

Crash Summary – FAA, N3131J, Timmons

My son and I had decided to participate as volunteer pilots in the Navajo Nation Christmas Airlift. Volunteers fly donations from their home airport to Gallup, NM KGUP. I did my preflight planning and WX analysis using Foreflight on my IPAD. The route from KDVT to KGUP was 196NM and estimated to take two hours of flight time based on winds aloft. The plan was to fly non-stop to Gallup, drop off the donations, refuel the Cessna 150 with a few gallons, fly to Holbrook and top off both aircraft with fuel (fuel was cheaper in Holbrook than Gallup), then return to DVT. I left my house with my son, Carson around 9:50AM for the airport. We arrived at Deer Valley Airport (KDVT) around 10:10AM. We drove to the hangar of the event coordinator for the Navajo Nation Christmas Airlift where we picked up 6 white trash bags of donated clothing and discussed how perfect the weather conditions were across the entire route of flight. We drove to our hangars where we conducted our pre-flights and loaded our aircraft. I own two aircraft, a Cessna 150 and a Bellanca Citabria hangered in two small T-hangars located side by side. I dipped the fuel tanks and found 9 gallons in the left tank and 10 gallons in the right tank of 31J. I checked oil and found 4 quarts in the sump, I added an additional ½ quart in the sump and placed 2 quarts of Aeroshell 100W in the cargo section of the 150, one for me and one for the Citabria. I placed four of the donated clothing trash bags weighing approximately a total of 60 pounds in the cargo area of the 150. Carson placed the two remaining bags in the back of the Citabria. I found nothing out of the ordinary during the preflight of 31J.

At approximately 1800Z (1100L) I started the engine of the 150 and then conducted a run-up in an open area of the ramp. I noted nothing out of the ordinary during the run-up checks. I was cleared to taxi to Runway 7R and eventually cleared for takeoff with a northeast departure at 1815Z (1115L). Carson took off in the Citabria right after me and we flew a loose formation exiting the Phoenix area to the northeast. We gradually climbed to 7,200ft MSL using a discrete frequency to communicate between the two aircraft. I did not pick up flight following because I was flying with another aircraft which allowed for mutual support. The airplane performed as normal at 2500RPM, oil pressure was normal, oil temperature was normal for a 40F OAT, CHTs were normal. We passed abeam of Payson (KPAN) at 1849Z (1149L).

At this point we were approaching the Mogollon Rim which sits at 7,500ft MSL elevation. Carson was flying about a mile ahead of me. We decided to start climbing again. We crossed the rim of the Mogollon at 8,500ft around 1900Z (1200L) with plans to continue to climb to 9,500ft. At 1905Z (1205L) I decided to increase the cabin heat because OAT was 40F. The heat knob was already half way out, I pulled it fully out. At that exact same moment the engine stumbled and the tach bounced around from 2200 to 2500 RPM. I immediately pushed the cabin heat knob back to the closed position. The tach continued to drop. I radioed Carson that I was having engine problems and needed a place to land. At the same time I pulled the carburetor heat full out and pushed the mixture and throttle to the fire wall. These actions did not stop the engine from continuing to lose RPMs. Carson said he saw a field near him, he was still in front of me by at least ½ mile. I kept heading towards Carson but I could not see any clearing. The engine was still running but at less than 1000 RPM. The tall pine trees masked the small meadow Carson had found until I was over the western edge of it. I was too high to attempt a straight landing even with a full on forward slip because of the short length of the meadow. I started a left 360 turn to lose altitude. While I was executing the turn the stall horn began chirping intermittently, the propeller continued to turn. I rolled out level, lined up with the field, and thought I would clear the last few tall pines at the edge of the meadow. As I crossed over the trees I heard and felt a tremendous and

violent crack on the left wing. Time was 1906Z (1206L). At that point I just held onto the yoke and tried to brace myself, everything became a blur. After 5 seconds of violence and chaos the plane came to rest upside down. It took me a few minutes to get my orientation and extract my arms and legs until I was laying on the ceiling of the plane. Both doors and door windows were bent and crushed preventing escape. The seats were still in place blocking an exit through the rear window. Most of the forward windshield opening was buried in the dirt but there was a small opening on the bottom right corner of the passenger side. I could see fuel dripping from the right wing root, which had completely separated from the fuselage. The sight of the dripping fuel terrified me and I became frantic to escape the plane. I ended up placing my feet in the opening in the windshield opening and shimmied out of the wreck feet first.

I stood up and moved a safe distance from the plane to a small clearing. Besides swelling to the left side of my face I thought I had only pulled some muscles in the left side of my back. Carson was circling overhead in the Citabria and I waived to him to let him know I was okay. I had no communications with him because my phone was missing in the wreckage. When I was sure that there was no fire I returned to the airplane and reached my arm into the cockpit through a small opening to turn off the magnetos, and the master switch to prevent possibility of a fire. I could see that the red light on the small ELT control panel was illuminated indicating it had activated. I tried to locate my phone and first aid kit but could not find them. I did find my survival kit which I took and moved back to the clearing. About this time my internal injuries were starting to inhibit my movement. I took the emergency blanket out of the survival kit and wrapped it around myself and lay down face up. I staid in this position until the crew of Native 7 AirMed helicopter arrived around 2110Z (1410L). Shortly after the arrival of the AirMed crew the ground emergency units arrived. I was eventually moved to the helicopter which flew me to the Trauma Unit at Scottsdale Osborne Medical Center. The Trauma Team told me that I had fractured 11 ribs on my left side and fractured the C7, T1 and T11 vertebrae in my spine. I remained in the hospital until November 17, 2022.

Timothy N. Timmons