Nik's Aircraft

E-mail correspondence date/time; February 20, 2023; 1714 PT

According to Mr. Fragala,

"During the annual inspection, we replaced the wing sight gauges with brand new ones. On the new gauges, there was about 15 gallons on each side. This corresponded with the gauges on the instrument panel."



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Interview #1 Summary

Niknam Nickraves
Nik's Aircraft

Interview Date & Time; November 15, 2022; 1043 PT

According to Mr. Nickraves, he arrived at the accident site 20 minutes after the accident. His assistance was requested by airport operations because he was the only mechanic onsite who could disconnect the battery. The fuel levels were noted when the FAA arrived the following day, which included 15 gallons in the right tank. The left fuel tank was breached and void of fuel. Mr. Nickraves stated that the airplane arrived with 15 gallons of fuel in each tank and they ran the engine for about 1 hour on the left tank.



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Interview #1 Summary

Ryan Hogan
Accident Pilot

Interview date/time; February 17, 2023; 0900 PT

- Mr. Hogan stated that he had accumulated about 30-5 hours in the accident airplane over a period of 1+ years
- He had some time in Piper Archers, Cherokees, and Twin Camanches, but not in the Saratoga
- The pilot started flying the airplane after joined the company about June 2021 to fly to company assets in Northern California. The airplane was used as a business airplane.
- According to Mr. Hogan, the previous company owner had a stroke about 7-8 before the accident and since then the airplane had only been flown about 30-40 hours per year.
- Mr. Hogan stated that the airplane was a “good airplane to fly” and had a few squawks that had been addressed during its recent annual inspection.
 - These included a cracked motor mount, cracked door, leaking strut, and avionics database upgrades [non-exhaustive]

- The pilot dropped off the airplane in early April for its annual inspection at which time they resolved the squawks and discovered the cracked motor mount. The repair was originally supposed to be 4 weeks, but ended up being 2 and a half months
- The mechanic told the pilot that they were going to do an engine run-up and a high speed taxi test to test the mount, brakes, and tires. The pilot received a call from the maintenance facility about 1700-1800 on the day of the accident that the airplane was ready. Mr. Hogan had planned to pick up the airplane, complete a few laps around the traffic pattern to check it out before flying it back to San Jose Mineta, where the airplane was based
- The pilot arrived at the facility shortly after he was notified, but was unable to find the owner so he found one an employee who discussed the repairs with him, showed him the door strut, and fuel gauges. He recalled that they spent about 20-25 together. Mr. Hogan stated that the facility had replaced both fuel sending units
- The pilot stated that he then completed a preflight inspection where he checked the tires, fuel, and fuel level and noted that the oil was light and in the 10-12 qts normal range. He stated that he checked the fuel using the sight gauges on each wing and recognized the color and smell of the fuel when he sumped the tanks. The pilot stated that the fuel sight gauges at each wing were consistent with the cockpit fuel quantity indicators (15 gallons each side) and that he did not add any fuel to the airplane before the accident flight. The pilot then started the airplane and taxied to the run-up area while in contact with ground control, which took about 10 minutes.
- The engine run-up was uneventful; mag check was normal, propeller cycling was normal and the engine did not run rough
- After receiving clearance from the tower controller for takeoff, he started his ground roll and departed the airport. He could not recall which fuel tank he departed on. The airplane started to climb, but when it reached about 400-500 ft mean sea level the engine started to run rough, so the pilot started looking for emergency landing sites, but could not find any
- The engine was still producing partial power at this point so the pilot elected to return to the airport, but during the subsequent turn the engine lost all power
- He immediately went through his mental checklist and switched fuel tanks (but did not switch back to the tank he departed on). The engine did not restart; the propeller was windmilling.



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Interview #1 Summary

Kathryn Whitaker
Piper Aircraft

E-mail correspondence date/time; February 20, 2023; 1702 PT

According to Ms. Whitaker,

“I did look at the fuel level gauge that was in the left wing...the needle was resting at 0 during my exam and movement of the arm did produce movement of the needle. This part was consistent in appearance with a being brand new, as depicted in the aircraft's Annual invoice and the mechanic's statement. I could not test the right gauge because it was intact and I could not reach the level float.”