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Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: August 1, 2023

Subject: WPR23LA294 / Record of Conversation

Contact: James Lambert, Pilot/Owner

In a telephone conversation with the pilot, he reported that he had departed Cavanaugh Bay Airport (66S) Coolin, Idaho, with 60 gallons of fuel onboard, and that he usually burned about 18 gallons per hour. Everything was running fine. When he was close to his destination, he saw that he had about 45 minutes of flight remaining and about 25 to 27 gallons remaining between the two tanks. He indicated that the right side was burning faster than the left. He mentioned that his wife stated that she could smell fuel. About 6 minutes from his destination, he saw that he had about 6 to 5 gallons per side. The engine died then started up again. He saw the fuel pressure drop from 4 to 3 to 2 to 0. He pumped the throttle and the engine would "come to life, then die, then come to life, then die." He stated that they "were going down." He believed that there was a leak in the fuel system. He recalled that the engine was still running after touchdown.

He stated that he had done the airframe restoration in January and had flown about 20 hours since. He reported that before the recovery, he had drained about 3 gallons from the right tank, but the left tank was too high, and he could not reach the tank to drain it. He said that he didn't know why [the engine lost power] because he topped off both tanks. He stated that he was 100% positive had had plenty of fuel.

In an email dated August 4, 2023, the pilot reported that while assisting in the recovery they removed about 5 gallons from the left wing and about 3.5 gallons from the right wing. When he removed the wrap cowl, he noticed a lot of fuel staining below the carburetor and more staining on the main cowl.